

The Agony in the Garden, Part 2

Luke 22:39-46

March 2, 2025

Man, I love that song. Thank you so much for singing that, choosing that song for us, and thank you for singing so well. Let's just find out how marvelous and how wonderful his love really is. Turn to Luke chapter 22. We're returning to the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus' prayer in preparation for the cross. And so find your way to Luke 22 and verse 39 in your Bibles.

Luke here, in Luke 22:39 to 46, this section on the Garden of Gethsemane in Jesus prayer, there he wants us to reflect on what it meant for Jesus to accomplish our redemption. The weight of our sins that he bore in his own body on the cross was a crushing weight, an overwhelming burden. And So what did he do? What did he do when he faced this ultimate test, this extreme trial of stress and temptation? We see that he prayed. He prayed, and when he prayed, we see in this text, the father upheld him. The father sustained him, visited him with help and notice the help that he provided was not to escape the trial,



but to bear up under the trial and to endure it and to pass through it.

You ever want to stop and maybe assess yourself and take the measure of your maturity. See how you respond to trials. That's a good kind of a marker on your spiritual condition. See how you respond to trials. Disappointments in your life, suffering, pain, afflictions, rejection, maligning, persecutions, relational things that come up, disappointments in, in the job, in the workplace, disappointments with family, disappointments with chronic suffering and illness and difficulties.

Many wrong responses, we, to trials as we know, as we have probably many of us lived out. But maturity in Christ is always going to approximate what we see in Christ. Maturity in Christ is going to approximate what we see here in Christ as he faces this trial of all trials. This ultimate trial, here in the Garden, we see the posture of prayer. We see the calm of humble dependence, as he emerges from this prayer time, in calm. We see the resignation, not in a fatalistic way at all, but in a

relational way, a resignation to God's perfect will. We see the resolve of obedience.

This is the picture of maturity. He had to learn obedience through suffering, as Hebrews tells us several times. He had to go through this himself, as a human, in his human nature, as a human being. And so we see that he is the author and perfecter of our faith. He is the one who started it, and he will perfect it and he will mature it and the way he matures it, is he shows us how it's done. And this is what we see here in this text. He shows us how it's done. He shows us how to go through trials, how to please God in trials, how to submit to his will, how to find strength to uphold us within trials. A very, very important text.

We divided the text into three sections. The solitude in verses 39 to 40, the suffering in verses 41 to 44, and then the sorrow in verses 45 to 46. Three points, solitude, suffering, sorrow. We really got through a point and a half last time. So we're going to get through another half a point, maybe a little bit

more today. We have one more week in the text, but let's read it in its entirety and then we'll continue on. Okay?

Luke 22:39, "And he came out," came out, "of the upper room, 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 are 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 arose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

For today, we're going to continue what we were doing last week. We're going to continue today. We're going to be observing Jesus

as he's wrestling with this unique set of burdens and stresses in this unique, one-of-a-kind, once in history trial that has come upon him. So we saw in a first point the solitude, the solitude. He goes through this alone. By solitude, we see this suffering as something that he is facing alone, and the accomplishment of our redemption, of course, relies on him and him alone. He is the only Savior, the only mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus.

Luke is the one who emphasizes the solitude of Christ here. He's, Jesus here, is seeking a place of solitude coming out of the upper room. He's going there for the purposes of prayer due to his unique role and the solitary responsibility that is his, of bearing the weight of our sins. That's his duty alone. No one else can fulfill that. There's no other incarnation. It's only him. He is the God man. He is truly God, truly man, and this is his role and his alone.

No one but Jesus knows what it's like to be sinless and then to have to anticipate the spiritual burden that he would feel of the guilt and the weight of the guilt of his people's sins. No

one but Jesus would be sinless and then anticipate the father's alienation; a separation that he feels in his human nature, to suffer divine wrath, to drink this, this cup that you and I deserve, he drank.

As God's chosen Messiah, Jesus is the only one who is able, who's qualified, who's authorized to drink that bitter cup, to suffer as a substitute for sinners. He's the only one qualified, the only one authorized to atone for our sins, to satisfy the wrath of God, and then to win for us an eternal salvation. And so he came out. He left that upper room out of that fellowship and the company and the enjoyment and the intimacy with his friends and "he went out, as was his custom to the Mount of Olives. He went as was his custom." He went where Judas would know to find him, in John 18:2 it says that.

And so we see even as we enter into the text, he's embraced this duty, even before he prayed, he embraced his role. He went to that place and he was bearing in solitude the sin bearing role, the anticipation of what he would go through. And so he sought

solitary communion with his father, his father who has planned this, his father who is, is executing this now.

So he leaves the disciples in verse 40, under the protection of his command. It's just like, I think of parenting and analogies, having raised kids and how many times you give commands not because you're overbearing in your authority and because you like to Lord it over your children. Did you care for their safety? You care for their well-being and so you give them commands and he's given them commands here. "Pray that you may not enter into temptation," leaves them under the protection of his command. And by the way, that is enough. His command is enough, if we obey it.

