

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Four Features of Triumphant Prayer

Scripture: Luke 22:39-46

Code: 42-273

This morning, as we turn now to the Word of God, I want you to look in Scripture to one of the most sacred of all passages, Luke chapter 22 verses 39 through 46...Luke 22 verses 39 through 46. I want to read this passage, it is simple, straightforward, clear, unmistakable, and yet it contains profundities and mysteries the likes of which we will never understand.

Verse 39, speaking of our Lord Jesus, it says, "And He came out and proceeded, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives and the disciples also followed Him. And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me, yet not My will but Thine be done.' Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him strengthening Him. And being in agony, He was praying very fervently and His sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground. And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

Isaiah prophesied that our Lord would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Sorrow and grief followed Him all through His life. During His ministry, we are told in Mark 3:5, that He was grieved over the Jews' hardness of heart. In Mark 7 and verse 34, we are told that He was so grieved over the suffering of a man that He looked up to heaven with a deep sigh." In Mark chapter 8 and verse 12, He had the same response of sorrow at the superficiality of Israel's leaders and was sighing deeply in His Spirit.

In John 11:35 it says that He stood at the grave of Lazarus and wept. And when for the last time He finally arrived in Jerusalem, in Luke 19:41, it says, "He saw Jerusalem and wept over it." Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 7 focuses, however, on the grief of this event, His agony in the Garden, and says, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death." Yes, He was the man of sorrows. Sin, unbelief, rejection, ignorance, suffering, death, all gave our Lord Jesus grief upon grief and sorrow upon sorrow, all through His life and ministry.

But the apex of His sorrow came in the hours that I just read you about in the Garden when He was on the brink in a few hours of drinking the cup of God's wrath. It is here that His sorrow became so severe that it came near to killing Him. His sorrow in facing death, as the sin bearer, is beyond our

comprehension. It defies description. It surpasses understanding, even when we read the Scripture because His experience is absolutely unique and not like anything any human being ever experiences. So no matter what we read about the temptation of Christ in the Garden, we are left with incalculable mystery. We are awestruck over the scene of His agony before the cross. We are stunned by this greatest of all battles against temptation.

Now remember, Satan's objective has always been to keep Jesus from going to the cross. Satan did not kill Jesus on the cross, God did. He is God's Lamb, God's chosen sacrifice, God's preordained, predetermined substitute for sinners. He dies under the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, though secondarily slain by wicked men. And so, as God moves His Son to the cross, Satan attempts to stop Him. And the great temptation that came at the beginning of his ministry, recorded in Luke 4 and Matthew 4, you remember that Satan came after Him in three temptations, each one of them was to give Christ what was rightfully His without the cross...satisfaction, acceptance and the kingdoms of this world. And now in the scene before us, Satan in unrevealed ways weighs too profound for us to understand, too mysterious has His hour. Verse 53 says, "This is the hour of darkness." In the great sovereign purposes of God there is a determined time limited, to be sure. There is a determined hour in which Satan can release all his tempting efforts to stop the Son of God from the cross. This is the greatest battle and when it is over, Satan is vanquished and Jesus comes out of the Garden triumphant and moves in a few hours to the cross.

How severe was this battle? He said, recorded in Mark 14:34, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." The battle was so fierce and so great, and so profound and so wrenching that even a perfect human body was well nigh unable to stand under its onslaught.

As we enter the Garden with Jesus on this occasion, we enter hallowed ground. We go where the Apostles did not go. Eight of them were left at the entrance to the Garden, three of them went a little further, but only Jesus went all the way in and agonized alone. In the accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, for all gospels record this event, we are taken in to that inner place where Christ struggled by Himself. It is the unparalleled private struggle with the power of darkness.

What is stunning about it, among many things, is the fact that in the midst of this greatest of all struggles in His eternal life, He is concerned about His disciples. This is a great illustration of omniscience. God can be totally consumed with what He is doing and at the same time never lose track for one split second of the needs of all His own beloved children. And always the teacher...always the teacher, even in the horrors of his own struggle. They show indifference to Him, He is completely aware of them. So what you have here put together in an astonishing union is the great struggle of our Lord in this massive temptation and alongside of it, His desire to give instruction to those He loved for them to know how to handle their own temptations. Always the teacher, always compassionate, even in the midst of incalculable conflict which drew all of His powers of concentration.

