

The Agony in the Garden, Part 1

Luke 22:39

February 23, 2024

Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22, we are following our Lord Jesus Christ. We've just been with him and his disciples in the upper room, and they are in this text that we're in today, Luke 22:39. They've left the upper room and they're heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. Today, as we enter into the Garden of Gethsemane with our Lord, we are wading into some deep, deep waters; really deeper than our ability to comprehend. We are going to see Jesus in the greatest contest of his life as his sinless human nature struggles. There's an agony in his soul as he wrestles in prayer with the father, as he bears the weight of our sins, and as he looks forward to, anticipates, the wrath of God falling upon him.

Let's begin by reading that text, Luke 22:39 to 46, "And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples also followed him. Now 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 you're willing, remove this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours 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, came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" It's a short reading, but there is a lot in those verses and so I can promise you we are not going to get through this in one sitting. And why hurry?

We're coming into what we could call holy ground here. This is the site of the greatest contest in human history, which our Lord fought and he won. So we're going to linger here a little while. I call it a contest because the word agony used in verse 44, being in agony, the word *agonismi*, the verb; it really refers to the kind of exhaustion and effort and sweat, that's put into a contest like an athletic contest or a military contest. It's, it's that kind of extreme effort, extreme pain,

extreme suffering, reaching out for the goal and that's really the idea here. This is really the agony in the garden, the contest in the garden, and there's so much to see here.

So this is not a sermon where I want you to be looking for immediate personal application, though I'm sure that the Lord by the Spirit will raise some points of application; different implications from the text for you to ponder, think about, reflect upon, and practice. But it's really not a sermon to look for immediate applications that that's going to come next week, Lord willing. In fact, what I'm going to preach today is either half a sermon or maybe one-third of a sermon, depending on if this turns into two or three parts. But there's plenty here. There's so much.

This sermon today is for pondering. It's for observing the Lord here in the garden. It's for watching him, listening to him, and especially for marveling over him. And my prayer for us has been, all the while, that we all come to a deeper knowledge and understanding and appreciation for what our Lord endured, when he bore our sins in his own body to the cross. When he took on

himself our guilt and our shame, when he suffered the wrath of God that we deserve to win for us the eternal life that we don't deserve and as he gave himself up for us, my prayer is that we give ourselves up holy, without reservation, without qualification for him.

Now before we get into the outline for this morning, let me point out a few things about Luke's record here of Christ's agony in the garden. Just several things to point out. First, you'll notice in this section, and it is shorter. If you're familiar with Matthew 26 or Mark 14, those are the other accounts of Christ's agony in the garden. But as compared with those other two accounts of the same event, we see Luke has significantly abbreviated the account. The others, each of them, are about twice as long as what Luke has recorded here and there are some differences in this shortened account that I can draw to your attention.

Matthew and Mark, for instance, give the name of this place called the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane means olive press. So there was a, some type of a structure in this place. And it's

an olive grove on the Mount of Olives. So olive trees everywhere and all those olives gathered and then taken to the olive press where they're refined, crushed, you know, millstones rolling over them to squeeze out the olives, then put those olives, squeezed olives, into bags that would then drain all the olive oil and process olives for many uses, lighting lamps, using in cooking many other things. But Mark and Matthew, they give us the name olive press. Luke doesn't name it. He just refers to it as the place, verse 40.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus leaves eight of his disciples at the entrance into the garden, and then he takes Peter, James, and John with him to the place of prayer. And then he separates a little bit beyond them. In Luke, just says that he separates from them all. No contradiction there. We just see that the other two accounts fill us in, fill us in on the details. Another detail, Matthew and Mark show three cycles of Jesus going to pray; praying, and then returning to sleeping disciples, the ones he told to keep watch with him. Luke truncates the back and forth and, but he captures really the essence of the prayer itself, to focus all of our attention on its wording.

It's clear that Luke is not shortening the account for, you know, any reason concern for length. After all, we're in a chapter that has 71 verses. He's not trying to be short. His gospel is massive. He's not interested merely to summarize, try to get to the, the, the end too quickly. In fact, we see that Luke is the only one of the three that records the angelic visitation, the strengthening of Jesus, his sweat pouring out like drops of blood.

So Luke is not here merely summarizing in order to hurry us along to the end, to get to the cross and the resurrection. No, he's abbreviating the account and tightening up the details because he wants to, he wants to, focus our attention on the heart of this account, and we see that in a second observation here, how Luke structures the account. It's been a while, maybe since I've mentioned the word chiasmus. This is another instance of a chiastic structure. A chiasm is a, is a, literary device to help the reader to narrow his focus in reading on the central point. So a chiasm.

Chiasm comes from the Greek letter chi, which is shaped like an X. In verses 40 to 46. This main section of the account, Luke orders nine points there in parallel pairs, putting our attention, as he orders those pairs and kind of brings them from the outside and, and, top and bottom of the X into the middle to focus on the center of the X, which is verse 43. He wants our attention to be on the angels' ministry in strengthening the Lord. That's significant. It draws our focus to what Luke, under the direction and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wants us to see.

Let me just run through these points briefly and you can follow along with the text, taking note of some of the parallels here, but just following this X structure, which starts top and bottom on the outside and then moves inside into the middle section, which is verse 43. Jesus commands his disciples to pray in verse 40 and 46, and those form the outer boundaries of the chiasmus to. So the top of the X, the bottom of the X are commands to pray and then at the beginning of verse 41, as we go a little bit interior, 41 Jesus withdraws to pray and at the end of verse 45, he returns from praying one more step toward the middle.

