

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

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[0 : 00] I'd like to turn once again to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22, and reading at verse 43.

Luke 22 at verse 43. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and the sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Especially words there in verse 44. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.

As we read scriptures, especially the New Testament, we see how much a man of prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ was.

Often he would separate himself from his friends and disciples and the crowds, and go apart and seek his Father's guidance and strengthening.

[1 : 16] At an early part of the Lord's ministry, we read, In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out into a solitary place and prayed.

Whenever he needed guidance, or whenever he needed his soul to be restored or strengthened, that's where he would go. As an example, for each and every one of us, when we are feeling disconsolate or cast down, the throne of grace is where we will find grace and help in every time of need.

Another example, after feeding of the 5,000, he sent the multitude away and went again into a mountaintop to pray, and he spent all night there praying.

Remaining until the 4th, watch of the night. At the choosing of the 12, the night before he chose his 12 disciples, who were chosen to be with him, he spent all night in prayer, and then chose.

It's probably not insignificant to know that the Lord, in assuming human nature, was made in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

[2 : 49] He put himself into the place where he was dependent on God. One of his acts of pontification, one of his acts whereby he humbled himself, was he made himself dependent upon his heavenly Father.

Although he was the second person of the Trinity, although he had all the attributes of God, having all the power and the glory and the majesty of the Godhead, yet he places himself in a situation where he humbles himself and he takes the form of a servant.

And so being made of a woman, made under the law, meant he could receive nothing from his heavenly Father except he asked for it.

If you remember again the words in the first epistle of John, we are guaranteed to be forgiven if we ask. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins if we would but ask for forgiveness.

And so in the same way as the Lord Jesus Christ lived out his days and lives here on earth, he put himself into this position that he had to ask his Father for wisdom, for instruction, for guidance, and strength and support.

[4 : 20] Whenever the Lord needed strength and grace and support, they could only be his if he would make his request known unto God.

The second psalm that we sang earlier on reminds us, it says, Ask of me, and for heritage, I'll make the heathen thine.

But the asking precedes the giving. But if we ask, why did the Lord not utilize his own divine energy?

Instead of offering up his prayers and requests to his heavenly Father, we find the answer in Paul's famous passage in Philippians chapter 2 from verse 5 onwards.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and he humbled himself.

[5 : 24] He made himself of no reputation, and as such, he resigned himself not to use the power that was inherent in his own divine nature.

He veiled the power, he hid his divinity, and he prayed. Everything the Lord achieved, he achieved by the power of his Father who was in heaven.

At the Lord's disposal were all the attributes of God. Remember your catechism, there are three persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal, and power, and glory.

All the attributes and power and glory the Father had, the Son had. And yet, in making himself man, by taking to himself a true body and reasonable soul, he condescends to submit himself to his Father's will and submits himself also to asking his Father for all that was necessary for him to fulfill those purposes.

In his humiliation, although he resigned all his powers, he did not cease to be God.

[6 : 56] Remember again, we're told that in taking to himself the true body and reasonable soul, he became God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever.

And the person is the God-man. The man comes to this earth, but he is still the God-man. in his exaltation, he continues to be man.

In his humiliation, he continues to be God. And he does not cease to be man when he is returned to heaven, but he continues there as the God-man throughout all the endless ages of eternity.

But what about this prayer that the Lord utters here in Gethsemane? As we look at this prayer, there are certain aspects of it which deal very closely with our future and our hopes for a life that will never end.

And we're told that he being in a great agony, he prays more earnestly.

[8 : 23] Already the Lord is in earnest with a great degree of zeal and desire towards God. But as he receives the strengthening of the angel and the angel reminds him of who he is and what his purposes are and what the end of those purposes are for the salvation of mankind, he prays the more earnestly.

He prays with strong crying and tears and even sweats of blood. And he prays that he might be strengthened to fulfil the work that he's been given to do.

See, there are two different prayers here. The first prayer is nevertheless not my will but thine be done. Let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless not my will but thine be done. The prayer he utters on this occasion is if this cup will not pass from me except I drink it, let your will be done.

and so he commits himself to the work of being strengthened by the angel, he commits himself now fully and wholeheartedly, strengthened in his soul and his mind to fulfil the task that his father has given him to do.

[9 : 48] Sometimes we think these words of the Lord are a mere resignation and willingness to do the will of God. Almost as if he's saying well if that's your will then so be it.

There's much more than this contained in the prayer of the Lord. It's a willingness to know the will of God to obey that will and to submit himself to God in all things.

