

The Darkest Night in the Life of Jesus

Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1-2

We have been “*walking with Jesus*” through the pages of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John on Sunday mornings for over a year now. Today we will walk with Jesus to a garden called Gethsemane where He agonizes in prayer just before He is betrayed and arrested.

When I visited Israel in 1986, Bill Tate lead our tour group to the garden of Gethsemane. Several of those gnarled olive trees are over 2,000 years old. It was a highlight of my life to kneel amongst those same olive trees that Jesus prayed under 2000 years ago.

Three significant gardens mentioned in the Bible:

1. **The garden of TRAGEDY** (Gen. 2-3). Eden—Adam sinned and death was passed unto all men.
2. **The garden of TORMENT** (text). Gethsemane—Here Jesus sorrows unto death.
3. **The garden of TRIUMPH** (John 19:41). Jesus’ victory over death.

The night Jesus spent in Gethsemane was *the darkest night in the life of Christ*—A frightful night... A night of extreme agony... A night of betrayal... A night of abandonment. With the exception of Calvary, the most traumatic event in the life of Christ was His praying in Gethsemane.

The whole ordeal in Gethsemane was over “the cup.” Jesus prayed three times, “*If it be possible, let **this cup** pass from me*” (vs. 39, 42, 44). What was this “cup.”

- It was not PHYSICAL DEATH on the cross. Jesus knew He came to die for sinners (John 12:27). He came to lay His life down.
- It was not dying in the garden. No one could kill Jesus.

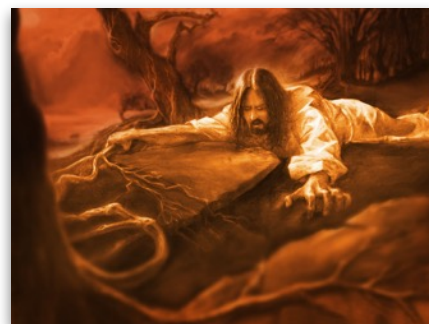
➡ Let’s examine three things about this “cup”—

I. **The PRESSURE of the cup was heavy to bear.**

- ➡ A severe spiritual struggle was taking place. No other trial in life can compare with what Jesus faced in the Garden. The struggle waged within His two-fold nature—God / Man.

Gethsemane means “olive press.” An olive press is used to crush and squeeze olives, so they give oil. In Gethsemane Jesus is crushed and pressed spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

- A. His SORROW—*“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”* He was in *“agony”*¹ (Luke 22:44). The agony was so intense He sweat great drops of blood. Any medical doctor will tell you that when blood is secreted through the pores of the skin, a person is at the point of death.
- B. His WITHDRAWAL— *“And he went a little farther...”*
1. Praying with others is good. Thank God for those who pray with you and for you. But there are times when we must withdraw to a closet, where no ear hears but God.
 2. We need a garden, a solitary spot, where we can get all alone with God in times of great trial.
- C. His COLLAPSE— *“...fell on his face...”* Jesus was broken... burdened... weighed down and fallen on His face. The pressure He experienced was unbearable.



II. The PORTION in the cup was horrific to behold.

- ➡ Jesus was *“sore amazed”* (Mk. 14:33). [Strong’s: “to astonish utterly; affright.”] Why Jesus was *“sore amazed”*? God is never amazed or frightened. It was the human nature of Jesus that was *“sore amazed”* as the terrors ahead were coming into view.
- ➡ What was so horrific about *“this cup”* that caused Jesus to shudder in fright? As the sinless Lord Jesus looked into that “cup,” what did He see? Two things...
- A. The SINS of the whole world—All the filth and stench of everything rotten in mankind—A cess-pool of putrefying, disgusting, garbage.

¹ The only occurrence of the word *“agony”* in the Bible (Luke 22:44).

1. He saw Himself about to **become SIN for us.**
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21— *For he [God the Father] hath made him [the Lord Jesus] **to be sin** for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus literally became sin!*
 - Isaiah 53:6—*“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*
 - Galatians 3:13—He was *“**made a curse** for us...”*
 - 1 Peter 2:24—*“Who his own self bare our sins **IN** his body on the tree.”*
2. How does something get inside your body? You can *inhale* it... *inject* it... or *ingest* it by swallowing it. Jesus would swallow the cup of our sin and it would become a part of His body. [You are what you eat/drink.]
 - He who was sinless would become sin...
 - He who was truth would become a lie...
 - He who was light would become darkness...
 - He who was holy would become unholy...
 - He who was pure would become polluted...
 - He who was life would become death.
3. No wonder He was *“sore amazed...”* **Everything sin is, Christ is NOT.** He hates sin with every holy fiber of His being.
 - ➡ The Father offers the “cup” to Jesus to drink, “For You to save poor lost sinners, you must take their sin, YOU MUST DRINK THIS CUP!” As He lifts the cup to drink He saw...
 - every act of adultery ever committed ...
 - every murder . . .
 - every foul word . . .
 - every act of idolatry . . .
 - every sexual perversion . . .
 - every theft . . .
 - every impure thought ...
 - every vile deed ever committed by every man, woman, boy, and girl who would ever live on this earth.

➤ How would you react if you were given a cup of raw sewage and asked to drink it? Repulsed?

- B. The Lord saw something else in that cup. By becoming sin, **He also saw the penalty of sin** He must pay (Rom. 6:23).
1. Sin incurs the wrath of God. The “cup” contained God’s wrath poured out upon sin (cf. Rev. 14:10; 16:19).
 - Revelation 14:10 *The same shall drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into **the cup of his indignation**; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*
 - Revelation 16:19 *...and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her **the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath**.*
 2. This penalty went beyond physical death. Death is separation from God—Eternal death.
 - a) Jesus knew IF He drinks this “cup” of sin, there would be a SEPARATION or “break” in His union with the Father. He would be forsaken by God the Father because God cannot fellowship with sin. *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”* (Hab. 1:13).
 - b) Our finite minds cannot grasp the horrors Jesus experienced by drinking that cup. From the depths of His absolute holiness, He cried out against it, *“O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* In essence, He was praying, “Father, if there is any other way to to save souls from Hell... let this cup pass from Me.”

III. **The PRAYER about the cup was humble to bow.**

➤ In Gethsemane, Jesus faced the supreme test of His obedience to His Father— *“He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2:8).

- A. His SUBMISSION (Mt. 26:39, 42—"If there is no other way?" "*THY WILL BE DONE.*")
1. Jesus did not come to do His own will (John 5:30; 6:38). His "meat" was to do the will of the Father (John 4:34). He always did those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29).
 2. Sometimes the answer to our prayer will be a hard pill to swallow. Jesus later told Peter, "*The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*" (John 18:11). And drink it He did at Calvary! Thank God He drank the cup!
 - Jesus drank the cup of wrath without mercy that we might drink the cup of mercy without wrath!
- B. His STRENGTHENING (Luke 22:42-44).
1. God did not give Christ what He asked. Although God did not remove the cup, God strengthened Him to bear the cup.
 2. The lesson is clear: God sometimes answers our prayers with "No." But He strengthens us with His grace to accept His answer.

SUMMATION: Three important lessons:

- 1) Jesus suffered the awful punishment your sin deserved. He paid your penalty of sin. Will you accept His offer of salvation?
- 2) Jesus died for all your sins. How can you continue to live in them, knowing what it cost Him?
- 3) Even though it was the hardest thing God ever asked Jesus to do, Jesus surrendered to His Father's will. Will you bow your knee to the will of God? Will you say to God, "*Not my will, but thine be done*" (Luke 22:42).