Jesus kneels to pray. And at the end of verse 41, then he rises from kneeling, rises from prayer, beginning at verse 45. Jesus then prays verse 42 and then it says in verse 44 he prays very fervently, to the point of sweating drops of blood. And that brings us into the very middle of Jesus agony as the father sends an angel to strengthen his son in verse 43. So how Luke structures the account is significant here, and we're going to come to appreciate the significance of this structure and that central focus, as we kind of move through the text.

And then a third observation to make is that the central focus of the text pertains to yet another structural feature in Luke's account, a literary device called *inclusio*. *Inclusio* is just Latin for inclusion. You just write inclusion. These are the bookends that I mentioned in verse 40 and verse 46, that repeated command almost verbatim. Pray not to enter into temptation, there at the beginning and then at the end. And this is precisely what Jesus models for his disciples.

And he leaves an example for all of his posterity, for all of his people for all time. We get to see how it is to overcome

temptation, to stand firm, not to sin. This is what he's modelling. "Pray not to enter into temptation." This is how to stand firm when temptation visits and we see with Jesus, it's the very worst of temptations with the most significant consequences, and he avoids falling into sin. Jesus is showing us here and showing his disciples how to please God, where to find strength in the hour of need, how to stand firm against temptation, how to emerge from any temptation, any trial, any affliction, any contest, victorious and confident and hopeful and enjoy.

So that's what we're going to do today is start by observing well, what happened on this night to understand the extreme stress that Jesus faced in this temptation and how it is that he stood firm, how it is that he was tempted in all points, as we are, and to the more extreme degree than we ever are, and yet was without sin. How did he do that? This is going to give us great instruction and encouragement and hope because we too, by his Spirit and by his Word, can follow in the same pattern. And just to make a side comment about that, any temptation that we face, that we suffer, eventually, if that temptation persists

and if the Lord doesn't rescue us from it, any temptation will eventually break us.

The pressure comes, weighs on us in our flesh. Our spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak, right? And so eventually, allowed enough time, we will break. Not the Lord Jesus Christ, he having a perfect human nature, but also a divine nature. His human nature, though weak like we, we are in its own human weaknesses, not with any sin, but with any human weakness. Any pressure that he felt as a man, he lasted that temptation out because he was bound to a divine nature and could not sin ever.

And so he outlasts any temptation, any pressure, any stress that comes on him, he bears through it and endures through it, to the uttermost, so that he never falls. He never fails; He never sins. We break way early, he never breaks. And so he experienced the full extent and power of temptation, outlasted it, endured it, and he is our perfect champion and savior, the one who can help us in our time of need.

I had one professor compare our state and his state just talking about human nature and divine nature by comparing a wooden like a broomstick handle; take a wooden broomstick handle and say that that stands for the human nature, put enough pressure on that wooden broomstick handle and eventually you can break that wooden broomstick handle, right? Tie that wooden broomstick handle to a titanium bar. Now put pressure on it. That thing will never break. Will it feel the pressure? Every bit of it. But will it ever break? Never.

We're the wooden broomstick handle, he's the wooden handle tied to the titanium bar. He never breaks. He outlasts every temptation, feels it all, endures it all, and demonstrates here how we too, by his strength, by his power, by God's power, that titanium rod coming into our soul, into our strength, that's there for us too, and we can withstand. So this is what happened to him. This is us observing him in this text, not immediately running to application; just let's rest awhile and watch awhile and observe and think and ponder, so that we can learn, so we can humble our hearts and worship him in gratitude.

Now I've broken this section down to three points. The solitude, the suffering, and then the sorrow. The solitude, the suffering and the sorrow. We will, I think, get halfway through the suffering, have to stop and come back and get to the rest of the suffering and sorrow next time. But for the first point, notice the solitude number one: the solitude. Luke brings us into the scene here in verse 39 with these words, "And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples also followed him. He came out," that is to say, "out of the upper room."

Matthew, Mark tell us that after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. It's interesting to hear that though the time is short, the hour is upon him. Judas and his band are hot on his heels. They're going to come to the Upper Room, try to burst in. He's not in a hurry. He's got time for a hymn. He's got time, as we see in this text, for prayer and, in fact, that is his, the highest priority on his mind, to leave there, visit the garden, and pray a while before he's arrested.

So Jesus seeks a place of solitude for the purpose of prayer. He knows what lies before him. Two verses prior to this, back in verse 37, he says, "I tell you that this which is written must be completed in me." He was numbered with transgressors, and for that which refers to me is having its fulfillment." Like right now this is happening. This is on his mind. What's on his mind?

Isaiah 53 is on his mind. The weight of his people's sins is on his mind, bearing their griefs, carrying their sorrows. That's on his mind as the sin bearer. He would be stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. He'd be pierced, run through for the transgressions of his people. He'd be crushed for their iniquities. He'd be cut off out of the land of the living.

Isaiah 53 says, his life is a sin offering to atone for sinners, bringing on this sinless, perfect soul, great anguish, a weight, that no one else but him could bear.

In fact, one commentator talked about all the angels of heaven could never bear the weight that he bears. And that's what's on his mind. That's what's on his mind. He knows the time is short. He has to leave the upper room. He's got to find that place of

solitude for the purpose of prayer. Judas Iscariot is going to soon arrive at the upper room with a band of servants of the chief priests, the officers of the temple to come to arrest him.

And so to protect the home owner is one of the concerns that the Lord has, to protect the home owner, this man who graciously provided them the place to where he shared the Passover with his disciples and gave them so much instruction, this private intimate time with them in order to protect him, to preserve that home even for future use. After all, it is the home of the parents of John Mark; became a meeting place for the early church according to Acts 12, verse 12. So here Jesus knows he's got to scoot. He's got to get away from that upper room and go to a place for prayer. He doesn't want to be interrupted. He wants to pray. He wants to protect and preserve this home. He's not trying to escape arrest, but he is controlling the timing of his arrest.

