

Gethsemane

We will be wise to come to these verses with a sense of awe, wonder and reverence. The soul-suffering of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane brings us to the limit of human understanding and exceeds all earth-bound explanation. This hour in time is unique in the history of the world and peculiar to the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ, and while it is not the fulness of all the Saviour had to endure for our redemption it is nevertheless described by the gospel writers, and the Lord Himself, in words repeated nowhere else.

Powerful language

Here we find phrases unparalleled in the life of Christ such as Him being 'sore amazed', and 'very heavy', His soul 'exceeding sorrowful unto death', 'being in an agony', and He praying 'more earnestly', and His sweat on this cold night, 'as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground'. Whatever else the Lord endured in His body on the cross, here in the garden His human spirit was crushed beyond measure. Having been made sin for us an infinite weight of sin entered a perfect soul and the sword of divine justice pierced into Christ's heart. So exceptional is this hour that we are told there 'appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him' a support unheard of anywhere else in the Lord's ministry.

The olive press

The word 'Gethsemane' seems to refer to the process of crushing olives, and suggests this was a place, a garden, containing an olive press used for producing oil from the trees on the mountain side. This imagery has been employed to describe the pressing weight of all the sin of all the elect upon Christ, and the bruising and crushing of the Lord's soul that followed. The Man who was the 'man of sorrows' here enters more deeply into His great work of suffering, in the place and on behalf of His people. It was in a garden that Satan ruined our Adam-nature, and in a garden Jesus delivered us from Satan's grip.

A witness and a weariness

Various occurrences in this hour at first seem ordinary but on second look have a significance for the Lord, the disciples, and the church of every age. For example, the Lord by dividing his disciples and taking three, the same three who witnessed His transfiguration, shows us that a record of this harrowing event must be left for the church as a testimony of the Lord's suffering, despite its intensely personal nature. Christ's words must be heard and His actions attested for His people to publicly affirm, for in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Watch and pray

The slumber that overcomes these men is not a natural weariness, but rather, as Luke suggests 'for sorrow'. It may be considered as a direct temptation of the disciples by the devil to aggravate Christ's own sorrow. It reveals our Saviour suffering alone for the sins of His people, thereby fulfilling the prophecy, 'I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me ... and I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me' (Isaiah 63:3ff).

The cup of Christ's suffering

But it is to the prayer of the Lord that our thoughts run. These words express Christ's love for His church. The Son declares, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.' In these words we hear the complete, utter and absolute commitment of our Saviour to our salvation. The Lord Jesus was not asking for a way to sidestep suffering as if His drinking the cup of trembling might be changed for some other method. Rather, He was expressing His willingness to endure to the fullest extent whatever God's justice demanded, even to His own eternal separation from His Father should His sacrifice prove insufficient to answer our debt of sin and guilt. Christ's success would be seen in the passing of the cup, emptied of every last drop of judgment.

The reproach of justice

We have no idea what degrees of sorrow, grief, misery, woe and anguish followed upon the entrance of sin and guilt into the conscious experience of our Lord. He became sin for us. How His pure humanity must have recoiled from that mass of filth and corruption poured into His soul. How His heart must have been broken to feel the rod of God's anger,

and the curse of the law. 'Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none' (Psalm 69:20).

Our great salvation

Our Saviour stood alone in the gap and became accursed for us. Gethsemane was the start of His intense soul-suffering. Brutalising would follow at the hands of His enemies, then the cross awaited. It is the price our Surety paid in bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. May we never undervalue His commitment to our salvation. May we never underestimate the price of our freedom.

Amen

Website: www.newfocus.church

Magazine: www.go-newfocus.co.uk

New Focus Church Online: www.youtube.com/channel/UCsWi1Rdn4COFedq2_IgPO6A