It expresses first of all an intense desire to do God's will. We're told that the Lord prays the more earnestly with strong crying in tears and in an agony of blood.

And so knowing what lay before him having had that revealed to him by the angel who had come to strengthen him to reveal that yes he would have to go through it but he had the strength of his father and he had the comfort of his father at this time and up to the time of the cross he was strengthened to go ahead.

And knowing what lay before him the Lord desires to drink this cup to ensure God's approval and God's purposes.

[11 : 18] having taken on him the task of becoming assurity to the children of men he knows that unless he fulfills the task that is given to him there will be no salvation of mankind there will be no salvation of men and women there will be no future glory and he will not be the firstborn among many brethren.

The Psalm 40 reminds us that the Lord delights to do the father's will. To do thy will I take delight O thou my God that art yea that most holy law of thine I have within my heart.

A will by which those who God gave to the Son will be separated from the world and consecrated to God and by which will the Lord should become the sin offering to God for his people.

If you remember Isaiah 53 a great chapter that is read so often at communion seasons we're told the Lord put him to grief he made his soul an offering for sin and he made him a curse.

Now implicit in the Lord's words is the asking from his father of the strength and grace needed for him to pour out his soul unto death.

[13:04] It is something that he knows he must do. It is something he knows that in his humanity it is impossible for him to do without his father's help and strengthening and grace.

And as we go through life's journey there are many occasions when we find ourselves weakened we find ourselves doubting and fearful and the only recourse is the throne of grace to go there for strength and grace and help for every time of need.

The Lord has been our ultimate example here in this. And so the Lord prays for strength to enable him to embrace the sorrow and the agony of dying the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

The Lord wasn't praying that he might be saved from dying. He knew that was his purpose that he might be saved in dying.

that he would die well. That he would die gloriously. That he would die looking up to the heavens. Die in the knowledge that he was fulfilling his father's will and do it gloriously.

[14:23] Do it powerfully and fearlessly. So it's not the fact that he was dying that was causing him such fear and causing him such agony.

But that in dying he would do it as it was purposed for him to do. The Lord here is experiencing the frailty and limitations, the inadequacies of the human nature to bear the burden of the wrath of God. And so the Lord prays with strong crying and tears. He trembles before the wrath of God and throws himself prostrate on the ground praying in the words of David which he had written more than a thousand years before.

The Lord's crushing fear in all this is that he may fail and waver in his obedience. So the words be pleased to deliver me, make ace to help me, I'm poor and needing and no tarrying make that David wrote all those hundreds of years before are particularly directed to the case that the Lord here is going through.

David was writing as a king in his own situation in regards to King Saul but also he's acting as a prophet declaring what the Lord himself would one day have to experience and go through as the Lord faced the powers of darkness.

[16:15] This was the hour as we read. This is the hour of the power of darkness and he was facing them in all their strength. and all their enmity against him.

Also let not the waters overflow me. Let your loving kindness now turn toward me. Hide not your face for I am in trouble. My strength is like a pot sure dry.

We know these words so well. We sing them again and again. They're part of our worship but they're also part of what the Lord himself was experiencing. What the Lord himself cried out as he was there on the cross and during the time there of his agony.

But as well as an intense desire to do God's will, this prayer was a yearning for the salvation of his people.

God's will, the Lord is a man of prayer. The Lord is someone who is offering up to God the honor and the glory that is due and he's doing it as the servant of the Lord.

[17:27] He's doing it as one who has humbled himself and taken the form of a servant and he's doing it as one who wants to glorify God by his obedience and in knowing the obedience, in submitting to the obedience and fulfilling the obedience that was required of him.

But it's not just his own purposes the Lord is looking to at this time. He's looking to the consequences of fulfilling the work that his father had given him to do.

It was a prayer for the salvation of his own people. it was a prayer that those whom his father had given to him would be upheld, separated, and consecrated to God.

The Lord's anxiety to be preserved from failing to finish the work that his father had given him to do was increased by the thought that if he failed, there would be no salvation for the children of men.

Our salvation is caught up in the Lord's struggle, in the Lord's fulfilling the work that he was given to do.

[18:54] It's a great temptation, and there were temptations surrounding him all the time. There was to face him there in the garden.

There were his friends. Facing him was the cross on which he would be left on his own, left in abject solidness where there was no help, and there was no answer to his cries.

there's no denying that the Lord was tempted. Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. But if he was tempted, can he then help us when we are tempted? Well, he was tempted by Peter. When Peter was saying to him in Caesarea Philippi, where he says to him, be it far from you, no one's going to take you, you're not going to die.

[20 : 08] And the Lord says to Peter, get thee behind me, say. There's the thought, there's the temptation there that there's a way out of this, and the Lord knows there's no way out of it. He must go through with it.

If he's going to fulfill the work that he's been given to do, there's temptation here in the Garden of Gethsemane. Temptation as he fears, and as he trembles, and as he thinks of all he's going to lose, and all he's going to submit himself to over the coming hours.

There's a fear almost of losing his close and intimate relationship with his father. You remember the story of Abraham and Isaac.

We're told there that they went both of them together from Abraham's house to Mount Moriah. And Abraham said, I and the lad will go yonder and we will come again to you.

They went both of them together. Now the Lord, during his earthly sojourns, often said, I am not alone. My father is with me.

[21 : 22] Whenever he was forsaken, whenever his friends left him, as they did during his capture and during the crucifixion, when he was all alone, his father was with him.

But there came a time on the cross when the father wasn't there. No longer could he say, Abba, father. The cry turned to, my God, my God.

The closeness and the love and the grace that came from the father to the son was not going to be there.

And the Lord knew it. It had been revealed to him by his father that this was what was going to happen. And it's no wonder he feared. It was natural that he trembled.

It was part of the makeup of his humanity. that he would want to step back from it. And yet he knows he must go through the task that his father had given him to do.

[22 : 28] And so it's a prayer that those who his father had given him would be separated and consecrated to God.

The Lord's anxiety is to be preserved from failing to finish the work that his father had given him to do.

Again, as we sang in that psalm, let not them that wait on you be ashamed for my sake. Let those that seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

It's almost as though the Lord is saying here, let me be sustained by your covenant love towards me, your loving kindness.

I can rely on nothing else but what you have promised me. In the same way as we can rely on nothing else during our lives, but the promises that come to us through the scriptures, the promises that God will love us and he will never forsake us.

[23 : 36] The words there especially at the end of Romans chapter 8, who shall separate us from love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. And this is what the Lord is praying for.

He's praying that this might be something that comes to pass in their experience. And so the Lord is saying that as I offer myself to you, in loving obedience to your will, the salvation of all those that seek your face, that them also shout for joy and experience your love and your grace and your mercy.

Such is the subject of this prayer that the Lord is praying here. There are other aspects of this prayer. There is the nature of the prayer which talks about the faith of Christ and the upholding of Christ in that prayer of faith.

It's a prayer of consecration and faith into the one who is praying. And there's also in this prayer the success of that prayer. The success which means that all that he's prayed for comes to pass.

And we have that assurance that what he has prayed for has come to pass. And that he has finished the work and that his father has given him to do. And so our salvation is secured.

[25 : 02] Our salvation rests in the finished work. It is finished. Those words mean that for us, all has been accomplished.

We are safe. Our security is in Christ and what he has done. Such, as I said, is the subject of the prayer.

The Lord beseeching all needed grace from his heavenly father to finish the work that his father had given him to do.

And pleading also that his people, that is you and me, will be sanctified and consecrated and given the strength and the ability to follow him and so know that perfection, which Jude talks about, that we might be presented faultless before his presence with exceeding joy.

That is our future. That is our destiny. that is our hope. Not only today, but every day that we live, the hope that we can be confident that what the Lord has purposed and what the Lord has prayed for is coming to pass.

[26 : 24] May the Lord then bless these thoughts to us. We conclude our worship now by singing to God's praise in Psalm 23 and sing Psalms. Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know.

He makes me lie down where green pastures grow, leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. The whole psalm to God's praise. Amen. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know.

He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow, he made me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps he brings back to this way, in straight paths of righteousness making me stay, and this he has done his great name to display.

Though I walk in death's valley where darkness is near, because you are with me, no evil I'll fear, your rod and your staff make me comfort and cheer.

[28 : 01] In the sight of my enemies a table you spread, the oil of rejoicing you pour on my head, my cup overflows and I'm graciously fed.

so surely your covenant mercy and grace will follow me closely in all of my ways, I will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days.

Lord, we thank you again for this opportunity to meet around your word and under your word. We pray for the fellowship that is shortly to follow this meeting and pray that you would bless all that's been prepared for the use of those who will be there.

And now may grace and mercy and peace in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit one God rest on you and abide in you now and always.

Amen. Amen.