Luke says, coming out of the upper room, he went, "as was his custom to the Mount of Olivet." In other words, he intended for Judas to find him, so he went to a place where he would be

found. John 18:1 says, "Jesus went forth with his disciples over the ravine of the Kidron where there was a garden." And verse 2 says, "Judas also, who was betraying him, knew the place for Jesus, had often met there with his disciples."

So Jesus wants to be found here. He's not avoiding the death that's awaiting him. He embraces it. He volunteered for this. This is what he signed up for. So he enters this garden to pray in, in this agony, in this. But he prays in the spirit of submission and obedience, not in disobedience at all, but from start to finish, Jesus is thinking and he is acting in a spirit of submission. So yeah, Jesus wants to be found, but not yet. He is this moment is feeling the weight of the burden that he carries. He knows the significance of the responsibility that lies before him, an unimaginable degree of stress weighing down upon him far beyond our comprehension.

As Luke introduces the scene in verse 39, we can see that Jesus, here, is isolated as the subject. It says he came out singular, singular subject, singular verb tense or verb forms there, he came out, he went, his custom. The disciples, they're pictured

as kind of tagging along behind him, but Jesus is out in front. He is leading, he's acting, he's taking the initiative and as to some degree in all leadership, there's a, a, sense of isolation and of loneliness, and the agony in the garden, though the disciples are there, though they're present, Jesus is there in solitude. He is fighting and he's fighting alone. His disciples cannot help him. They're not the sin bearers. He is. This is his battle to fight.

So when he arrives at the place in verse 40, "he says to them, 'pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" Significant isn't it because Jesus has been warning them about this, that you may be facing temptation. You will be facing temptation and soon. Remember verses 31 to 34, Jesus told Peter about Satan asking and receiving, granting of his request to sift these disciples like wheat. Jesus there assures Peter of his prayers for him, that his faith wouldn't fail, that he would return, that he would strengthen his brothers. And remember how Peter responded, like Peter with bold words of loyalty. "Lord, with you I'm ready to go both to prison and to death."

Remember that that resulted then immediately in Jesus first prediction of Peter's denials. He would deny three times that he even knew Jesus before dawn would break. And then a second prediction comes, which Luke doesn't record, but Matthew and Mark tell us that on the way to Gethsemane, between the upper room and the Garden of Gethsemane, as they're making their way up the Mount of Olives and finding their way to this garden, Jesus warned the disciples again about the sifting of Satan, that they'd all scatter.

He cites the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7, "Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter." It's coming. The sifting is coming. The temptation is coming. You're all going to run away. Peter doubled down once again, "'Even though all may fall away, because of you I will never fall away.'" Jesus said, 'truly. I say to you,' you yourself, 'on this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you shall deny me three times.' And Peter said, 'look, even if all, even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.' All the disciples were saying the same thing too."

I don't take any of that, by the way, as mere chest thumping bravado. I don't think it was superficial on the part of Peter, part of the disciples. I think they've meant it, and I think the Lord took them that way too. I think he knew that they meant it. He just knows how unprepared these men were for the spiritual nature of this battle. He knew they don't fight in this world. In fact, as we mentioned last time, Peter's about to whip out a sword and try to cut somebody's head off. It's not flesh and blood we're fighting with, there's a spiritual component that is the most real aspect of this battle. You guys are, you guys are far from that in your minds.

Tells them, in the other two gospels, he says this principle, "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." That's such a good line, isn't it? "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." How often our great desires for spiritual faithfulness, consistency, constancy, how often our good intentions fail us in the middle of prayer? I don't know if this is your experience, probably not. It's probably just me. But in the middle of prayer, your mind can be like, huh, I wonder if I checked the stove. You know, just simple things like that, like something else enters into the mind.

Sometimes even worse, sometimes sinful thoughts enter into the mind and temptations. What is that? The Spirit is willing, flesh is weak. Such a good principle that Jesus lays down in Matthew and Mark. So why doesn't he, why doesn't Luke choose to record that here? Because, instead, he shows us that here, he wants to show us. That's why Luke's account begins and ends with this command, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

The word *peirasmós*, it can be translated temptation, either in a positive sense or a negative sense. If it's in a positive sense, it's a trial, a test. In a negative sense, temptation the enticing to sin, to evil. We know that James 1:13, God tempts no one. He himself is not tempted and he doesn't tempt anyone. He is not the, the author of temptation. "Each one is tempted when he's carried away and enticed by his own lust." It's your own sin nature that is to blame for all of your temptation, all your drifting, all your dullness, all your stupidity. All of that is on you, not on him.

When you're enticed by your own lust, that is when you enter into temptation, presents itself, and you can refuse it and resist it and stand firm through prayer, through the model that Jesus gives here, or you can play with it a little bit. You know what that's called? Entering into temptation. You know what entering into temptation is? It is sin. It is sin. You enter in by your own lust, and when that lust conceives, it gives birth to sin, and sin then brings forth death. And that's all on us.

Whatever presents itself to us as a temptation comes to us by various means. It comes through various agencies and the agencies, that's where the guilt for the temptation comes, through the agencies of temptation. But all of this is sovereignly controlled by a good, kind, wise God in whom there is no sin, no evil, no tempting. God uses whatever that source is, whether it's affliction, suffering, temptation, whatever it is, he uses that in a, for a good purpose, for a trial, to test, to test us. And he tests us with a view for us, passing the test, for us learning from the test. It's all for a good purpose.