So while we see Christ in His agony, at the same time we're going to learn how to face our own temptations. And while His temptation is not like any temptation any human being could have, we're still going to learn that the principles that manifest themselves in this temptation are applicable to us. So let's go there with Him, verse 39.

"And He came out and proceeded as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples also followed Him."

He came out from where? He came out from the Upper Room...late Thursday night, probably early Friday morning. He must die Friday afternoon between three and five when the Passover lambs are being slain. He must die at the appointed hour for the slaying of the Passover Lamb because He is the true Passover. He must be in the grave before sunset because He must be in the grave three days, a Friday, part of it, all day Saturday and a portion of Sunday. There are only hours now, midnight has very likely passed. He had been in the Upper Room for a long time that evening. He had celebrated the final legitimate authentic Passover, drawn that symbol to its end and said that He would not have another legitimate Passover until He returned and set up His Kingdom. And in place of the Passover, while He was in that Upper Room with the eleven disciples and Judas, He instituted the Lord's supper which we know is the communion service, so that the new memorial, the new celebration of God's delivering power would not be a remembrance of His power to deliver Israel from Egypt, but His power to deliver sinners from hell at the cross.

He also made commands in a prolonged teaching time which John records from chapter 13 through chapter 16. Gave them commands, gave them promises, gave them warnings, extensive specifics, also at the end of that evening He prayed His great High Priestly prayer, the most stunning prayer in all the pages of Scripture recorded in John 17. Then they sang Psalm 118, the last song of the Hallel which was always the way the Jews closed Passover and they left. That evening was over.

Having left, they did what they did every other night that week, went right to the Mount of Olives. That's why it says, "Proceeded as was His custom." John 18:2 says, "Jesus often resorted there with His disciples." It was a place in the spring where you could stay at night and find a comfortable place in the density of the olive trees to rest and to sleep and perhaps more importantly for Him, it was a place where you couldn't be found, there were no lights there and His enemies didn't know where He was. And He had to avoid arrest until the precise and exact moment so that His death would come...it was supposed to come, as well as His burial.

The specific location...what was it? The Mount of Olives. But within the Mount of Olives, according to Matthew 26:36, a Garden called Gethsemane. Likely, typically, it belonged to a man, a family, surely believers in the Lord Jesus who let Jesus and His disciples find privacy there, secrecy there and sleep there in seclusion.

By the way, here is another sympathy shown to the Savior during this Passion Week by a nameless man, like the nameless man who gave Him the donkey's colt to ride on, like the nameless man who was carrying water and let Him to the Upper Room, like the nameless man who provided the Upper Room for them...here is the nameless man who lets them stay in His private Garden. And there's no attempt here to hide from Judas any more. They go back to the place they always went. They go back to the place Judas knew they would be. Remember now, Judas had been dismissed earlier by our Lord when our Lord exposed him and when Satan entered into Him. The Lord sent Him out of that Upper Room and he went to consummate the deal with the leaders of Israel and to betray Jesus. And Jesus then went directly to the place where He always went so He would be exactly where Judas knew He would be so that Judas could find Him.

It is the time. No need to hide from Judas. It couldn't happen any earlier, that's why the Lord never let anybody know where they were going for the Passover, only Peter and John knew. No one else knew because He didn't want Judas to know or they would have likely come and arrested Him in the middle of that and He wouldn't have completed perhaps the Passover or the institution of the Lord's Supper or the teaching that He needed to do. And so, only now was it time.

