

Take away this cup from Me

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn together to the passage we read, Mark chapter 14, and read again at verse 32, page 1026, Mark chapter 14 and verse 32.

And they went to a place called Gethsemane.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. You feel when you're reading these words that you're intruding on someone's privacy.

it's a little bit like when you visit someone who's suffering it can be a very very distressing experience and it happens to us as ministers quite often we go to a hospital and you go into a room and there is someone suffering and you know that they're suffering and you know the best thing to do is not to stay long just to perhaps have a short word of prayer and because you know that that person's in pain or that person's gasping for breath or some other way and you feel that you're intruding on their privacy and the best thing of course the most appropriate thing of course when a person is like that is only to have their close friends and family with them at that particular time and that's the way i feel anyway as we're you feel as if you're watching you're in your yours you're observing or spectating something that that is so special and so momentary and so exclusive and because that's exactly what's happening we do not understand what Jesus was suffering at this moment in time and yet for some reason it is given to us the reason it's given to us is so that we we gain the kind of information that what God wants us to gain enough information for us to know as much as is possible for us to know of what Jesus went through in the garden there is much that we do not know we don't know the pain that he was suffering the dread and the horror that he was suffering at this time we don't know the way in which he prayed abba father all things are possible all we have are the words in front of us we don't know whether he prayed them quietly or loudly we don't know and yet we know that he prayed them and we can only imagine as far as it's possible for us to imagine what he was going through and i don't think that that's a wrong thing at all these words are given to us for us not to create the situation but for us to take the information that's there and to put it together to try to grasp what was going on there are many many questions that arise in your mind as you're as you read through this passage why was it that was Peter and James and John of course that's a question that that goes all the way through the gospels Peter and James and John they appear to be closer to Jesus perhaps simply naturally than the other disciples why was it that he wanted them to sit what did he want them to do i can only presume that it was to pray with him while i pray and then what does it mean that he began to be very sorrowful sorrowful verse 33 he began to be greatly distressed there is obviously a contrast between what just went before when he was in the upper room when he spoke to his disciples and observed the passover with them and what he is suffering now what he's going through now there's a huge contrast i'm not saying he wasn't aware of what lay in front of him when he was in the upper room he was he was aware of it all the time many times he said to his disciples that he told them of the day when he'd be arrested and when he'd be mocked and persecuted and eventually he would be nailed to a tree and yet there's there's a difference there's a something singularly happened to him at that moment in time when he began to be greatly distressed and troubled and then there's another

[5 : 22] question in verse 34 he said my soul is very sorrowful even to death what does it mean to be sorry even to death that word simply means sorrowful it's it's the word that means grief intense grief the kind of grief that you would suffer if a loved one was taken away from you in death it means simply intense grief what does it mean to have that grief even to the point of death none of us knows what that means we can only imagine we can take the words that are placed in front of us and we can meditate on them we can think about them prayerfully and carefully and we can try to

see all we're going to do is to spectate all we're going to do is to observe what jesus went through there's another there's another question of course and this is brought out by luke when he prayed it tells us that he sweated as it were great drops of blood where they were that was that sweat real blood or did it just appear to be blood well i believe it was real i believe that such was the intensity of his agony his psychological and his spiritual agony at that moment that apparently it is possible i'm not a medical person i don't know but i'm told that it is possible for blood to be pushed out of the of the skin at that particular point in your head and then of course there are the other quite the questions about the prayer where he said abba father all things are possible for you remove this cup from me how can we reconcile that prayer with the knowledge that he had all the way through his ministry that he had come here to give his life as a ransom for many he knew all the time he was never able to escape the knowledge that he had that one day he would be nailed to a cross and on that cross he would become sin for us and suffer the father's wrath instead of us how can we reconcile what he's praying now with what he knew all along after you can go even further and you can say about this same as you can say about his words on the cross was he not god did he not know what he was about to suffer was this not the reason why he came he knew it all the time surely as god he would have known the answer to that question that it wasn't possible for the cup to pass from him and when he hung on the cross and when he cried my god my god why have you forsaken me you can you can reason within yourself and say why is he praying that surely he knows why he is suffering and why the lord has to forsake him and to turn his back on him on the cross but that is armchair reasoning isn't it that's the kind of reasoning that comes all too easily to us when we're not suffering ourselves when we don't know what it's like to go through and we'll never know what it was like to go through what he went through and the words that we have in front of us here they simply give us a glimpse now into that experience we will never know and we have to be very careful you probably heard this before people warning you not to talk about your gethsemanes or your calvaries whatever we might go through in this world we will never have a gethsemane we will never be made to suffer the darkness that jesus suffered or the pain that he suffered on the cross whatever we might go through in this world and there are dark times times that we feel alone

and that we feel that uh that things are happening to us that we don't understand but that does not equate to our calvaries and our gethsemanes the fact is that when a person or when jesus was suffering all there was was suffering there was nothing else but suffering it was one experience and one experience alone and that was utter darkness and suffering that in which there was no light and in that experience which is only experience you can't think oh well you can't think in terms of rationalizing your situation the way that we can as we look in you can't think in these terms at all he was a human being a human being and every point like as we are yet without sin he was subject to weakness and pain when he felt pain he felt it like we felt feel it and when he was tired he was tired like we are tired in every way he was like ourselves and so for him the prospect of what he was about to go through was overwhelming to the point of death that's what he tells us i am sorrowful to the point of death even to death in other words even at that moment in time there was only a hair spread between him and death itself in human terms he was that weak he was that overcome he was so overwhelmed with the dread of what lay in front of him now some of you might be surprised to hear me talking about dread how can jesus dread anything some of you are a bit hesitant and i've heard this in discussions before you're a bit hesitant to use the word fear in terms of gethsemane i've heard the question was jesus afraid of what lay ahead of him yes he was i say this unreservedly yes he was let me use the words of professor mcleod the wonder he says of the love of christ for his people is not that for their sake he faced death without fear but that for their sake he faced it terrified that's the sense of dread that jesus had the sense of sheer horror it had to be that way how could he be truly human and not face what lay in front of him with a sense of overwhelming fear to the point in which and of course our natural human reaction is to draw back in that fear in that horror and to and so when when we see it along these lines then his prayer is a little bit more understandable for us abba father all things are possible for you another way of looking at this is to contrast the garden with other elements in the life of jesus in which everything was under his control wasn't it remember when he was in the boat and when the storm arose on the lake of galilee and when the waves were coming into the boat and if he hadn't been there the boat would have would have gone under he was asleep and the disciples ran to him and said master save us we're going to drown and he woke and the first thing he did was he rebuked the winds and the waves and they

went and they fell calm immediately and his disciples were amazed and they said who is this even the winds and the waves obey him and now it is him that is calling to the father save me take this cup from me you imagine him in the you can think about him in the upper room just moments before and he is praying for his disciples and he prays so comprehensively for them john chapter 17 he prays for them he prays for all those who would who would learn to who would hear the gospel through their preaching all those who would come to faith in him and he prays for the world that was that needed to be saved and now there is only one prayer on his lips abba father all things are possible for you remove this cup from me you remember jairus when jairus was walking along the road with him to where his daughter lay dying at home and when because of the woman with the issue of blood there was a delay and by the time jesus had healed the woman his daughter jairus's daughter had died and someone came out of the house and said to jairus don't trouble the master any further your daughter is dead and he said do not fear only believe and now it is him that is fearing what lies ahead not that he didn't know what lay ahead but that he is he has a sense of it in which he had not experienced before he began to be sorrowful something happened something came over him there was a threshold in the garden his teaching and that that element of his ministry was now finished with his disciples and and as he healed and as he taught people that that phase was finished he was now about to and of course there's a very interesting question that rises here as well i know that i'm raising a lot of questions but sometimes the bible does raise so many questions and rightly so because it is as we try and grasp these questions that we learn to study the bible and learn to appreciate and grasp some of the the great truths therein another question is is uh uh about uh the the prayer that he that he prayed abba father all things are possible for you remove this cup from me was it possible for the cup to be removed from him well of course that depends on what the cup is isn't it what did he mean by remove this cup from me well i think it's very clear that the cup he was talking about was what lay ahead of him some people some people reckon that the cup he was talking about was the suffering which he was suffering at that moment in time in the garden but i don't accept that at all because that moment in the garden was the beginning judas was just about to lead a band of of his own followers those he had betrayed jesus into and they were about to arrest him so what else could it be but that which lay ahead of him his arrest his trial his mock trial his handing over to pilot the mockings the the the beatings the crown of thorns and lastly the crucifixion and the process of dying in which he would suffer the judgment and the wrath of god what other cup could he possibly be referring to but what lay ahead of him that very day that very evening so that is what he asks the father to remove from him and we talk about hesitation here and it is a hesitation a natural human hesitation but nevertheless it is a very definite prayer remove this cup from me remove this cup from me of course the most natural way to explain that is simple human reaction to what lay ahead you know we often say it's as well that you don't know what's ahead of you and we're absolutely right when we say that it is as well it's better that we don't know what's ahead of us because if what was ahead of us next week was something awful today would be a nightmare the time that we would spend from now till then would be a nightmare we couldn't cope with having to face such a thing but jesus did know what was ahead of him that's the whole point of this moment he did know something of what was ahead of him and therefore he suffers and he suffers in a way that we cannot imagine remove this cup from me and what this prayer tells us is that it wasn't possible for there to be any other way there is a question that's very often asked was there another way in which god could take away our sin there was no other way and this prayer proves that there was no other way here is the son of god himself and he's asking this all important question about our salvation he's asking the father is there any other way for my people to be saved and the answer is no there is no other way because if there was another way god would have taken it if there was a way in which the beloved son of god could have been spared the darkness and the shame and the pain and the agony that he suffered at calvary surely the loving father would have spared him he would have chosen to spare him it wasn't as if there were two or three options and he chose the one that was most painful for his own son of course he couldn't have done that there was simply no other way than for the son of god himself to take our nature and our flesh and come into this world to represent us as a real true human being with a true body and a reasonable soul he was human in every way so that he could represent us and as the son of god with his love for his people it was that love that drove him to the cross and that meant his willingness as we were thinking about last night his willingness to go all the way to the altar where he became our sacrifice for our sin so the cup had to be given to him and he had to drink not some of it but all of it every last drop even to death itself because the wages

of sin is death and Jesus' death on the cross paid the wages of our sin and in order to die as for our sin he had to be made guilty of our sin. God we are told he placed the guilt of us just in the same way as in the Old Testament when a person brought a lamb as a sacrifice we were thinking about that last night the first thing he did was he placed his hands on the head of the lamb and transferred the guilt. God reckoned in the sight of God that lamb was guilty instead of the person who brought it and that was God's way of forcing the Israelites

to look forward in faith to the day when this person the son of God himself would become guilty for our sin by God placing the guilt of our sin upon him and I believe that his sorrow the intensity of his agony in the garden was simply that that God was placing the guilt of our sin upon him. Now I don't believe you imagine today that you were to stand before God in your sins how would you feel how would you feel any one of us doesn't matter who we are whether we're at the table or not at the table how would we feel today can you imagine it you're standing before God who sees every single thing that you have done and for once in your life you are in the presence of the God who has in front of him every every section of your life and he is the God who is of pure righteousness and to behold iniquity the judge of all the earth and the God who must punish for sin how would you feel you would feel your guilt as never before you would feel a weight that you've never ever experienced before now you imagine not just your sin but you've become you've become guilty and you're standing before God guilty not just for your own sin but for the sins of thousands millions of other people I can tell you it would be bad enough for me to stand before God in my sin I can't imagine what it would be like to become guilty for all the sins of God's people but that's what happened and in the garden Jesus as never before became aware of the awfulness the weight the burden the unbearable burden of what it is to be a sinner. God made him I'm not saying that he sinned of course he didn't sin and yet God placed our guilt upon him and punished him for that sin now there were plenty of people of course who faced the death of the cross Jesus wasn't the first person to be crucified and he wasn't the last either but it's one thing and it's awful enough to be crucified and to know the pain of the nails and to know the dislocation of the bones and the suffocation and the awful way somebody said once that if you were crucified you died a thousand deaths but it's another thing altogether in that suffering to face the wrath of God that's what Jesus that's the cup that Jesus prayed would be taken from him so in many ways when we begin to look at it in its reality it's not surprising is it that Jesus in his weakness would want to recoil in horror and in fear from what he was about to suffer but this was a prayer for which the answer was no it is not possible and Jesus resigned himself and submitted himself to that answer nevertheless not my will but yours be done thank God today that that was Jesus' response to the Father's answer nevertheless not my will none of us would be [25 : 36] here today we would all be still in our sins if it hadn't been for that nevertheless not my will but yours be done so today we remember his death we remember his will the willingness of his death how he voluntarily went to the cross and we remember the agony in his mind and in his soul as he approached that place of darkness where man did his worst to the son of God but in which in that action that God made his own son to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him we're going to bow our heads in prayer our Father in heaven bless these thoughts to us we ask we ask that you will bless our time together around your word and at the table we pray that you will accept our thanks and our worship now in Jesus' name amen well we're going to sing together and this time in Psalm 61 and it's the traditional version of the Psalm Psalm number 61 and we're going to sing from the beginning down to verse 5 Psalm 61 from the beginning to verse 5 page 293 oh God give ear unto my cry unto my prayer attend from the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee

I'll send what time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I for thou hast for my refuge been a shelter by thy power and for defense against my foes thou hast been a strong tower and I want us as we sing these words to compare the way in which we have often taken refuge in these words this Psalm is a very precious Psalm to us it talks about the rock God being the rock that is higher than ourselves and the shelter and the refuge which God is in times of trouble I want us to compare what we're able to sing in this Psalm with what Christ suffered what time my heart is overwhelmed he could not be led to the rock there was no refuge for him he had to suffer alone for our sake Psalm 61 from the beginning to verse 5 O God give ear unto my cry unto my prayer unto my prayer as end from the utmost glory of the earth might cry to thee ascend what time my heart is whole of where and forefront in the night For love has born my refuge, a shelter by thy power.

And Lord, he pensts against my foes, love us beyond strong times.
Within my sovereign land will I forever with abide.
[30 : 26] I will cover all thy ways, with all good ends devised.
For love has born my refuge, a shelter by my refuge.
But I will be the heritage of those I ever fear.