All of his designs and his providences are kind and good and wise. He just points us on how to pass the test every time by relying on him in prayer. That's what we see here. These disciples are facing a trial at a magnitude they've never experienced before; the testing of their faith. Jesus too, he is facing a unique trial of his own. He's about to do battle with an unparalleled level of testing, even the probably the, the visitation of Satan, who left him for a more opportune time; left him in the wilderness for more opportunity time; here's the opportune time. Here's where he's weak; pounce on him, pursue him, test him, tempt him. Unparalleled level of testing by which the son, as we read earlier in Hebrews 5:8, "He learned obedience through the suffering.

Nevertheless, for all the disciples, temptation cometh. Jesus has predicted it. All the disciples, all of them insisted on their ability to stand in the face of temptation, to withstand the sifting of Satan. These sheep don't scatter, these colors don't run. This disciple will never deny you. So Jesus gives them the only shot that they've got in verse 40, "Pray". Okay, "pray that you may not enter into temptation," but again, He's got to move forward.

He's got to do his part alone, verse 41, "He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and began to pray". Now we know from the other two accounts that Jesus took Peter, James, and John along with him to this place of prayer. He left the other eight men behind near the entrance of the garden. Those eight men formed the outer perimeter of the first line of defense. They were there to keep watch and alert him of the arrival of those who were coming to the garden to arrest him and interrupt his time.

So Jesus "withdrew from them," them referring to all the disciples, and "he withdrew about a stone's throw away," so about 30 to 40 yards, however far you can huck a, you know, medium sized stone. Peter, James and John, they were with him as they separated from those men, but he went a little bit further, even beyond them

and entered into the real battle that he had to engage that night through prayer.

His three best men, Peter, James and John, his three closest men, they are the inside perimeter, you could say, of his watch. They're the final line of defense to warn him of any intruders into this time of prayer. Anybody who's coming to disrupt, interrupt, and arrest. We know having read ahead both the outer, the inner perimeters of this defense, they ultimately failed. Why?

Because these disciples fell asleep on watch. That's an offence punishable by death in any time of war and this is the greatest war, the greatest battle, greatest death sentence should fall on these men. But again, we need to see even though they failed. Yes, he must be

alone here. He must be all alone on his own, facing the solitude of agony and prayer in the garden.

Whereas, before Luke 22:28, Jesus had commended his men as those who stood by him in his trials. Now he knows that this is one trial that he has to face alone. These men can't help him. He'd prefer their company. He'd prefer their, their support. He'd prefer their prayer. But they're not strong enough really to pray. The verb Luke uses here, he withdrew. It really could be translated, that he pulls himself away from them. He tears himself away. So kind of an emotionally laden term.

When Paul bid farewell to the Ephesian elders, they, it says there in Acts 20, end of acts, Acts 20, that they wept, they embraced Paul. They didn't want him to leave. There was a, there was a prediction about Paul

being arrested and handed over. They, they were for, they were foreseeing his death. They pleaded with him not to go. Paul said, I must, I got to get back there for the feast. He knew he had an appointment. God was sending him there.

And so they wept. They were kissing him repeatedly. They thought they'd never see him again. Their, their got his, their arms around his neck and Luke, there also, the author in Luke, there in Acts 21:1, he writes, "We tore ourselves away from them" is how one translation puts it. That's the same verb used here, tearing himself away.

So yeah, he's loves these men. He's comforted with their company. He wants their companionship, but he knows that they can offer no help in this battle. They're unable to handle the battle. They're, they're

mentally unprepared. They're spiritually immature. They're weak in prayer. And so he tears himself away. It's for their good and for his own purposes. John Calvin writes, "By leaving the disciples at a distance, he spares their weakness; as if a man, perceiving that he would soon be in extreme danger in battle, were to leave his wife and children in a situation of safety." End Quote.

That's what he's doing here. This fight, he knows, is a sign to him and to him alone. So that's the solitude, point one: Solitude. The second point, which brings us into the heart of the text, draws our attention to number two: The suffering. The suffering. Typical custom of the Jews was to pray. Standing here on this occasion, he's feeling the urgency, he's bowed in humility, his soul is afflicted with the agony, and we read in verse 41 that he withdrew and knelt down.

Mark says he fell to the ground and, and Matthew adds he fell on his face to the ground. Then he began to pray. It's an imperfect verb there. He's, he's started his prayers. Started praying, verse 42, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me," take it away. "Yet not my will, but yours be done." We compare Matthew and Mark. We know there were actually three separate petitions.

As I said, Luke distills the essence of all three of those petitions down to this one here. But even as we read this prayer, there are many who have asked questions of this; some being foolish, atheistic, unbelieving, whatever it is like to scoff and like to point out some kind of an inconsistency and try to accuse our, our Lord and Savior of sin or sinful attitude or a resistance to God's will. But even for us as believing, we do have questions that come to mind.

I'll list some of the questions for us, raise them to the fore, and then issue a couple of general cautions as we attempt to answer questions like these presented to us here. For instance, when Jesus prays "Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me." Are we witnessing here a conflict between the will of the father and the will of the son? Are they in tension? And if you answer as you should, well, no. The will of the Father and the will of the, the will of God the Father, the will of God the Son are one and the same, since both God the Father, God the Son, two persons of the Trinity share the same divine essence.

No, there's no conflict whatsoever. What we see here, if it's truly a conflict, then is a conflict between the will of God and the will of Jesus in his human nature, right? That could be maybe a conflict between the will of God and the will of his Christ, the one whom he has appointed. But isn't that just to kick the

can down the road a little bit further? Are we to regard it as acceptable that Christ may differ with God the Father, Christ the King disagreeing with his Co Regent?