The eleven come with Him. It's here as they reach the Garden that Luke focuses his history on our Lord's prayer and His instruction to the eleven. This passage is beyond rich, it is profound. It is stunning in every sense. Here is our Lord Jesus at the heights of supernatural conflict, the devil, the supernatural leader of the demons fighting with the Son of God. And yet, as supernatural as the conflict is, in compassion our Lord uses this conflict to instruct His own on how to face temptation and triumph. We will remember also that in the time that Jesus was with His disciples in the Upper Room, Luke points out to us how many points of trouble there were...trouble with the betrayer, trouble with the disciples arguing about which of them is the greatest, trouble with Satan coming to sift them, not just Peter but all of them, and to scatter them. Trouble with Peter who would deny Him, trouble with the hostile world who would kill Him and then persecute His followers. But you remember, in every one of those incidents, our Lord talks about the trouble and then immediately moves to the triumph. In the case of Judas, lots of trouble but He only did what it was predetermined that He would do.

In the case of the disciples, lots of trouble. They looked completely inept as those who would evangelize the world because all they can think about is their own glory in the Kingdom, and yet they are faithful, they do triumph. And Jesus says to them, "You will sit with Me in My Kingdom at My table and eat and drink with Me and you will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel." Triumph in the midst of trouble. Triumph over Satan because Satan comes to sift you like wheat, Jesus says, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. Triumph in the trouble of Peter's denial, Peter will deny but Peter will be restored and recovered and be the great preacher on the Day of Pentecost and through the first part of the book of Acts as the church in Jerusalem is built. Trouble from the world, but the worse the world can do is to number Him with the transgressors and thus fulfill the Word of God as

laid out in the great fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

But all of that trouble only leads up to this trouble. The greatest trouble our Lord faces is the direct trouble, not the indirect trouble from friends and enemies, but direct trouble that comes from Satan when Satan comes after Him in the Garden. We're going to see something of that, at least as much of that as revealed to us, understanding that there's so much mystery here, we'll never be able to comprehend what our Lord went through, nor does the Bible tell us what means Satan used to tempt Him.

But beyond that, what our Lord also does is instruct us here by His own example and His words about how we are to face our temptation, how His disciples were to face theirs. His confrontation and prayers marked by four vital elements that I believe we need to understand.

Number one, anticipation...anticipation. The disciples follow Him in, verse 40 says, "When He arrived at the place, the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter in to temptation. Pray that you may not literally be overwhelmed by temptation, or that temptation would be successful. Pray.'"

Jesus knew he was temptable. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He could not sin but He could be tempted. He did not sin, but He was tempted, He had been tempted but here would be the greatest temptation of His entire life. He was well aware that He was temptable. As a man, He had become temptable. Though pure and holy, incapable of sinning, He knew the reality of human weakness to which He had willingly subjected Himself.

In fact, the temptation that came to Him is so intense, so powerful, so immense that it almost killed Him. I read from Mark, here's Matthew's record of Jesus' statement in Matthew 26:38, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." He is struggling to such a severe degree that He is on the brink of death. But it is not for the reason that we struggle with temptation. And this is what I want you to understand.

We're sinners, all the whole human race. And as believers, we struggle with temptation because of our sinful flesh, our unholy flesh. Though we have been forgiven and though we have been made new in Christ, we're like Lazarus, we came out of the grave, we have new life but we stink. We have our dirty grave clothes on. We're a new creation incarcerated in unredeemed flesh. And we are seduced by the remnants of our fallenness. Satan's temptation to us is to hold on to sin and not come to righteousness. Satan's temptation to us is to hold on to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We struggle because the power of evil is so strong in us. We struggle because the power of sin is innate to us, because the power of iniquity is intertwined in our being. Unholy impulses reside in us. Our battle is to fight against our innate attraction to sin, to fight against our fallenness

and to abandon it and embrace righteousness and holiness and purity.

That was not Christ's struggle. Christ struggled with temptation in exactly the opposite way...exactly the opposite way. He struggled because of His holy flesh. He struggled because He was totally devoted only to that which was pure and righteous and perfect. He struggled because the power of holiness was the only motive He had ever known in His eternal being, the only motive for every thought, for every word, for every act was absolute pure holiness, holy, holy, holy. We struggle with three things, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. He struggled against three driving dominant, all-consuming, all pervading impulses, holy, holy, holy.. For us, we're trying to abandon sin and embrace holiness. For Him, He was being tempted to abandon holiness and embrace sin bearing. Just the opposite.

