

Understanding Calvary in the Light of Gethsemane

- *Christ's sufferings did not begin at Calvary, but at Gethsemane.*
- *To grasp a fuller understanding of how much Christ suffered for us, we need to look at what happened that last night in the Garden of Gethsemane.*
- *In the events of the Last Supper and Gethsemane there are a number of points we could study.*
- *We could observe Peter's fleshly zeal—thinking he would never deny Christ, but ignorant of the true condition of his heart. His confidence was in himself instead of God.*
- *We could study the instability of His disciples who fled in fear at His arrest.*
- *We could study the treachery of Judas, the envy that caused the priests to condemn Jesus, or the fickleness of the crowd, who one day cried "Hosanna" and a few days later cried "crucify Him."*

However, our main focus as we study the Last Supper and Gethsemane will be to understand more about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 14:22–24 (NKJV)

²²And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

²³Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."

²²And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

- *"And as they were eating..." – While the disciples were engaged in a meal, Jesus was about to share one of the most important moments of His earthly ministry with them—a moment that would establish the way His Church is to celebrate His sacrifice.*
- *Jesus was sharing from the depths of His heart the purpose of His life with His disciples.*
- *It is interesting to consider what was going on in the minds of His disciples.*

- *I am convinced that at that time they did not even conceive what Jesus was really telling them as they observed Him, but the impact of His actions as He shared the cup and the bread would later resonate in their hearts for the rest of their lives.*

This act of Communion would be passed on to every generation of Believers for the next two thousand years.

Often God desires to share some revelation or special moment with us during what appears to be an ordinary day, and if we are not attentive we will miss out on something very precious.

- *Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” – What to the disciples seemed like a simple act, in reality reflects one of the greatest symbols of self-sacrifice in the entire Bible.*
- *Christ took the bread, blessed it, and then broke it. Jesus took the symbol of His agony and sacrifice and blessed it!*

As Christ tore the bread apart He knew that in a few short hours His physical body would be torn by the whips, pierced by nails, and hung on a cross to die.

“Take, eat; this is My body.” – Jesus’ instructions to His disciples were not meant to arouse their pity or to make them understand how great His sufferings were going to be, but simply for them to partake of what He was going to do for them so they could be saved.

- *Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. – Jesus took the cup representing His blood that would be shed in a few short hours in the most agonizing death in eternity and He gave thanks.*
- *Jesus took that cup and gave thanks! What an example of love and self-sacrifice.*
- *As Jesus’ disciples ate the bread and drank from the cup they really did not comprehend the significance of what they were doing.*
- *They were not able to fathom what Jesus was about to do for them and for all mankind.*
- *However, the important thing is that they had put their faith in Him even with their limited understanding.*
- *When we first come to Christ, few of us even begin to grasp how much Christ suffered for us. God doesn’t make it a prerequisite for us to appreciate how much it cost Christ, but for us to simply accept that He did suffer and die for us.*
- *However, as we walk with God, He begins to reveal to us how much it really cost Jesus to redeem us. This revelation increases our capacity to understand and experience His love.*
- *When we first come to Christ we are happy that Jesus died for our sins, but our appreciation for His sacrifice is limited by our own self-centeredness and lack of knowledge.*

- *One of our chief purposes in this life is to daily seek to deepen our understanding of His sacrifice and sufferings for us.*

Just as in the Old Testament the priests were instructed daily to perform their morning and evening sacrifices, we too need to begin and end our day giving thanks and meditating on what Christ did for us at the cross.

Philippians 3:10 - 11 (NKJV)

¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- *In Philippians 3:10-11 Paul describes one of the great objectives of His life.*
- *This Greek word for "know" is γινώσκω ginōskō and it can mean knowledge acquired by experience, relationship, or intimate contact.*
- *Three things that Paul wanted to know: Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.*
- *These three things can only be known by experiencing Christ on a personal and daily basis.*

"if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" – Paul's purpose was to experience "the resurrection from the dead." This Greek word for resurrection is an unusual Greek word ἐξανάστασις exanastasis and is used only once in the entire New Testament. It could best be translated "out resurrection."

