

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

The Garden of Glory

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 82-1

Whenever we come around to another Resurrection Sunday, another Good Friday, I'm always eager to bring to you something that is fresh; and, certainly, there are many, many ways to come to the cross, many scriptures that we could look to. But this one began to kind of work on my heart maybe about a month ago, or even more. Many ways to look at the cross. Many ways to look at the death of the Savior. You can look at the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You can look at the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts, referring back to the death of Christ and the resurrection. You can look at the epistles, particularly the Pauline epistles where he writes so much about the significance and meaning of the cross. And, of course, the other men who wrote the epistles look at the cross as well. You can even go to the book of Revelation and see reflections on the significance of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is one view that I want to give you tonight, and I think it's our Lord's own view of the cross.

Our Lord didn't write a book after His ascension into heaven. Yes, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers. But if you want the Lord's commentary on the cross you have to go back to the garden of Gethsemane. It was in that garden that our Lord shows us what His death meant. Yes, we know He understood the physical elements of His death.

Back in the 20th chapter of Matthew, before He had even entered into the city of Jerusalem for that Passion Week, He said to His disciples as He was about to go to Jerusalem, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him; and on the third day He will be raised up." Very specific.

On other occasions, our Lord expressed other details about the events around His death. He was very familiar with what was going to happen. He had always known that. He had always known that. But when you find Him in the garden He is in deep agony. None of that agony is related to any of the physical elements of His death. As He drew close to the cross, it wasn't the physical features that were on His mind; not even the betrayal of Judas, not even the false arrest, not even the illegal trials, not even the scourging or the spitting nor the mocking, not even the carrying of the cross, nor the scourging that ripped His flesh bare, not even the pounding in of the nails, crown of thorns, hanging naked in the sun. As horrific as those things were, they were not the cause of His agony in the garden.

As we consider His agony in the garden, we learn what His thoughts were. I want to read the garden account from one perfect life which blends together Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John's account. Just listen as I read. Here's the full account of Jesus in the garden.

"Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and there was a garden which He and

His disciples entered. And He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go and pray over there.' And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me. Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'

"He went a little farther, being withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down on the ground, and fell on His face and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. If it is Your will, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done.' Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground. When He rose up from prayer and had come to His disciples He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to Peter, 'What, Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Why do you sleep? Rise, watch, and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

Again, a second time He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words, saying, 'Oh, My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.' And when He returned He found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy, and they did not know what to answer Him.

"So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'" Such is the gospel account.

The garden of Gethsemane, just a little bit east of Jerusalem, was a very familiar place to our Lord. Went there frequently. Was a place of rest. It was a place of quiet. It was a place of solitude. It was a place of retreat. And, particularly, it was a place of prayer: communion with His Father. You might say it was a garden of sweet fellowship. It was a garden where He could meditate on heavenly, holy realities, and come apart for a little while from the sinfulness of the world.

But on this night the garden of rest has become a torture chamber. And with the exception of His separation from the Father in the hours of darkness on the cross, here in this garden is the most horrible place, the most awful place, and the worst experience that anyone has ever had in Scripture or in history. This is the experience of the Lord Jesus knowing full well what is coming, not so much physically, but what is coming spiritually on Him from God that drives Him near death in the garden. We approach that garden with deep reverence to consider the Lord's mysterious sorrow.

Isaiah 53:3, as we heard earlier, says, "He's a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And this is the pinnacle of His sorrows, at least to this point in His life, exceeded only by the separation from the Father on the cross. Here is a conflict unparalleled in human history. Here is a war raging in the soul of the Son of God. It is a battle with the wrath of God headed straight at Him. He had always been a man of sorrows. He had always been acquainted with grief. But He had always carried those sorrows alone.

As you read the gospels you find many times that He left the disciples and went into a mountain alone to pray. He carried His sorrows in secret. They were too deep and too profound. But now, for the first time in His life, in the garden He can conceal His sorrows no longer. He shares them at their

depth with His disciples – Peter, James, and John – and with all who read this passage.

His sorrow rose to a place that He had never experienced before. The cup of wrath from the Father was going to be handed to Him, and He was to drink it all. In so doing, He would receive the curse of God. He would be struck with the sword of the Lord's vengeance, penal desertion by His Father at the cross. He would make a curse for us.

In His dark anguish in the face of the Father's fury, which He knew was coming at Him in just a matter of a few hours; in this, the darkest and the ugliness unparalleled, still we see His glory. The glory of the Redeemer is seen here in a way that it's not seen anywhere else. There is glory in the garden. He, at His worst moment, is still all glorious; and what is revealed in this unequalled suffering is that glory. I see it in four ways.

First of all, His sorrow is a holy sorrow. I read to you that the Scripture says He was sorrowful and deeply disturbed even to death. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful enough to kill Me." The sorrow of the garden is produced by the Lord's anticipation of sin-bearing on the cross. No human being has ever had this kind of sorrow. This is holy sorrow that is, in a sense, sorrowful even to the point nearly of death over having to bear guilt for sin.