This is incomprehensible to Him. This is repulsive to Him. This is foreign to Him. He's not like us. He's not fighting against sinful impulses to be holy. He's fighting against holy impulses to be made sin. Satan is tempting Him to cling to holiness, just as he did when he tempted Him in the wilderness, cling to the right to be satisfied. You shouldn't be hungry, cling to the right to be acknowledged as Messiah, jump off this building, take what You deserve, cling to the right to rule the kingdoms of this world, I'll hand them to You, You don't need the cross. You don't need to embrace sin. You don't need to embrace sin to be satisfied. You don't need to embrace sin to become acknowledged. You don't need to embrace sin to take Your rightful throne.

He was having to fight against holy impulses. We have to fight against sinful impulses. We fight to hold on to God. He fights to let go of God. We fight to be joined to God. He fought against being separated from God. In the face of this immense inconceivable conflict, can't even fathom, He's thinking while fully concentrating on this conflict, He at the same time is thinking about His own beloved Apostles whom He loves unto perfection, according to John 13:1, are going to struggle that same night with their own temptations and they're going to have to be ready. He makes Himself ready by prayer and He knows they need to do the very same.

He had always anticipated this hour, this hour of severest temptation. And He had always known it would be the greatest struggle of His eternal life because it would call on Him not to hold on to that which was evil, but that which was pure, ineffable, glorious purity. It was a temptation to let go of all that He had known. He had never been separated from the Father, never been made the bearer of the wrath of God for sin. And it racked Him, it wrenched Him.

That is why, even in that prayer He prayed recorded in John 17 before they left the Upper Room in the first five verses, He prays for Himself. "Father, Father, give Me the glory I had with You before the world began." And what He's praying is, "Father, get Me through this and out the other side and back to eternal glory."

And so, it says when He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that You may not enter into temptation." He was going to go and do the very same thing, they needed to do it as well. He left eight of them near where He entered, took Peter, James and John, according to Matthew and Mark, in deeper, left them and went alone to pray.

But when He left the eight and when He left the three, He told them...Pray...Pray so that temptation does not overwhelm you. And then He went to pray alone.

They couldn't go with Him. No one could, this is a solitary experience because it's a temptation the likes of which none of us could ever comprehend. You pray. I've told you, Peter, you're going to deny Me. I told you Satan's coming after you, he wants to sift you like wheat. The you is humeis, plural. He wants to sift all of you. And when they arrest Me and take and smite the shepherd according to Zechariah's words, the sheep are going to be scattered. It's coming, you better pray.

Here again is that ever-present balance between sovereignty and human responsibility. He says, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." That's divine sovereignty. "But you better pray as well." And what should their prayer be? He taught them that. When they asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray," He said, "Among the things you need to pray for, pray like this, Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

So the lesson is clear. Christ goes to His temptation, they go to their temptation. Everyone needs to pray. We must empty ourselves of all self-confidence, which Peter and the Apostles had already exhibited. We must empty ourselves of all spiritual pride, of all over-estimation of our strength, and pray for divine help.

Now as we go with Him into this prayer, the first aspect is anticipation...anticipation. That's what He's saying in all this. You've got to anticipate temptation and be ready with prayer. Prayer that confesses weakness, inability, that confesses a lack of strength, humble, meek prayer. Anticipation is the first principle of praying in the face of temptation...anticipated. Don't get caught, when the temptation hits with its full force, not having prayed. Help awaits the one who prays.

He goes to pray in anticipation of His own temptation. And so it's really amazing to see while He's talking to God, and we don't know the details because it's not revealed to us, nor can we comprehend them, Satan is working on Him at the same time. He is praying in anticipation of and right through the temptation.

The second feature in His prayer...the first is anticipation, the second is affliction. He illustrates for us here in such powerful terms that one who prays honestly and earnestly in the face of temptation feels afflicted. There is an agony in legitimate prayer. Luke is brief on this. Matthew and Mark record how Jesus took Peter, James and John a little further and how He went a little further in alone and then

how He came out once, and then He went back and prayed, came out again, then went back and prayed. Finally came out a third time. All those details are laid out by Matthew and Mark in their account. Luke just kind of squeezes it for us and summarizes it being aware that people had, no doubt, familiarity with the accounts of Matthew and Mark and knew more of the details.