- *This "out resurrection" that Paul was seeking to experience is a special level of intimacy and abundant life which is experienced by Christians who have come to know the overcoming life of Christ on a daily basis.*
- *One of the keys to live in this abundant life that Christ is offering us is to be able to grasp the revelation of His sufferings for us.*
- *Understanding His sufferings will empower us to resist temptation and sin, even if it sometimes causes us pain or sorrow.*
- *Every time we partake of Communion is an opportunity to consider in a corporate setting His sufferings and sacrifice for us.*

We deepen our revelation of Christ's sufferings:

- **1. Through fellowship – sharing our insights with one another about His sufferings.**

- **2. Through studying the Word of God to receive accurate revelation of His sufferings.**
- **3. Through prayer as the Holy Spirit quickens us to understand Christ's sufferings.**
- **4. Through living a life of self-sacrifice that is willing to suffer for the One who suffered for us.**

Mark 14:25–26 (NKJV)

²⁵Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- **“when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” – Christ ended the Last Supper with a hymn of praise and worship as He prepared to go to His death.**
- **I believe as Jesus sang this song of praise and worship His heart was heavy, because He fully knew what He was about to experience.**

What a perfect picture of abandonment as Jesus sang one of the psalms of praise and worship with all His being to His Father, while at the same time His soul was filled with turmoil as He faced His death.

- ***We must understand that Jesus Christ's suffering and death at Calvary is unique from anyone else's in all eternity.***
- ***Many people have died horrible deaths and many have died carrying their own sins to the grave, but Jesus took all the sins and curses of mankind upon His body and His soul.***
- ***Jesus Christ didn't die a martyr's death. He died as the Lamb of God who took upon Himself the sins of the world.***
- ***Our English word for martyr comes from the Greek word μαρτύριον martyrion and it means “a witness.” So when someone is a martyr he is willing to suffer and even die as a testimony to the truth of the gospel.***
- ***Jesus' death was not a testimony of God's faithfulness; it was the reality of God's faithfulness.***
- ***As Jesus Christ faced the reality of Calvary, He was fully aware of the physical, emotional, and spiritual torment He would endure as a man to redeem mankind.***
- ***In the Garden of Gethsemane the Bible gives us precious insights into the sufferings of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.***

- *As the Son of God, Jesus could easily endure the sufferings and temptations, but as the Son of Man He had to face the terrors and pain of bearing the sins and curses of all mankind.*

Hebrews 5:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

⁸though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

- *“in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him” – Hebrews 5:7 can be understood to describe, besides other times in Christ’s earthly life, that critical time He spent in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night He was betrayed.*
- *This gives us insights into the intensity of His emotional pain and turmoil as He contemplated what He would have to endure.*

“to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear” – One of the essential things we must understand to more fully grasp Jesus’ sufferings for us is the fact that as the Son of Man He could have failed.

- *As the Son of God, Jesus Christ could not fail, but He came as the Son of Man so He could redeem us. Coming as the Son of Man brought with it the possibility of failure.*
- *Where Adam failed, Jesus was victorious, in not only living a perfectly righteous life, but He was able to go through the sufferings of the cross perfectly to be our Redeemer.*

When Christ hung on the cross He bore the excruciating physical pain of our sins and sickness, the emotional attack as He endured the mocking and jeering of the crowd as He hung on the cross, and the spiritual torment of being separated from His Father as the sins of mankind were placed upon His soul.

If while Jesus hung on the cross He entertained any thoughts of bitterness, resentment, or hatred in His heart toward either the people or His Father, it would have resulted in not only all of mankind being destined to eternity in Hell, but also His own soul.

When Christ was on the cross being crushed by the physical torment, the weight of sin, and the hatred of all mankind and the demons of Hell, out of His mouth came forth the words expressing His pure love, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34).

“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” - This verse does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient, but that He grew in obedience even as a ten-year-old boy understands obedience in a greater way than a two-year-old child.

- *Jesus never chose His own will, but always His Father's will, no matter what suffering He would have to endure or experience.*
- *Calvary is the greatest demonstration of obedience and self-sacrifice ever displayed.*

Mark 14:32–43 (NKJV)

³²Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

³³And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

³⁴Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."

³⁵He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

³⁶And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

³⁷Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?"

³⁸Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

³⁹Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words.

⁴⁰And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

⁴¹Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴²Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

⁴³And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Mark 14: 32

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."

Gethsemane is a transliteration of the Hebrew word which means, an “oil press” and it accurately depicts what Christ experienced at the Mount of Olives. His soul was under the greatest strain and pressure as He struggled with the reality of His sacrificial death.

Mark 14 (NKJV)

³³And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

³⁴Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.”