Verse 41, "He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down and began to pray," and brings us to the next point, which is the suffering. Number two: The suffering. We saw this in verses 42 to 44, how Jesus' praying reveals five aspects of this agony that he went through spiritually, this agony that he went through in the garden. We made it through about half of them. But just to remind you with a couple of thoughts here, first,

his suffering is spiritual. That was the first point, we said of his spiritual agony.

First aspect, his suffering is spiritual, as Jesus bears all the sins of all of his people in his own body, and he's going to take those sins to the cross. And so he prays, "Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me." This cup, this cup refers to this cup of suffering. It's a, it's a cup of suffering detailed in Isaiah 53. And that cup of suffering is poured out on Jesus for his people. As we've said, Jesus bears the weight of our guilt.

He anticipates suffering the full weight of this divine wrath upon him for all of our sins. Just think about that. He's got coming down on him, all at one time, the weight of God's eternal decree, the weight of God's plan. The sovereign will of God bears down on him, in a pointed way, here in this moment, in taking it to the cross, and that decree assigned to him, the weight of human guilt for sins.



So take all of your sins, which are too heavy for you to bear, and take all the sins of all the people you know, they cannot bear it, collect all that together, and then collect all those sins of all the people now living who are good, who are God's people; take all those sins from all the people around the whole world, and then project that backward in history and forward into the future, all of that is on his shoulders. And that guilt for sins, merits the weight now of divine justice.

That's a heavyweight; a penalty of divine wrath, that's a heavyweight, where God, in his retributive justice, gives those sins what those sins deserve. All of this weight poured into one cup that he then must drink. Think about taking a cup and pouring into it molten lead and drinking that. It's heavy, even as you hold it in the cup and it burns going down and then solidifies within you, magnify that to the utmost degree. This is all poured out into the cup that he must drink within hours at Golgotha.

None of this, for Jesus, is an abstraction. It's not impersonal. It's not remote. He's not the sin bearer suffering the wrath of

some angered deity, who's distant. He bears the weight of suffering at the hand of one he knows intimately, his father, and this brings us to a second aspect of his suffering. Second, his suffering is relational. This hurts, as the father pours this weight of wrath and justice for the weight of sins upon his one and only beloved son. There's a filial term and begins his prayer father or in Matthew it's, "My Father," in Mark it's, "Abba! Father!" as Jesus in his humanity cries out to the most important of all his relations, his father with his most heart wrenching cry.

It's the father who's delivering the crushing blow. It's the father who's removed his comfort and his consolation. So the son would feel, in his soul, in a mysterious way, that we're never going to comprehend and never fully understand, but he felt, as John Owen put it, as we mentioned last time, quote, "A suspension of the comforting influences of his relation unto God, suspended his relation unto God." Owen says, "As his God and Father was the fountain of all his comforts and joys, and the sense hereof of these comforts and joys now suspended, and so from hence he was filled with heaviness and sorrow." End of quote.

This is one of the most sobering reminders to my mind of the sinfulness of sin. How bad it really is, that we, you and I, were the cause of robbing the perfect Christ from enjoying a single moment of "the comforting influences of his relation unto God." That you and I, with even one sin that we committed, let alone all of the sins we've committed, would prevent him from partaking of the close fellowship with God. Quote, "The fountain of all his comforts and joys." If we were to reflect on that more, I think we would sin less. I love that stanza of Fernando Ortega's song, "Stricken, smitten, and afflicted," as it calls us to reflect on this very point: "Ye who think of sin but lightly, nor suppose the evil great, here may view its nature rightly, here its guilt may estimate. Mark the sacrifice appointed. See who bears the awful load. Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed Son of Man and Son of God."

If we would want to think of sin rightly, view the nature of sin rightly, we'd reflect more on what happened at the cross. His suffering is spiritual as he bears the guilt as he's receiving the penalty for our sins. His suffering, though, is always so relational. This is not an abstraction, this is

concrete, real, felt in his soul. His father turns against him, withholding the comfort and the consolation of the fellowship that he has enjoyed all of his human life, to deliver the penalty for sins, our sins, and by the father's own hand.

And so we understand his response here. It makes sense how he responds trying to say, father, if there's any other way, remove this cup. And so that brings us to one third observation of the aspect of his suffering. His suffering is natural. His, this is understandable; his response here. Jesus prays, "Father, if you're willing remove this cup from me." The word remove, *paraphérō*, to bear away. It's built from the same stem *Phero*, the verb *Phero*, to bear, as 1 Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, which is *ana-phérō*, to bear up, to bear away.

So the sin bearer. It's interesting the one who bears away our sins asked his father to bear away this cup of suffering to take it away, carry it away; simply remove it, remove this cup. His apprehension here, Jesus' fear it's a distinctly human response. It's as natural to a human being as could be expected. In fact,

if Jesus did not react to such a deep aversion like this, so as we see here in the text, to bearing our sin in his sinless soul, we would rightly question his humanity.