For Luke, it's enough to say, verse 41, "He withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and began to pray." And here we come face to face with His affliction. "Knelt down," that's the term that Luke uses, a verb that he uses. And that's an open door, that just throws the door open. That's going to let us in to the secret place. Peter, James and John aren't there, they're a stone's throw back. The other eight are back even further away, but were there and it says He knelt down. This is where we begin to consider the severity of the affliction that He is feeling as He struggles in this temptation. Kneeling was not the customary posture for prayer. Standing was at the time of our Lord. The fact that Luke in a very mild way says He was kneeling down, doesn't tell the whole story because having knelt, Matthew 26:39 says, "He fell on His face." And Mark 14:33 and 35, "He began to be very distressed and troubled and fell to the ground and began to pray." And Hebrews 5:7, as I read earlier, "With strong crying and tears."

What you have here is the Lord Jesus lying flat on the ground sobbing and crying out loud in the agony of this struggle. This is the Man of sorrows at His most sorrowful moment. What depressed Him? What distressed Him? What grieved Him? What made Him sorrow? Certainly the rejection of the nation against Him, the defection of the betrayer, the dissension of the eleven, the repudiation and denial coming by Peter, the scattering of the rest, the injustice of men, all of those things distressed His holy soul. The sinless Prince of truth and justice, lover and source of righteousness condemned in a corrupt court and slain by evil men...all of that brought grief.

But that pales compared to the struggle going on in His soul here because what was tearing Him up was the realization of the coming wrath of His own Father falling on Him. This is just more than He can bear physically and so He's prone on the ground, crying at the top of His voice. The lesson here is that if you're going to triumph over temptation, you must hate it, you must feel afflicted by it, you must feel the pain of it, the assault of it, the repulsiveness of it. There needs to be an agonizing in prayer because you love holiness and you hate sin.

Obviously because we're not like Him, we don't feel the perfect hatred of sin. But facing temptation in prayer must include the most basic attitude of a genuine hatred of sin, if not a perfect hatred of sin. We need to be afflicted by the thought of sin. If you want to be triumphant in your facing of temptation, there must be anticipation, and there must be affliction. The believer must feel the agony of sin because he hates it. The agony of sin because he loves holiness and he loves Christ. And so this temptation is a temptation that generates agony at the thought of sin.

This is triumphant prayer. It is characterized by anticipation and affliction. Thirdly, it is also

characterized by submission...submission, verse 42. "When He began to pray, He said this, 'Father, if Thou willing, remove this cup from Me, yet not My will but Thine be done.'"

That's a familiar truth to us, isn't it? Pray according to My will and I will hear and answer your prayers. In all our struggles, the bottom line is I want to do Your will...I want to do Your will...I submit to Your will...I submit to Your will. That's the only way we can submit to the flesh. Feel the weight of sin, feel the affliction of sin, feel the affliction of any solicitation to do evil and long in your heart to do the will of God.

First John 5:14 and 15, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us and we have the requests that we ask for Him." You plead to know the will of God and to do the will of God. This is foundational in prayer. And it is so with Jesus.

"Father..." Mark adds abba Father, papa, endearing term, intimate term, "If You are willing, remove this cup from Me." Cup? Cup. In the Old Testament, cup is often associated with judgment. The pouring out of judgment. This is the cup Jesus has in mind, the cup of suffering, the cup of agony, the cup of pain, the cup of wrath...all His sufferings. And it has been suggested through the years that this is some indication of perhaps the fact that Jesus stumbled here, that why if He said, and He did, "No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down of Myself," why if He had said over and over again, "I'm going to the cross, I'm going to die, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it dies alone, but if it dies, it brings forth fruit. If the Son of Man is lifted up," speaking of His cross, "He'll draw all men to Me." If He went inexorably to the cross, willingly to the cross, voluntarily to the cross, fulfilling prophecy every step of the way and culminating in His death on the cross, what is this? Why is He even asking if You're willing, remove this cup from Me? Isn't this somehow an indication of the weakness in His divine character?