We don't have that kind of sorrow. Our sorrow is over our sinfulness. His sorrow was over His sinlessness. His glory is on display, because His reaction is the reaction of a holy person to the thought of bearing sin. Nothing could be more horrifying to His holy soul than to have His Father pronounce a curse on Him. He was so sorrowful that He knelt on the ground, but not for long. He fell face-down on the ground, and He cried out on all three occasions, "If it's possible, Father, let this hour pass from Me." And He even said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup from Me."

The agony was so great He was sweating as it were drops of blood. His capillaries were disintegrating and blood coming out His sweat glands. What was this cup? Isaiah 51:17 speaks of the cup of God's anger. Jeremiah 25:15 speaks of the cup of God's wrath. He sees the fury of God coming at Him, fury over sin, and all He's ever known is perfect love from the Father.

Could He have had true sinless character and not had this kind of reaction? If He didn't react like this we would wonder about His holiness. But He is perfectly pure. He is both sinless and reasonable. In other words, He understands this. And it is the most normal thing to cry out to be rescued from the terror that the Lord pours on sinners. Could He truly fear God and not tremble in anguish over the face of God turning against Him in divine anger? He had seen the Father's anger. He had exhibited divine anger. He knew what it was; it drowned the entire world.

To desire exemption from the wrath of God was the reasonable dictate of His holy nature. Not to have felt that desire would deny His holiness. Holiness can't be comfortable with guilt and condemnation and divine wrath. To have, as He did, the perfect knowledge of His Father's wrath, the perfect knowledge of His own sinless purity, and not to be filled with a desire to escape the coming judgment would bring His holiness into question.

And what is the cup again? It is the imputation of the guilt of all who would ever believe. It is to be punished for all the sins of all the people who would ever believe through all of human history as if

He was guilty. The punishment is incalculable. It is the cup of the hour of darkness. He is sorrowful, but His is a sorrow we don't understand. It is a holy sorrow, the sorrow of revulsion of the one who is perfectly pure and about to be made sin for us.

Secondly, you see His glory in His holy trust, His holy trust. Has anyone ever trusted more to the Father than Jesus did? Has anyone? Of course not. The sinless one to bear the punishment for sin. Has there ever been such a sacrifice or anything even remotely close to it? When He says to His Father, "If it is Your will, let it pass. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done." And He says it three times. This is holy trust; this is holy faith.

He could have used His infinite, divine powers; He possessed them. He could have ended the torture. He could have ended the profound humiliation short of the cross. He could have taken what He deserved and avoided what He did not deserve. He had the power. But He did not will to do that. He willed to put Himself in His Father's hands while His Father poured out vengeance on Him. He even said, "Nobody takes My life from Me, I lay it down by Myself."

Listen to Jesus in John 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

"For now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'" There has never been an act of trust like this where the sinless, perfectly holy Son of God places Himself helplessly in the middle of the curse of God.

When Satan tempted Him, he said to him, "If You are the Son of God, You don't have to suffer, You don't have to be hungry, You don't have to be rejected, You don't have to be ignored. I'll call on You to make bread; You deserve it. I'll call on You to demonstrate Your deity by a great miracle. I'll call on You to embrace the kingdoms of the world; I'll give them all to You. You are the Son of God; You don't serve deprivation, You don't deserve to be hungry, You don't deserve to be rejected, You don't deserve to be ignored."

And it was true, until the cross; and this was His will and the Father's will. This is holy trust. This is a Holy One putting Himself in the hands of the Father for the sake of sinners, to feel the fury of the wrath of God. All His glories though concealed, when you see Him in the garden, are really there.

Holy sorrow, holy trust. And then, thirdly, holy strength. It is a garden of glory. It is a garden of glory. He brought with Him Peter, James, and John into the garden to pray, to pray with Him, and to pray for Him. And, again, as I said earlier, this is not usual for Him; He prays alone. This is really the only time that He asks them to come and pray alongside of Him, and all the while to pray for themselves as well, because it was going to get very difficult, and temptation would be great.

He prayed three times; they slept. He commanded them, "Rise, watch, pray, lest you enter into temptation." The sleep was evidence of their flesh. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

What did their sleeping indicate? Weakness. It was the sin of indifference, indifference to the obligation of friendship, to the obligation of love, to the obligation of obedience. It was the sin of fleshly indulgence. Sleep: that is a fleshly indulgence. It was the sin of squandered fellowship, squandered privilege. It was the sin of overconfidence. But most of all, it was the sin of failing love.

They had been given more privileges than any human beings who've ever lived. They were given richly incomparable grace. They should have been saying what the psalmist said in Psalm 116:12, "What shall I do for all the Lord's benefits to me?" "Can I not stay awake? Can I not pray?"

Sleep: that's negligence, that's indifference, that's lovelessness. They slept while the Lord sorrowed. They were weak; He was not. What you see here is someone so engaged in prayer, there is no thought of sleep, and there is so much strength in that prayer that His physical body begins to break apart. That's how strong He is inside. He's not like them. He prayed until He bled, without sleep, without weakness. His spirit was willing and His flesh was strong, strong.

All the way to the cross and after all that He suffered on the cross, He did not die by any physical means. He yielded up His spirit and willed His own death. Remember, He was sinless. There was no decay operating in Him. There was no diminished strength. So you see in Him holy sorrow, holy trust, and holy strength. This, again, is the revelation of His glory in the garden.

But there's one more. The final revelation is in my mind the most stunning, and the most overlooked, and the most beautiful. The Lord prayed in His sorrow, "If it is Your will, take this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done." And He prayed, as I read to you, with distress, sorrow unto death, agony, torture, wracking His holy soul. And then an amazing thing happened. It says an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. You've read that, right?

Did you ever ask, "What did the angel do? What did he do?" He didn't need strength, that's evident. He didn't need information, He knew everything. He didn't need wisdom. He didn't need a counselor. And, by the way, it says, "The angel strengthened Him," – and then immediately after that – "and being in agony, He prayed more earnestly."

There is no diminishing in His strength. But the angel did something to intensify His prayers. In fact, so intense now is His praying that this is when His sweat becomes like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

What did that angel do? Well, he didn't ease His pain; it was more agony after that. He didn't comfort Him; there was more intensity after that, there was more suffering after that. No angel could add anything to His divine nature. No angel would give Him more holy sorrow, more holy trust, or more holy strength. No angel could give Him any information that He didn't have or any wisdom that He didn't possess. No angel could rescue Him from the cup of divine wrath or mitigate it. So what did the angel do? This is not a rescue, because He has all power. What did the angel do to strengthen Him? He did what angels do all the time.

Listen to Hebrews 1, such a wonderful passage. Speaking of Christ, it says, "He is the heir of all things," – verse 2 – "through whom also He made the world. He's the radiance of His glory," – the glory of the Father, of God – "He's the exact representation of His nature, upholds all things by the Word of His power. When He made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty

on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He had inherited a more excellent name than they." So no angel has anything to offer Him, as if He lacked something.

"For which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? And again, 'I'll be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me'? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him,' – there it is – 'let all the angels of God worship Him.'" God commanded all the angels to worship the Son. To the Son He says, verse 8 of Hebrews 1, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."

What do angels do? They what? What do they do? They worship. What did that angel do that day? That angel worshiped. One angel dispatched from heaven. The Lord is on the ground. He's lying down, crying to the Father, and the angel is bending down worshiping Him.

What is the significance of that? God sent one angel to give Him a preview of what He would receive when He came through the cross, out the tomb, and to the right hand of the Father. And all the angels of heaven, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands, and thousands would worship Him forever and ever and ever and ever.

A Scottish pastor back in 1875 by the name of Hugh Martin said it so beautifully: "To He made the object of divine worship an adoration. To be with profoundest love and reverence reminded that though reproached of men and despised of the people, though tortured and abased in body and in soul to the utmost extreme of anguish and of woe, though avenged upon by God as the substitute for countless sinners bearing their responsibilities and visited with all their curse, though reduced in His created nature to all the extremity of submission and anguish of which it was susceptible, that still He was the adorable and true God, the living God, and everlasting King to be worshiped still while Himself a prostrate, agonizing worshiper, still to be Himself worshiped and adored by the messenger from heaven with all the adoration that messenger had been rendering at the Father's throne."

Oh, this was precisely the ministration of strength to His fainting soul, which the crisis of the anguish required. It was a foretaste by one angel of His coming glory, when all angels, principalities, powers – every knee will bow. The worshiping angel is the Father's messenger in a moment of profound abasement to tell Him that exaltation is coming.

So what is the fourth? Holy worship. It is a garden of glory; holy worship. Himself a trembling worshiper of the Father, on His face before God, there falls an angel worshiping Him and adoring Him, to give Him a taste of the coming glory. It is a garden of glory.

Father, we thank You for the power, the wonder, majesty, the glory that we see of Christ even in the garden. Even though it became a torture chamber for Him, He still is all-glorious, and nothing can diminish that glory, nothing. He knew what was coming. He knew what the cross meant. It wasn't just physical suffering, it was divine wrath, and He knew it.

Lord, as we think about what You have done for us, blessed Lord Jesus, we offer You again words and prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving for all that You have done for us, for all that You did in the darkness of Calvary, and all that You endured even in the garden of glory. Whatever the garden was in all its torture, the cross was more. It wasn't just the anticipation, it was the reality when divine

vengeance broke, and You cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

And in those words we come to grips with the hell that You endured for three hours receiving our punishment. In the name of Christ. Amen.

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