It's very natural, very human to recoil at this prospect. It's to be expected that he's going to react this way to the suffering he's, he must undergo. If he didn't react this way, we'd be prone to doubt, whether he's truly human, whether he felt anything at all. He did feel it. He felt every bit of it; every ounce of the weight he felt as a true human being. And this is an immense, immense suffering far beyond our comprehension. So his suffering is spiritual, relational, and natural.

And now we come to a most remarkable aspect of Prayer fourth: His suffering is volitional. Volitional, meaning it's willing on his part. He was doing this voluntarily. He's not coerced into it. He's submissive and when he's submissive, he's in all the way. He's fully obedient. In fact, we pointed out just a moment ago, Jesus entered into the Garden of Gethsemane in this

obedient, submissive frame of mind. He went to the exact place that he knew Judas would be able to find him.

So he embraced his arrest, which means he embraced everything that would that would come out of that arrest. All the mock trials, all the false accusations, all the slander, all the punishment and the scorn and the mocking and everything. The, all the, the beat down that the soldiers put onto him and the embarrassment and the shame and then going to the cross itself and being displayed in shame publicly before everybody. Here's your king of the Jews. A total failure. He took all that on.

He knew that his arrest meant that, that, that's what would come, including the death itself. And now he prays that way, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done." It's interesting we got to see two different words, for the word for, willing, here in the text. When Jesus prays at first, when he says if you are willing, he's using the verb *boúlomai*. *Boúlomai*. And then there's another word, *thelo*. *Thelo*, which is another verb for, will. The noun form is *thélēma*, and that's what's used next. So *boulē* would be

the noun form, and *thélēma* would be the noun form of the other word that's used here.

And often times in the New Testament, these are synonyms. You're able to use one or the other, but there are some ways to distinguish them. And certainly, in this context, in this text, we see some distinguishing marks that draws out an aspect of *boúlomai*, that's different from *thelo*, an aspect of *boulē*, which is the noun form from *thélēma*, which is the noun form. Here, when he uses the verb *boúlomai*, which when God is the subject, it refers to his sovereign will, his eternal counsel, his predetermined plan. When he says, if you are willing, he's referring to God's decision or God's eternal purpose.

I have many references I could show you to, to, to see this. In fact, if you'd like to come up to me afterwards, I put them on a footnote, so I can share them with you. But I'll just give you three examples for now. Just so you can see that when we're referring to God is the subject of the verb *boúlomai*. We're referring to God's eternal purpose, his decree, you might say. Acts 4:28 is one such reference to illustrate this in crucifying

Jesus. All the leaders, all the people, the Jews and the Gentiles all did, Acts 4:28, all did whatever and this is the early apostles, early church praying about this. They said they did whatever your hand, God, whatever your purpose, there it is, *hē boulē*, whatever your purpose, predestined to occur. *Boulē*, purpose.

Ephesians 1:11, We Christians, we believers, we who've been regenerated by the Spirit and born again, we were chosen in Christ. Here it is predestined according to the purpose, *tēn boulēn*, according to the purpose of his will. We're talking about an eternal decree, his sovereign purpose. Again, Hebrews 6:17 God desired, it's in the participle form there, *boulómenos*, to show the heirs of the promise. God desired to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of, here it is again, his purpose, *tēs boulēs*. And so he interposed, he punctuated it with an oath saying, surely I will bless you, reaffirming in that moment his eternal purpose, his eternal decree. So when Jesus prays here, "Father, if you are willing," using *boulei*, he's referring to the eternal purpose.

He's asking, listen, is there some place within the divine decree? Remember, he's praying as a human being and as a human being here in the garden with a human nature, what does he have that shared by you and I? Finitude. He does not have omniscience in his human nature. That's his divine nature. Here, he's praying in his human nature. So he's saying, is there some place within the divine decree, some possibility deep within your hidden purpose, as yet unknown to my finite understanding, where the removal of the cup might be found? Search and see. And if it be so, then might that provision be revealed now? To spare me, if possible, the bitterness of this suffering. But then, he adds, it's amazing. After that, just short little pondering. Immediately he amends his statement. "Yet not my will, but yours be done."

You see that, perfect submission, unforced, uncoerced, offered freely, voluntarily, submission, obedience, he's all in. And in his second reference to the will, "yet not my will, but yours be done," he's using the word *thélēma*. Like I said, *thélēma* in the *Koine* of the Greek of the New Testament. *Thelema* is, as I said, often a synonym for the word, *boulē*, except, except in one of its senses, and it's the sense that Jesus uses here. Here,

thélēma refers to the subjective act of willing. So you might say wanting, wishing.

In the first case, Jesus appeals to his father's purpose in the eternal decree, but in the second case he's submitting to whatever comes to pass in God's perfect providence and readily, eagerly submits to it. Look, it's not what I want. It's not what I want. It's what you want, that's best. Let that will be done.