Could he, Christ, be in conflict with the father's will? That's one question that comes up. Setting that aside for the moment, didn't Jesus? Here's another thing that comes up. Didn't Jesus just say in Luke 22:37, "that which is written must be completed in me"? Remember, I made a big deal, that little tiny verb *DEI*, *dei*, *dei*, indicating the inevitability of the divine decree. This must happen. It's decreed by God before, before the foundation of the world.

So how is Jesus, now, as it seems, trying to find a little loophole in the divine decree. Wouldn't that be to wish for change in God, the unchangeable one. Didn't

we just confess that on the screen earlier out of our London Baptist Confession that he is immutable? Is Jesus less than us in our confession? And if Jesus is asking God to make an allowance for such a loophole, doesn't it allow, as Calvin says, "An aspect of absurdity, to make the purpose of God changeable?"

While we're asking these questions, how is it that Jesus' feelings, which it would appear, seem to have led him astray here? How? How have feelings and emotions not compromised his sinlessness? If he's not sinless, then how could he qualify to serve as God's spotless lamb? Told you, wading into some deep waters here, every single text, every single line seems to raise some theological reality that is, is, actually living itself out in, in flesh and blood, in real life, here on the pages of Scripture. It's amazing.

But I wanted to raise those questions at the outset before making observations about the nature of Jesus suffering because they present themselves to the thoughtful, thoughtful mind just by reading the text. By doing just, a pausing a little bit and observing, we start to, we start to ask some questions and some, very quickly, like to move past those questions and never, never really thoughtfully answer them and I don't want that to be you.

And preparing for this sermon, I like to look around at different things, different people have said and I found from a website of this once famous mega church, there's a guy who's on video, he's talking about this scene. He's talking all about the olive press and he's talk, he's trying to make the point as if it's speaking of hushed tones and profound terms, about how pressure brings something good.

Pressure brings something good and he's talking in that kind of whispering thing that kind of makes your skin crawl, made my skin crawl. But as he goes on, and he's there in Jerusalem, he's there in that Olive Garden place, and he's showing an olive press and there's showing the process of crushing the olive and pressure creating something good and then squeezing out the olive oil and dripping into a vat and collected and use for cooking and use for lighting lamps, see, pressure creating something good. And then even the pits, as they're squeezed and crushed, outcomes like a, a reddish substance that's also useful for whatever it is, he said.

And it's pressure creating something good. And the video ends and that's what we're to take from this account. What? Do you see anything about pressure creating something good in the text? Do you see any olive press stuff coming out? Just folks, I'm only

mentioning this and taking precious time away from exposition to warn you against schlocky stuff like that on the Internet. Don't follow that stuff.

Focus on the words, there's enough here to excite your interest, to raise questions, and all the questions are met and addressed in the theology that we learn, that we understand, as we interpret the text for what it is. Don't listen to that stuff. Get into the text. Use sound principles of hermeneutics, Bible interpretation, to get the real meaning here, because any of that other stuff is counterfeit.

It makes you feel like you've discovered something deep because that's how they want you to feel and set that stuff aside and get down to the, the, brass tacks of what's actually here, because it's really, really good. But as we raise questions like this from the text, and

as we think about answering them, I want to give you two cautions. We need to remember who it is we're talking about here, who we're dealing with as we observe Jesus the Christ. This is no mere man. This is the incarnate son of God, who took on flesh.

Therefore, first: couple caution, caution, first, caution, we are ourselves limited in being able to comprehend this. We're limited in making comparisons to our own experience. And I say limited rather than utterly unable, because Jesus does share in our humanity and so there's something analogous here. There's something we can learn by our own shared experience. But look, he is so beyond us. He is a unique person, only one-of-a-kind. Be careful in your analogies. Be careful in your comparisons.

There's some correspondence, but not perfect correspondence, not comprehensive correspondence. Jesus is the God man, divine nature, human nature, one person. Divine nature has a divine will. Human nature has a human will; two wills, one person. That is not our experience. Even though some people I've talked to seem to have many wills going in many different directions. It's not the case with us. We have one will, one nature, but Jesus, God, the God man is utterly unique without true full correspondence analogy in comparison to ourselves. So that should give us caution as we proceed in answering questions like this.

Second, as the incarnate son of God, who took on flesh and accepting that revelation by faith, we accept all revelation by faith, including, the, all the attestations to his sinlessness. "He has been tempted in all things as we are," Hebrews 4:15, "and yet without sin." Hebrews 7:26 says, "He is holy, innocent,

undefiled." So whatever we come up with in this text, whatever we reflect on, what's going on in the garden in his agony, there is no sin whatsoever here. None. Not one stray thought. Come to any different conclusion is to really abandon faith, abandon believing, and abandon submitting to God's holy Word.

So we reason from faith. We think and we, we, think about and reflect on, from a position of believing, not from, not as if we subject everything to the scrutiny of unbelief. Now before we try to answer our questions, let's put them off for just a moment and try to understand something about the nature of Christ's suffering. As I can see it, his praying here reveals five aspects of his agony and his suffering. Five aspects of his suffering. So we're going to get through three of them today and postpone two more for next time and then the things that we can learn from it.

So five aspects of his suffering. First, his suffering is spiritual. His suffering is spiritual. We've already noted this. Jesus is bearing all the sins of all his people throughout all of time, and he's bearing all those sins in his own body on the cross. This is a spiritual reality. To bear those sins means God reckoned those sins to Christ, put them in his account, and treats him, though he committed none of them, though he has no experience, personal experience with any of them, God treats him as if he had committed all those sins, so those are reckoned to his account. That's called the doctrine of imputation.