- *These verses bring to light what Jesus was experiencing in the depth of His soul.*
- *The Greek word “to be troubled” is ἐκθαμβέω ekthambeō and it can mean, “to be thrown into terror, to be overwhelmed with distress, alarm, or fear.”*
- *The Greek word “to be deeply distressed” is ἀδημονέω adēmoneō and it means “to be troubled, great anguish, depressed,” and it is the strongest of the three words used in the New Testament for depression.*

Mark 14:33-34 (Williams Translation)

He took Peter, James and John along with Him, and He began to feel completely dazed and to realize His anguish of heart of heart, and so He said to them, “My heart is breaking, it almost kills me! You must stay here and keep watching.”

Mark 14:33-34 (Philips Translation)

He took with him Peter, James and John, and began to be horror-stricken and desperately depressed. “My heart is nearly breaking,” he told them. “Stay here and keep watch for me.”

Mark 14:34 (Yeager translation)

“And He said to them, My soul is engulfed in sorrow, almost to death. Stay here and be on the lookout.”

In this intense time of agony we see another aspect of Jesus’ sufferings – an intense loneliness as He faced a death that would not only separate Him from all earthly companions, but even from His Father.

- *We can see this loneliness expressed through Christ’s request as He took His three closest disciples to be with Him, but they were totally oblivious to what Christ was going through.*
- *In Matthew 26:38 we see Jesus reaching out to His three disciples with the words, “Stay here and watch with Me.”*

Mark 14 (NJV)

³⁵He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

³⁶And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

- *We see Jesus as He struggled with the agony that is already coming upon His soul as He came to His Father in prayer.*

The “moving picture” described here in Mark 14, by employing the imperfect tenses in Greek for the verbs “fell” and “prayed” are graphic. Jesus stumbled forward, falling to the ground again and again, rising only to take a few steps to fall again, and in broken words, interrupted with sobs, He began to pray.

Mark 14:35 (Yeager Translation)

“And when He had gone forward a little He kept falling on the ground and He began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe the events of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- *Matthew concentrates on the final fall after which Jesus lay prostrate on His face praying to His Father.*

Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

³⁹He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

- *Luke focuses on Christ’s agony and the intensity of His prayer, describing the first drops of Jesus’ blood being shed, as He grappled with the suffering set before Him.*
- *Luke recorded that through this intense prayer the Father sent an angel to strength Him.*

Luke 22:43–44 (NKJV)

⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The beginning of Christ’s sacrificial sufferings and the first drops of His redemptive blood were not shed at Calvary, but at the Garden of Gethsemane as He agonized in prayer at the reality of what He must endure so mankind could be saved

The Greek word for agony is ἀγωνία agōnia and it means, “intense inner conflict,” and indicates the supreme concentration of power in the face of imminent decisions or disasters.

Jesus was agonizing over the victory in the face of the approaching decisive battle on which the fate of all mankind depended.

- *Matthew describes the last fall as Jesus lays in the midst of the Garden in prayer.*
- *Luke describes the intensity of the Jesus’ prayer.*
- *Mark describes Jesus’ progress into the Garden as He continues to stumble, drag Himself, and pray as He makes His way into the midst of the Garden.*
- *At the oil press of Gethsemane, Jesus was crushed with the weight of all that He had to endure and what came forth reveals His true character.*
- *“nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will” – What came forth as Jesus was being crushed was pure love and selfless obedience to the Father.*

- *A trial exposes the true condition of our hearts, because when we are crushed whatever is on the inside oozes out.*

Mark 14 (NKJV)

⁴¹Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

- *In the midst of His own agony, His concern for His disciples is seen when He returned to them to see if they were able to pray, so they could endure what they would soon have to face.*

Mark 14 (NKJV)

⁴²Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

⁴³And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

- *After Jesus’ time with the Father in prayer and His final resolve to submit to the Father’s will, a new strength and boldness replaced the fear and anguish that had previously filled His soul.*
- *Jesus not only bore our sins, sickness, and curses, but our mental anguish so we could be free from even depression and fear.*

- *Many times Believers struggle with God's love and feel insecure when facing crises or life in general.*
- *The key is to grasp God's love for us to understand how greatly Christ suffered.*
- *That precious revelation is found in the Book, so open it.*
- *One the main goals of our lives needs to be to appreciate how much Jesus suffered for us and to rejoice in His love for us.*
- *If someone here has never accepted Christ's sacrifice for his or her sins today you can!*
- *If you are a believer, but you have struggled with God's love for you, today ask God to help you on your journey to a deeper understanding of Jesus' sacrifice.*
- *For those who are beginning to grasp Jesus' love and how much He did for us, we can express thankfulness and also express our desire for even greater revelation.*