So just to expand it, just for the sake of understanding what Jesus' saying here, he's praying in this way. Father, if there's some place in the divine decree, if there's some possibility in your hidden purpose, not yet known, not yet revealed, is it there? And if it may now be revealed so that I may be spared of this, this cup, wonderful; nevertheless, let not my subjective desire be the determinative point. Let yours happen. Let your act of willing be what is done.

What a strong affirmation of ultimate submission, trusting in the sovereign priority, in the goodness of God's will. He does this from a place of intimate fellowship, of knowing his father

and who he is and what he's like. This is an example for us to follow, isn't it, in our own praying. When you go through anything that you're finding difficult to go through. For some of us, it could be difficult financial circumstances that are bringing pressure and stress into the family life or whatever.

For some it can be ongoing health issues that don't ever seem to have an end. You emerge from one only to enter into another. It just seems to be ongoing. No end insight, for some. For others, it's a relational thing. You're dealing with a bent, misshapen, distorted will of another that you can't, you can't actually change. You have no power to reach into somebody else's heart and turn on a light switch and make, make them do differently. It's God's prerogative and God's alone. We're on the outside. And yet some of those relational things are the most painful suffering that we endure, isn't it?

And so we pray this way, don't we? We, we, we understand what he's what he's saying. We can identify with this and we need to identify with it all the way so that we say, look, father, if there's some way for us to not go through this anymore, great.

But let me just add this, not my, not my immediate wish in this prayer be done. Don't let that be determined, because what do I know? I'm a finite human being. Let your will be done. You know what's perfect. You know what's best.

I trust you, and you know you will pray that more when you know God better. The more you know him, the more you are willing to resign yourself, not in a fatalistic way. I believe in the sovereignty of God. Therefore, no. It's yeah, my God. It's sovereign. But do you know why he ought to be sovereign? Because he is good and powerful and wise and perfect. And I love him and you ought to love him too. And whatever he chooses is best.

However, he orders my day, however he interrupts my schedule, whatever affliction I receive, I'm good. I'm good with it because I rest in his company. I'm completely held up in his power, his strength. That's the example, we're to see here, this is what Jesus does perfectly. It's the volitional nature here of his suffering though accepting fully what God has ordained. And suffering freely and willingly, that's what we see here in this prayer. Brings us to a fifth aspect of his suffering.

Fifthly, we said that his, let me just go through the points: His suffering is first spiritual, second relational, third natural, fourth volitional and fifthly, his suffering is physical and psychical. Physical and psychical. That's PSYCHICAL. Psychical, by which I'm referring to physical and psychical. I'm referring to the suffering of body and of soul. If you prefer to, just jot down a single term in your notes, you can write his suffering is Psychosomatical. Okay. If that's easier for you, I find that too unfamiliar. Really hard to say, so don't even bother writing it down. In fact, I'm very proud of myself. I didn't mispronounce it in front of you.

Still, if you want to, you could, if you want to write a single word, here's the word. Try this one: His suffering is incarnational. That's a good word, isn't it? Incarnational, that is to say, what was experienced by the Son of God, who became a man, body and soul, don't forget the soul and that's why in order to not forget the soul, I like using both terms physical and psychical, because psychical is built on the word for soul, *psyche*. There's no other reason just to draw to attention first

to the body, then to the soul and forget neither of them because both aspects of our humanity are found right here.

After Jesus prayed as he did in verse 42, we see a remarkable thing in verse 43, "Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him." I don't know if you remember in the introduction, but this is central to the account. And we're going to reflect on this, the importance of this, why it's central to the account in a moment. But first we need to kind of ponder this a little bit.

What, what in him, at this point, needed the strengthening of an angel, that the father would deploy an angel to him? What was the strengthening he needed? Was it of his physical material body or his spiritual immaterial soul? We find the answer in the next verse. "Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him and being in agony," as we said, agony, that means a contest, being in a contest and, and then not just a contest, like okay, I've registered for a contest, I'm in it. No, he's in it. He's in the ring, he's feeling the pummeling. He is going through the exertion and the exhaustion.

So that agony, "being in agony, he was praying very fervently and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Such a remarkable verse, as Luke tells us, he was in agony, *agōn* referring to, as I said, a contest; going through this immense effort, incredible strain, exertion involved in winning some sort of contest, which leads to his physical exhaustion. But what do we, what do we find, and what do you think about this? What do we find him doing here? Is he wrestling anybody physically? Does he have an opponent?

He separates from the three, Peter, James and John; says you wait here, I'm going to go over there and oh, there's a guy there. No! Is he running around fast-paced, doing sprints? No! Is he lifting weights? Is he engaged in hand-to-hand combat? No, none of that! He is in a stationary position, in a bowed posture, on his knees, face to the ground, praying. Is he burning calories? Yes, but why? This is a spiritual contest. The agony is internal, psychical.