Answer: absolutely not. This is not a failure, this is a proof of His holy perfection. He is so holy and so pure and so righteous, He is the ultimate hater of all that is evil, He is the ultimate hater of all that separates from God, He is the ultimate hater of all that brings the wrath of God. And this is the most normal response of perfect holiness to the thought of sin bearing. We would be shocked if He didn't do this, if He just calmly went to the cross, something would be seriously wrong.

But having said, "If You are willing, remove this cup from Me, this cup that I'm about to drink," as He told the disciples in Matthew 20:22, "This cup that the Father has given Me," as He said in John 18:11, He also says, "Yet not My will, but Yours be done." Submission. He had said in John 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone, if it dies, it bears much fruit."

"Yes, now is My soul troubled. What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." That's what He said earlier. Now in the throes of the

horrors of this with Satan bringing temptation upon Him in ways that we'll never understand, it is very normal for Him to feel the closeness of this sin bearing and separation and to agonize over it. There is a level of agony, there's a level of power in these temptations that we can't know..we cannot know. We only know what it's like to be tempted to hold on to sin. He knew what it was like to be tempted to embrace it when He had never known it. We want to embrace righteousness which is alien to us. He was to embrace sin which was alien to Him.

What marks His prayer is anticipation, affliction in the horrors of sin and temptation, and submission in the end to the will of God. That must mark ours as well. There's a fourth, restoration...restoration.

Verse 43, "Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him." Humph...an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him? This is unusual, folks. There were angels at His birth. They announced it. Oh there are angels at the resurrection, at the tomb. But in between? No angels...no angels. When He humiliated Himself and took upon Him the form of a man, and condescended to come all the way down to become a slave, He didn't have angelic help. He could have called a legion of angels, if He wanted, He said that. There are only two times in His life when angels showed up...two times...between His birth and His resurrection. The first time at His temptation in the wilderness, the second time, at His temptation in the Garden. Only two times.

What is the significance of the appearance of this angel? I don't know what the angel did. I don't know what the angels did when they showed up after His temptation in the wilderness. You remember the temptation in the wilderness ends, "And angels came and ministered to Him?" But my assumption is in both cases the angel came, sent from the Father to affirm the Father's love and care. And He was strengthened in that. That is the horror of all horrors for Him, separation from the Father.

The angel is an affirmation that the Father cared for Him, just as the angels that came after His first temptation to strengthen Him was an affirmation of the fact that the Father would in time give Him everything he wanted and everything He deserved and everything He was entitled to. This time He knows because holy angels are around the throne of God hovering, hovering, hovering waiting to be dispatched by God to minister to those whom God loves. This strengthened His confidence that the Father though bruising Him would not forsake Him. The One who is above the angels, the One who is better than the angels, the One who had a more excellent name than the angels, the One who was worshiped by the holy angels though for a while made lower than the angels is strengthened by an angel. And in the midst of His prayer there is divine restoration.

What a promise it is even in our prayers that if we go into prayer with anticipation, we feel the affliction of sin and temptation, if we come to the point of wonderful submission as Hebrews 1:14 says, "God sends His angels to minister to His people," not visibly as in the case of Christ, but nonetheless His angels...Matthew 18, His angels always look at His face ready to go to the aid of those He loves. He needed strength more than a human body has in itself, even a sinless one.

How severe was the struggle? Why did He need an angel to come? Verse 44, "And being in agony," and here we go in...the only comment comes from Luke, the physician, of the physical affects of this agony, "Being in agony He was praying very fervently..." Agony is agonia, the verb form means to be in combat unto death, agonizomai. He was praying fervently, ektenes, medical term used of stretching muscles to the max of their capability. He can't pray any harder. He can't pray any stronger. He's praying to the limits of His own capability and His sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground. He is praying in such extremity, the anguish is so profound, the torture of the temptation to let go of His holy rites and be made sin for us motivates Him to pray so passionately that literally His body begins to show the effects...massive struggle to accept sin bearing, divine wrath and separation from His Father, the intensity, the concentration, the passion and the struggle shows up physically in His sweat, hidros, from which we get hydro, water. And drops of blood, thromboheimatos (??), thrombosis is a medical term. This suggests a very, very dangerous condition known as hematadrosis(??), the effusion of blood in one's perspiration caused by extreme anguish and physical pain, subcutaneous capillaries dilate and burst mingling blood with sweat, brought Him to the threshold of death.