God imputes the sin of all of his people to Christ, and he senses that spiritual burden here. He anticipates, while bearing the weight of our guilt, he anticipates suffering the full wrath of God here. He, he knows what's coming. He knows that wrath of God is justly due for all those sins, but he himself is

feeling it. He refers to that suffering in this text and his prayer as this cup.

This cup, think about a cup, it's a vessel, it holds something, it contains something. This same cup that he raised when he instituted the Lord's Supper, Luke 22:20. This cup which is poured out for you. So it's the cup of suffering, the cup of wrath of God, the cup of suffering. God is the one who's doing the pouring, and it is the cup of his wrath that's being poured out, and the son is drinking that cup of divine wrath; he is ingesting.

It's just impossible for us to imagine this, but he is ingesting all the righteous indignation of God in his own soul. He takes the punishment for all our offenses collectively, and for every single individual offense, every bad act, every bad word, every slanderous

comment, every judgy condemning thing we say, every stray thought, every lust, every temptation, every bad imagination, not to mention all the things that were commanded to do and don't, commanded to feel and think and don't.

All the laws summarized in two: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Those are positive commands. And yet, who of us has kept even one of those commands for five seconds in our hearts? He takes all God's righteous indignation, drinks it into his own soul, takes the punishment for all our offenses collectively, every individual offense as well.

All the ungodly things that you and I, as sinners, along with all those who are redeemed from all of our sins, all the stuff that we've committed against him,

all that filth, all that garbage, he takes it. This is pictured in the language of Isaiah 53, which says twice, "he was crushed for our iniquities," verse 5. Again, "Yahweh was pleased to crush him," putting him to grief, his sinless soul, clean, pure, but it bore our burden.

He was crushed beneath the weight of this divine wrath and more than that, Jesus is pierced through for our transgressions. As the song says, he drank the bitter cup, deserved for me, for you, cup filled to the brim of the wrath of God. In the language of Alfred Edersheim, he says, Jesus is receiving the piercing blow of death's arrow, quote, "burying the shaft, his shaft in his own heart." He takes the shaft that's pointed at us and he redirects it and pierces his own heart with it.

John Owen writes, "he considered death not naturally, as a separation of soul and body; nor yet merely as a painful separation of them, such as was that death which in particular he was undergo." That is the dreadful, excruciating, suffocating pain of crucifixion. That's how the victim really dies on a cross is by suffocating, his arms held upward, his body starting to fill with fluid and his lungs not able to breathe, and he's suffocating up there on the cross.

So John Owens, not denying that Jesus faces that, anticipates that, but that's not really the issue. That's what Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* focused on. That's what the Roman Catholics, in their kind of Pagan fleshly way of thinking, focus' on. But that's not really the issue, Owen continues, "But he looked on death as the curse of the law due to sin, inflicted by God as a just and righteous judge. Hence in and under it he himself is said to be 'made a curse', Galatians

3:13. This curse was now coming on him as the sponsor or the surety of the new Covenant." End quote.

Ah, this weight, we cannot understand and I'm not, I'm not blaming us for that. We're just weak, dull, slow of heart to understand and believe. We don't. We're looking in on something that's that is foreign to us because it's his to own. All we can do is kind of marvel. Owen continues further down the section saying, "he had an intimate sense of the wrath and displeasure of God against the sin that was then imputed unto him.

"All our sins were then caused by an act of divine and supreme authority to 'meet on him', or, 'the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,' quoting Isaiah 53:6. Even all our guilt was imputed unto him, and none of the punishment due under our sins could have been justly inflicted upon him."

So the first aspect of his suffering then is spiritual as he bears the awful weight of sin, as he drinks the cup of the holy wrath of God, as he experiences the dissolution, the disintegration of death, ripping his righteous soul out of his sinless body.

He's torn apart and all of that by his father's will, which leads us to a second aspect of his suffering, which is the relational aspect, relational suffering. First the spiritual suffering and now the relational suffering. As it's, it's not some remote being, it's not some great judge in the sky, this is his father. The father is the one prosecuting this retributive justice against his only beloved son.

This relational aspect of his suffering is found in the very first word of address, father. In Matthew, it's,

"My father", in Mark, it's even more precious, "Abba! Father!" Abba, being an Aramaic kind of form of daddy, dad. It's a picture here of a trusting child looking upward into the face of his loving father, who's powerful. In his powerful hands he rests. In those hands he draws comfort. He feels secure. But those same hands are the hands that deliver the crushing blow.

John Owen draws out this aspect of his suffering as he writes about what he calls Christ's dereliction. He was derelict. Here he says, quote, "that Jesus was under a suspension of the comforting influences of his relation unto God. His relation unto God, as his God and Father, was the fountain of all his comforts and joys. The sense hereof is now suspended." Stopped. No wonder Jesus cried out from the cross, Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

That cry? In that cry he is calling upon Israel to consider the entire messianic meaning and import of his crucifixion found in that Psalm, interpreted in that Psalm. Read the whole Psalm for yourself. You'll see.

But it also is a very real cry of bitter agony, painful anguish. It's shocking to the senses for Jesus to anticipate that God, the protector of the righteous, father to the son, would hand him over to his enemies, and far worse, that he would withhold his own consolation, that he'd suspend his comfort from his son, Owen again writes, "The supporting influences of this relation were continued, but the comforting influences of it were suspended." That is to say, God is still in full control, sporting influences there, but the comforting influence, the closeness, the consolation, affection; suspended, arrested. "And from hence," Owen continues, "he was filled with heaviness and sorrow."