But make no mistake, what he's going through in his spirit is affecting his body. This is why we call it the psychosomatic. Psychosomata, the connection of the soul to the body, the body to the soul. We don't know how to unravel the mystery of that, but it's true. It's here. This contest is more strenuous and stressful to him than going 15 rounds with Mike Tyson. In fact, today's boxing doesn't go 15 rounds anymore, does it? But this is beyond what his body can bear. We see that, as his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

Many faithful commentators refer to what happened here as a condition called hematidrosis. The capillaries just below the skin, because of the stress and the strain, they dilate and then they burst. The blood mixes in with the sweat so that the, the bloody sweat comes out through the pores. That's what we see pictured here. And it is possible to see that.

We see the word, like Luke using the word like his, "his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground." And many commentators say, yeah, you could see it that way, but more, really, is intended and it's Luke, the physician that

draws this out. Modern doctors acknowledge this is a rare condition. It exists. They don't know what causes it exactly. Most suppose it's related to the release of adrenaline, that fight or flight response, and that that adrenaline goes through the body and prepares us to either fight or, or, run in response to great stress.

Great danger triggers a fight or flight responses due to deep anxiety at an extreme apprehension or a great fear, suddenness, wrestling with all that. It's William Hendrickson who writes this, he says, "It must be borne in mind, that the human nature of Jesus was sinless, and therefore very sensitive. When these factors--extreme anguish, earnest supplication, unparalleled sensitivity, are combined, the resulting strain can easily cause subcutaneous capillaries to dilate to such an extent that they will burst." End Quote.

So the sweating blood phenomenon, we read of in, verse 44, we need to see this is triggered by the strain we read about coming out of verse 42, as Jesus prayed that, it is a wrestling in his soul, but it's having an effect on his body. Never underestimate

this connection in your life, by the way, that there is a connection between your body and your soul for good and for bad. I think we underestimate the, the, ability of unconfessed sin and trying to suppress the guilt and the shame of our sin and hold that all in, kind of like trying to hold the lid on a boiling pot. How that affects our bodies, how it comes out in the life, how it comes out in the decision making, how it ruins a life.

Sometimes you can just see a person and they're the very picture as you even get to know them, you see, man, I see so much unconfessed sin here. So much guilt that this person walks around with and has never been released from. So much shame that they're trying to suppress and hide and they can't do it. It's coming out and it's affecting their guts. There's all this online stuff about gut health, right? You got stuff in your guts and parasites crawling through you.

Get, look, folks, that stuff's been there since the very beginning. In the very beginning, God put that stuff on us to groom us and take care of us. And because of sin and the fall,

it's kind of taking an evil bent. And so you get used to it. You got stuff on you, okay, and you're not going to be free from it until Kingdom come, okay? God's got even that in hand. He can take care of your gut health too. But here's what he can do effectively is he can take care of your sin problem and he can take away your sense of shame and your guilt and all your wrestling. Try that before you go searching online for all those wacko remedies and destroy yourself even further, chasing a dream.

Don't underestimate the psychosomatic connection: Body to the soul, soul to the body. And sometimes when we're in poor health, when we're dealing with physical issues, it can affect our spiritual nature too, right? No reason to be unhappy in the Lord. And yet, man, I don't know why, but I banged my pinky toe onto the coffee table yet again. And every step I'm reminded of this pain and it's making me sin inside. No, it's not. It's not making you sin, but it is having an effect on you, isn't it? It is compromising your spiritual well-being and it ought not to.

Look, we're, we're knit together this way, you know, fearfully, wonderfully; we're knit together this way. And we see this here in the garden as Jesus, his subcutaneous capillaries burst. The blood mixes in with the sweat. It comes out the pores as he's straining here in prayer. And so the father sends aid from heaven, an angel, in verse 43, sent to strengthen his body. We asked what kind of help the angel provided.

I'd like you to see a biblical precedent for angels helping men by going to 1 Kings in chapter 19. 1 Kings 19. Such an interesting, interesting section of 1 Kings, in the life of Elijah, in the ministry of Elijah, his powerful prophetic ministry. This is coming right after 1 Kings 18, in which we see this triumphant, courageous Elijah up on Mount Carmel slaying 400 prophets of Baal. He slayed them after God showed himself strong, as the true God, who can answer in fire; Baal silent. Great spiritual courage in Elijah, his own contest, his own *agōnía*, here with 400 prophets on mount baal, on Mount Carmel, he always shows up, answers with fire. Baal does not.

Elijah though, is the central figure here in this drama. He's praying and seeking God. He sees God work mightily through his ministry and through his prayer and not only to answer in fire, but also to answer in water. Elijah goes up on the mountain, he prays several times and, and, God ends the drought. And so his prayer life, it's used as an example in James chapter 5, isn't it? "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." That's where we get that saying from, is this example of Elijah. It's a massive, massively important section of scripture.

But after this victory on Mount Carmel, the beginning of chapter 19, we encounter a different version of Elijah. A spiritually exhausted Elijah coming from the mountaintop experience.

Literally, he comes to a very, very low point and the man of God is physically wiped out. Take note of this, by the way, for yourself, that after great spiritual exertion, after winning a victory in your life, overcoming a temptation, dealing with something well, wrestling in prayer, much serving, much teaching, much discipling, be on your guard after a victory for the low point, when you're vulnerable to spiritual attack.

The enemy is quite well known for taking advantage when our defenses are down catch us unaware as we see here 1 Kings 19. Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he killed all the prophets with the sword and, and, then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, "so may the gods do to me and even more if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by about this time tomorrow." And look at verse 3. He was afraid.

What? I mean, all of her prophets are dead. So, oh really, by the, by the power of those same gods, okay, "he was afraid for his life, arose, ran for his life, came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and he left his young man there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came, sat down under a broom tree, and he asked for himself that he might die," he said, "'It's enough; now, O Yahweh, take my life, for I'm not better than any of my fathers.'" And then look, verse 5, "He lay down and slept under a broom tree." "Behold, there was an angel touching him and he said to him, 'Arise, eat.'"

Probably been a long time since he'd eaten. "And then he looked, and behold, and there," what his head, "was at his head

a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. And so he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of Yahweh came again a second time and touched him and said, 'Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you.' And so he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food, 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb, the mountain of God."

Man, that's some good food. That sets a biblical precedent for one way in which God uses angels to strengthen his servants physically. Elijah's spirit was willing, wasn't it? But his body was weak. He needed rest, sustenance, to stand firm. And so the Lord here sustains him by means of the agency of an angel and by means of this special food and drink. The same thing, by the way, happened in the life of our Lord early in his ministry.

He was sent, right, wasn't he? He was sent into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. Matthew 4:2, "And after fasting 40 days and nights, he became hungry." I would imagine in that depleted physical condition, Jesus stood against the onslaught of the devil's cleverest, most powerful temptations. And then having succeeded and, and, outlasted all

those temptations, it says in Matthew 4:11, "the devil left him. And behold, angels came and began to minister to him." What were they doing? They administered angelic IV's to this depleted soldier to restore his electrolytes. They fed him with food, calories for energy and for strength.

All right, I don't know about the IV's, but you get the point. This spiritual battle for Jesus took a toll on his body. It depleted him and the father sent him angelic help. It's going back in your Bibles to Luke 22 and verse 43. We see that God sent his angel to strengthen his son and I believe it's, we have biblical reason to, for the warrant that he strengthened him physically, but don't fail to notice what that physical strength allowed him to do.

"Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him," and then says, "in being in agony, he was praying very fervently and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground." He had been praying in verse 42, and God attended to his need for physical strengthening, and so he sent an angel to care for his body, verse 43. We're not told more than that.

We don't know what that looked like. We don't know if he had like a power bar or what it was, what it consisted of, but according to verse 44, he needed that shot in the arm for the purpose of what? More praying, more fervent praying, strengthened by the angel. Physically, he's enabled to pray even more fervently; *ektenēs*, zealously, eagerly, earnestly. John Owen puts it this way, that, "Jesus prayed with more vehement intention of mind, spirit and body." He says, the word, "this word *ektenēs*, denotes the highest degree of earnestness in the acting of his mind, soul, and body." He needed to pray. He needed to pray like this with great intensity, fervency, earnestness.

I like, I like Owen's use of the word, vehement intention. I can tell you that, I, I mean, my, my, my prayer life hasn't come obviously close to this, but I have prayed before with intensity and intentionality and I would even describe my own weak way and capacity, even a vehement intensity and intentionality at times and I can just testify to coming away from that feeling physically exhausted. And I know you have felt that too.

I know you understand what I mean, when I say that that's what he's going through. But wow, to a degree we'll never understand, never know. He's back after the strengthening of the angel, he's back and he's, he's all in. He prays to overcome the weakness of his flesh in heading to the cross, that he would bear up under this unique strain and face this once in history contest of overcoming the world, the flesh, and the Devil, to bear the sins of his people, in his own body on the cross, to bear the weight of God's wrath and justice against all those sins.

He prayed in his true humanity for the righteous endurance of suffering, that he might live by faith, Hebrews 11:38. That he would not shrink back because God has no pleasure in those who shrink back. Even in him, we see the Spirit was willing and so he prayed, verse 42 and yet his flesh was weak and in need of his father's help, which the father graciously gave, coming to his aid. This is what we read in Hebrews 5:7, "That in the days of his flesh he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and He was heard because of his fear."

So the father sent his angel here to strengthen his weak body, so he could give voice to his willing Spirit once again, which he did, prayed with such fervency, with such intensity, that once again his body's giving way. Keep that in mind, beloved, as you strive against sin, by watching and praying, you please God in this exercise of faith, and he is pleased to give you aid even in ways you don't quite understand. That's what this shows at the very least, is to encourage you to keep striving in your prayer, to keep watching, keep praying, God knows what you need.

In fact, I think it's time to reflect on this. Remember how we introduced this account last week because verse 43, this verse is at the center of this chiastic structure. Remember I talked about the X, you know, the chi being the Greek letter that looks like an X and you've got the points on the outside. So the first and the last points are parallel. And then as you walk down toward the middle, they get, they're parallel, parallel, parallel until you get to a center point, which is kind of like in the literary structure, just meant for us to kind of focus on something that's important that the author wants us to see, to recognize and reflect on.

And that's what Luke has done here, so we see in verse 40 and 46, Jesus has commanded his disciples to pray. Top of the X, bottom of the X, commands to pray; as we move in a little bit, the beginning of verse 41, Jesus withdraws to pray. End of verse 45, he returns from withdrawing to pray; he returns from praying. One more step toward the middle, Jesus kneels to pray end of verse 41. Then he rises from prayer at the beginning of verse 45. We see in verse 42 Jesus prays.

Verse 44, he prays very fervently, even to the point of sweating blood. That brings us to the middle of Christ agony. The father sending an angel to strengthen his son in verse 43. Okay, so what are we going to get out of that? Well, here's something Luke wants us to see, something that instructs and encourages our praying. And we know that Luke's focus is on encouraging us in our praying because he's bracketed the entire account in verse 40 and verse 46, what I call *inclusio*, that literary structure term.

He's bracketed the account with that command, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation," and there at the center, this strengthening. Several things, I think are worth pointing out and reflecting on, probably more to find here too. First, we see at the very basic level, it's an encouragement to see the father answers Jesus prayer. Jesus is praying and the father is there attending to it and answering it. Should that not encourage us to pray, the father's there attending to us.

Second, we see the father gives Jesus something he didn't ask for anywhere in Jesus' prayer. You can go to Matthew 26, Mark 14 and the more expansive accounts and see there's nothing in Jesus' prayer where he's saying, hey father, send an angel; not once, father I'm, I'm, I'm physically weak, so any assistance here, but the father gives something. Jesus, he didn't ask for angelic help, which shows that the father he cares. He attends to his needs. Also, he knows what we don't know. He gives what we don't think to ask for. And sometimes we have the audacity to call that prayer an unanswered prayer.

Third, the father cares for Jesus physical needs, which shows us that the father is tender with his humanity. He knows our frame, doesn't he? Psalm 103, verse 14. He is mindful that we're but dust. He knows we need to be upheld, created us this way. He created us in a, a good and right dependence on him. We're not created, created to be independent, autonomous, masters of our fate, captains of our soul. No, we're created to be totally dependent on our God, which is good, healthy, wonderful, causes our souls to rejoice. He's mindful that we're but dust, and so he takes care of that dust. He animated it in the first place.

And fourth, we see that the father strengthens him. And as I said earlier, he doesn't strengthen him to escape the trial that he's decreed for him, but to endure the trial that he has decreed for him. So, beloved, whatever the trial, whatever the stress or the difficulty, take a page out of his playbook. "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

We'll talk more about that, "enter into temptation," next week. But pray that you don't enter into temptation. Pray that you don't sin. If you want any preview into what that

means, ask the men who were there yesterday at STM, because they got a really good preview about what it means, to pray that you don't enter into temptation, to watch and pray. So ask your husbands. Ask the men that were there. You'll get a preview anyway.

Just know that you have a father in heaven who knows you, who cares for you. You have a Christ in heaven, at the father's right hand, who knows what you know and has walked where you've walked. And since he shares in our humanity, body and soul, he's not only qualified to represent us as our atoning sacrifice, but also as our merciful High Priest. We read, came across both of those elements, his atoning sacrifice, his propitiation and also his high priestly ministry in our scripture reading, didn't we in Hebrews chapter 2?

Maybe keep a finger in Luke 22, as I am, and go to Hebrews 2 and take a look, starting at Hebrews 2:14, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil,

and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham."

It's St. Cyril of Alexandria, fifth century Bishop, he wrote, of God, who revealed his will in the sufferings of Christ. He said, "that having been made flesh, John 1:14, he allows the flesh to feel what belongs to it. And therefore, being truly a man, he trembles at death when it's now at the door, and says, father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, but since it cannot be otherwise, let it not be as I will, but as thou willed." And St. Cyril goes on to say, "you see how human nature, even in Christ himself, has the sufferings and fears which belong to it, but that the Word who is united to it, raises [the human nature] to a fortitude which is worthy of God."

Beloved, Jesus Christ knows what you know. He's felt what you've felt, he's suffered what you have suffered, and far more. He's shared in our nature, body, and soul, and he's carried our sorrows and our guilt and our iniquity in his own body. And as

we continue reading in Hebrews 2:17, we see he's not only taking it in his atoning work, but also the high priestly ministry.

"Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers," verse 17, "in all things so that he might become a merciful, faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, he is able to come to the," to the, "help of those who are tempted." Who's the one who deployed this great high priest? Who's the one who called him, chose him, qualified him, sent him, sustained him? God.

Listen, beloved, he went through all of this for your sake and for mine, to sacrifice himself and die for us. And as if that were not enough, he continues to live for us and to intercede for us even now, and to show us mercy by praying for us. He has been here where we are. He knows our nature. He knows our need. So when he told his men in Matthew 26:41, "keep watching and praying. Keep on praying that you may not enter into temptation."

The Spirit is willing. The flesh is weak. That command is not without sympathy. He knows the deepest of human experience beyond any other. He knows our humanity way better than we do. Way better, because he's lived it to the uttermost. He's been to the extreme end of humanity and he's felt it all, way beyond what you have ever felt or known. Do not commit the sin for a moment of assuming any less of him that he doesn't know what you're going through. That is a lie from the pit of hell that is meant to discourage you and prevent you from praying.

Ambrose said this, "There's no instance in which I admire more His kindness and His Majesty; for He would not have done so much for me, if He had not taken upon Him my feelings. He grieved, for me, who had no cause of grief for himself; And, laying aside the delights of the eternal Godhead, he experiences the affliction of my weakness. I boldly call it sorrow, because I preach the cross. For He took upon him not the appearance, but the reality, of incarnation."

Well, with that quote from Ambrose, I think the time has come to kind of leave this spot for the moment. Turn our attention to

the disciples. Going back to Luke chapter 22, as we turn our attention to the disciples, we also turn our attention to ourselves. We've seen the solitude; we've seen the suffering, both about our Savior.

Now here's a point about his men, and here's a point about us too. The sorrow, number three: The sorrow. Jesus warned them according to the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark. He said, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." And we see a contrast to how Jesus fought his battle in how the disciples fought theirs. Look at the verses 45 and 46, "And when he arose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

When Jesus arose from prayer, though he's physically spent, but he had received the strengthening from the angel, and he rose up like, like an athlete, sweaty but content after winning his contest. He got up from the mat like a wrestler, having exerted himself with this immense strain, but he won his match. Coming back to the disciples, they're sleeping. Matthew says they're

sleeping because their eyes were heavy. Mark says their eyes were very heavy.

It's Luke, though, the physician, who kind of gets down to the cause for heavy eyelids. They were sleeping from sorrow, the word, *lúpē*. *Lúpē* refers here to the mental grief, the distress, the sadness, the anxiety of soul that they felt, it again, something immaterial but having a physical effect, making them sleepy.

So while Jesus is off fighting his battle, these guys face their own form of agony in the garden. But unlike Jesus, they caved. They succumbed to the weakness of the flesh. They failed the test, forfeited the victory, unable to rise, being strengthened by God for what was coming, unable to run the victory lap, more tests would be coming for them within minutes. Verse 47 says, "while he was still speaking, behold a crowd led by Judas Iscariot."

This crowd comes to arrest Jesus. Driving this crowd forward is Satan himself who came to strike the shepherd, sift the

disciples like wheat, scatter this little flock and Jesus knew all of this. He knew all of it beforehand. He saw it coming and that's why he told them about all this, and he wanted them to see it coming. And that's why he says again in verse 46, "rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

That's what he said from the start. He repeats it again here. He knows that there's more to come for them. Well, we've spent some time observing this account. See what Luke wants us to see, the solitude, the suffering, the sorrow. And it's, I hope that for your heart, as it's done for mine, that has drawn our hearts to marvel, admire, worship. I hope it's, in you, provoked gratitude, in a believing heart evoked praise in your heart for your Savior.

But we're, as I said, we're going to invest one more week to learn what the Holy Spirit, by the authorship and the arrangement of Luke, wants us to learn. How do we avoid being overcome by the weakness of flesh during a trial? How do we avoid being overcome with sorrow, a very real thing? How do we

learn to watch and pray that we do not enter into temptation?
That's next week's subject. For now, let's pray.

Our Father, we're so immensely grateful for not only for our Savior, but for how you have saved us, for the way you have planned our redemption and the way you have orchestrated all things. And by your perfect providence, along the way to the cross, the most monumental event in human history, providentially taught us lessons along the way. Things that we carry into the rest of our Christian life. Things that these apostles embraced and learned upon reflection and then wrote down in the pages of the New Testament for us to discover and learn and practice, this knowledge that you have given us. And we're so grateful for it.

We pray, though, that this knowledge would bear fruit, that it would not be unproductive, that it would not fail, that it would not be ashamed in any way, but instead that it would bear fruit in our lives and go from knowledge to the practice of knowledge, which is wisdom, taking your knowledge, putting it into

righteous effect, and thus teaching us to walk in wisdom before you.

And as we walk in wisdom, we live our lives in a wise way, making wise decisions, setting wise priorities with a wise use of time, especially in praying. This is how we bring glory and honor to you. This is how people recognize the Word. We're a different people, we've been changed, we've been transformed. Our minds are different, we think differently, we act differently, we speak differently, and different things matter to us that matter to the world.

And so, father, we just ask that you would give us by your Spirit and by your word, give us the all that we need to follow Jesus Christ well, and especially in this matter of watchful prayer. And pray that you would go with us even this week to reflect even more on what we've learned, that we can give you more thanks and more praise, that we can appreciate, love, worship, our Savior even more deeply, but then we can also live obediently unto him, voluntarily submitting ourselves to you freely for your glory. In Christ' name we pray. Amen.