Hebrews 12:3, "Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." He's striving so hard with such agony that He starts to shed blood. And He just soaks His clothes with sweat, dripping off His head and His face to the ground, His blood mingles with it. He is blood/sweat saturated as He lays prone on the ground. This is escalating. He does this and then He goes back and finds them asleep. And then He goes back and continues and goes through the process until finally...finally the agony is over.

I love this, verse 45, there's just no statement about the triumph, but it's evident. "When He rose from prayer," that's all it needs to say, it was over. The power of Satan had given its best shot as verse 53 said, "This is the hour of the power of darkness." God allowed it. Satan tried to keep Him from the cross. When He got up off the ground, He was bloody but unbowed. And He came to the disciples blood soaked and found them sleeping from sorrow.

You can read the account about that in Matthew. They should have been praying. If He needed to pray, how much more did they need to pray? They weren't sleeping because they were tired or because it was night or because it had been a long busy week or they had a huge meal, or a long walk, or it was dark. It says why they were sleeping. They were sleeping from sorrow. They anesthetized themselves just by the sheer force of sadness. They knew they were going to scatter, He told them that. They knew Peter was going to deny Him, they told Him that. They knew He was going to go to the cross and be arrested and die. They knew that. Everything had come into from their perspective total collapse. Fatalism crept in, what's there to pray for? What's there to pray for?

Repeatedly He warned them to pray. Yes He would pray for them. Yes He's the great High Priest who intercedes for His own. But we are to pray as well. Luke condenses his response into one single statement, verse 46, "He said to them, Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may enter into temptation." He said it to them repeatedly but every time He came back, found them asleep again. Stay alert, keep praying, in the words of Matthew 26:41. Third time He came out, according to Mark, He said, "That's enough. That's it." Mark 14:41, "The hour has come. Behold the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let's be going. The one who betrays Me is at hand." No more time to pray. No more time to prepare. They had become hyper Calvinists. Didn't He say your faith is not going to fail? Why do we need to pray?

So our Lord goes to face the enemy triumph over temptation through a prayer. And they go to face the enemy defeated by lack of prayer. Our Lord has won the victory, defeated the prince of hell. Stands covered with bloody sweat on His blessed face and soaked through His clothes but He is bloody and unbowed. He is ready to face the enemy. He will face the betrayer. He will take His kiss. He will face the Jewish leaders. He will face the Romans. He will go to the cross and He will crush the head of the serpent and He will be made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him and He will triumph over death and He will burst out of the grave to be exalted to the right hand of the Father as King of Kings and Lord of Lords forever.

The last temptation is done. The cup is in His hand. He's about to drink it. And the cup is not trembling. No wonder P.P. Bliss (?) wrote, "Man of sorrows, what a name. For the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah what a Savior." Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, we are left in awe of this event and yet we haven't scratched the surface of its reality. We've heard and seen about His being crucified and the pain of being crucifixion. We've heard and seen about the pain of the beatings and scourgings. But here was the real pain, the real suffering, it all began here and went right through until he cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Until when He said, "It is finished," and triumphantly yielded up His life. But the great battle with temptation was won here through anticipation, affliction, submission and restoration. Lord, teach us to anticipate temptation, to be afflicted by sin, to hate and resent it, to submit to Your will and to depend upon Your restorative powers. You still come to our aid. May we rise triumphantly from prayer in our own lives as we live in a world so full of temptation. We are again also stunned by the glory of Christ who has turned every component of trouble into triumph for us...for us. Fill our hearts with love for Him, a love that manifests itself in obedience. We want to live to His glory who abandoned all that He had ever known to embrace all that sinners have ever known to be made sin that we might be made righteous.

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