Listen, folks, whatever else we can and must say about the suffering of our Lord because of our sins, yours and mine, we must confess and acknowledge what is perhaps the greatest crime of all in our sinfulness, that we should be the cause of robbing the only beloved Son of God of one second of "the comforting influences of his relation to God."

The fountain of all his comforts and joys was stopped because of your sin and because of my sin. Oh, the audacity of our sin. Oh the presumption, the insolent arrogance for all of our sins. And we being, so dull, so unfeeling, why do we pay attention to anything else? Why does anything else in life matter? In light of this, let me give you one more point to consider. We've said his suffering is spiritual, as he bears the guilt and the penalty of our sin.

His suffering is relational as he receives that penalty from the hand of his father, the dereliction or withholding of his father's comfort. But a third point we can see here is that his suffering really here is natural. By natural, I don't mean to contrast it with supernatural. I just mean to say that this reaction in prayer and his apprehension here, or if I can use this term, which is appropriate, it's the word fear.

This fear and apprehension is normal or understandable or natural. In fact, this is exactly as it should be if he is to be fully man, if he is to be truly sharing in our flesh, if he is to have all human experiences, a human heart with mind and will and emotions, affections. We should expect Jesus here, it's natural for us to expect Jesus to recoil in fear from the suffering that he must undergo. In fact, if he did not

react this way, we'd be prone to doubt whether he's truly human, whether he really feels anything at all.

I mean, at any time you're going to feel an emotions' going to come out, it ought to be here. Frederick Godet speaks of the natural revulsion of Jesus to the suffering ahead of him, saying "this repugnance is legitimate." It's another way of saying it's natural, he continues, saying, "This resistance of natural instinct to the will of the Spirit- that is to say, to the consciousness of the mission- is exactly what makes it possible for nature to become a real victim, an offering in earnest." And then this line, he says, "sacrifice begins where conflict begins."

"Sacrifice begins where conflict begins." If you are a wealthy millionaire and you give 50 bucks to somebody who needs it, that's great. But if you are not a

wealthy millionaire and you make 50 grand a year, to give 50 bucks to someone who's suffering is a much bigger deal, isn't it? The wealthy millionaire doesn't feel the doling out of fifties and hundreds here and there, but the one who makes far less, they feel that. And that's where giving becomes sacrificial.

Here, this is where his sacrifice is coming; it's beginning even before he gets to the cross. Here's where the conflict is. Here's what the torment is. John Calvin also, he's correcting in this text, he's correcting some who believe Jesus is wrong to pray as he does, supposing that he's wrong to seek any other possible way to accomplish redemption.

And John Calvin writes this, he says, "believers, in pouring out their prayers do not always ascend to the contemplation of the secrets of God, or deliberately

inquire what's possible to be done." It is to say, in our praying we're not always London Baptist Confession Theologically accurate, admittedly, right? He goes on and says, "but are sometimes carried away hastily by the earnestness of their wishes." It's true for us, isn't it?

"Thus Moses prays that he may be blotted out of the Book of life (Exodus 32:33; thus Paul, wish to be made an anathema, (Romans 9:3)." Paul praying, if I could be cut off from my people so that they could inherit the promises. Can't be done, Paul, your name is written in the *Lamb's book of life* before the foundation of the world. What, what are you doing praying against truth like that?

Moses come on, blotted out of his book. You know better than that Moses. You know God is unchanging. He's the

great I am. He revealed that himself, that way to you in the burning bush. But we do as believers, don't we? We pray and, and consciously at times, knowingly, against the theology that we profess because we yearn for this to be so. Moses yearning not for an absolute destruction, annihilation of genocide of Israel and starting over with him. He wants God promises to be true that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and protects them.

He's going to fulfill his promises to Israel. Paul too, in the same spirit of Moses prays may your promises to be filled to Israel, that's what he's saying. Even this kind of double mindedness is, so it would seem, praying in contrast to the theology that we know and profess. It is a, a figure of speech or figure of speaking or praying in a sense that shows the earnestness of our desire.

It's what's going on here? I hope you're picking up the implications of what Calvin's saying here. The, the proof of Christ humanity is in the naturalness of his praying here. I mean, of course he's recoiling from the task before him, of course his righteous soul revolted at taking on the filth of sin, of course he abhors one second of separation from his father's comfort, of course.

"This therefore," says Calvin, "was not a premeditated prayer of Christ; but the strength and violence of grief suddenly drew this word from his mouth, to which he immediately had correction," i.e., "Yet not my will, but yours be done." Again, showing his filial relation to the father. He, I'm the Son, he's the Father, his will. Yes, that's the one.

But this is not a premeditated prayer. It's spontaneous. It's the extemporaneous confession and expression of a soul that's in travail. Jesus told his men in the other accounts. Matthew 26:38, Mark 14:34. "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." Jesus is praying exactly as a man, who's deeply grieved, would be expected to pray. That's what we're seeing here. No conflict then, between God the Son and God the Father.

No conflict then between God the Father and Christ the Messiah. No real attempt here then to find a true loophole in the sovereign decree of God and his plan to redeem sinners to the cross. This is not a true real attempt to ask God to change his mind. And no, his expression of emotion here is not sinful.

How do we know for sure that Jesus is sinless in this account and free from all conflict with the will of God and in holy purity rectitude, fully aligned with the will of God? Because he prays here as the perfect man from his perfect human will, his perfect affections, his perfect emotions, pleading with God according to this perfect nature which is, wait for it, which is a finite in his humanness, a finite nature, limited nature; creaturely.

He prays here as a man prays. He prays here as a man, modeling for us as a human being how we ought to pray. I hope that gives you just a little bit of relief as you think about pouring out your soul in prayer to God that it is okay for you to express all your emotion. You feel that you don't want to be pounding and expressing anger, and hatred of God, as some will foolishly, and from unbelieving hearts, and rebellious, and just insidious stuff telling you to cry out and

demand God do this and that for you. That's, that's just unbelief.

But you need to see that there is some correspondence here between him and us, and that when we pray, though not as perfect men and women as he is, not with perfect wills and perfect affections as he has, nor with perfect sinless natures as he possesses. And yet when we pray, we also pray according to our finitude and our limitation and our creatureliness and that's not only okay, in God's sight it is good because he created us good, and he's restored unto us in the new nature, Ephesians 4:24, a nature that's according to the righteousness and holiness of the truth. It's the image of God.

Calvin writes, "though it would be true rectitude to regulate all our feelings by the good pleasure of God,

yet there's a certain kind of indirect disagreement with it which is not faulty and yet is not reckoned as sin." Let that provide some relief for you, beloved.

When we pray, we acknowledge, don't we, James 4:14, that "we do not know what our life will be like tomorrow." I mean, "we're just a vapor," right, "that appears for a little while, then vanishes away." So when we pray, we pray, if the Lord wills. Yeah, we pray longingly, not knowing the future.

We pray for sick ones to be recovered, for the suffering to be relieved of suffering, for the afflicted to have affliction removed. Is that not good and right? Or do we as good, strong Calvin and say, oh, God's will be done? If you're afflicted, let you be afflicted still get all that sin out of you. Let this

be your purgatory. It's not true Calvinism. I just quoted Calvin. That's true Calvinism.

When we ask God for the salvation of our loved ones or friends or our children, we don't pray with our fingers crossed. We pray to the one who has the power and the will to save. We pray to the one who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but loves to save people. There's great rejoicing in heaven when even one sinner turns from his sin and repents, Luke 15. We leave it to him, the one who is sovereign, to accomplish his perfect, wise will. But we pray according to our factions, our desires, our longings. Oh, save him, Lord, save him. That's the only help.

When we pray for kings and all who are in authority, according to 1 Timothy 2:1, "We pray that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life and all godliness and dignity."

And though we understand God sovereignly plans times of unrest and seasons of persecution, still it is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, for us to so pray to. Let us pray.

Let's pray for our nation, pray for our country, pray for our region, pray for our city, pray for our state. Let us pray for businesses, your business, their business. So Calvin says, "We see how those prayers are holy, which appear to be contrary to the will of God: for God does not desire us to be always exact or scrupulous in inquiring what he has appointed." He's referring to Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to God, but the things revealed are for us and for our children. We should walk in them forever."

We can't know his secret counsels, things he hasn't revealed, things his providence has yet to unfold. So

in praying about those things, "God does not desire us to be always exact or scrupulous in inquiring what he's appointed, but [He] allows us to ask what is desirable according to the capacity of our senses and according to the capacity of our senses."

I'll just add to Calvin according to what's revealed in God's word, our senses being trained by righteousness and the truth. That's how we pray. So listen, all of this is expected. This is natural, part of his suffering, that he should pray this way. His suffering is so appropriate and natural to the situation, it's called for.

In fact, if Jesus did not pray this way, in this desperation, in this fear, in this apprehension, we would have reason to wonder if the Gospels were some kind of hagiography, just an idealizing myth, putting

our hero on display with no question marks in our mind. No, our Savior suffered for us, the just for the unjust to bring us to God. When he suffered, he suffered as a man and he suffered alone. He suffered spiritually, relationally, and naturally.

When we come back next week, we'll see he also suffered volitionally, that is, offering himself freely, no coercion of his will. He also suffered as we see, physically demonstrating his humanity in how he suffered, in the, the evidence of his suffering, which qualifies him to act as our substitutionary atoning sacrifice and he is the only one. There's only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. It's him.

So as he goes to the cross alone to suffer and die alone, here in the garden in the agony, he also endures

that alone. Praise God that he does, because he's the only one that can carry it. Let's give him thanks for that.

Our Lord Jesus Christ. We only get glimpses, and imperfect at that, into what it was like for you. We have to confess that if we were there that day, we would take our rest alongside the other disciples because we'd be overcome with our own physical weakness. We would not be spiritually mature. We'd also be dull of understanding, so of heart to believe. Forget it's for sinners like us, fallen humanity as we are, that you came to rescue us. We came to bear our sins in your body on the cross.

We, we say, but thank you, our father, we thank you for your compassion, that is your very essence. It is one of your perfections, that you're merciful,

compassion, compassionate, gracious, kind and you've demonstrated that by sending this Savior, this Jesus, this Christ, that all who look upon him, look upon his perfect sacrifice on the cross, his perfect atoning death, his perfect life of righteousness, and they can look upon him and be saved.

And I pray that if there are any here today who do not know you, who haven't been reconciled to you through the death, burial, resurrection of your son, we pray that you would be pleased by your Spirit and by your word to awaken true saving faith in them, that you would give them the gift of the new birth. Take out that heart of stone, replace it with the heart of flesh that's living. Give them a new nature, place your Spirit within them; cause them to look upon Christ and be saved.

And for all of us who know you well, father, we pray that we would not be dull, but instead we'd be awakened and encouraged and motivated to a deeper study and a deeper contemplation and meditation upon Christ, his suffering, his cross, his resurrection, his current ministry, his victory over sin and death and the world, the flesh, the devil.

We love you, father, and thank you in Jesus' name. And just ask that by your Spirit, you'd help us to walk after him in obedience, follow him, be made more and more like him, that we would be recognized as children of you, our father, citizens of your Kingdom, and members of your church. It's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen.