

1.8.12

# THE CUP OF CHRIST

MARK 14:32-42

## INTRO

Several months ago, we came upon the loan text in the book of Mark that dealt with hell. Found in Mark 9:42-50, Jesus taught that “...*if your hand, foot, or eye causes you to sin, [cut them off. For] It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God [dismembered] than [to be whole, and] to be thrown into hell, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’* We concluded that what Jesus was saying was that not only is self-mutilation **better than** hell, but also death itself, or ceasing to exist would be **better than** hell. Revelation 9:6 bears this out “*And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.*” Non existence is better than hell for primarily two reasons. **1)** A soul in hell is under the focused, and concentrated gaze of an omnipotent God who is unimaginably furious. **2)** Non-existence is better than hell because, this unrestrained rage is untempered by time. There are no amount of ages that will pass that will ease the suffering of the soul in hell. No pity from the Holy God where He will say enough. God’s unrestrained violence, His unrestrained terror, and His unrestrained hatred will be poured out on the wicked in a place where the words: past, present, and future bear no meaning. The puritan Thomas Brooks says “*The damned shall live as long in hell as God Himself shall live in heaven.*”<sup>1</sup> This subject of Hell is intimately related to our text this morning although we don’t see the word appear once. I hope to demonstrate that the agony that Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane was an agony that was brought on because He had a full and accurate view of the unmitigated fury of His Holy Father. In other words, HELL...and that hell was targeted directly on His own soul.

**THE BIG IDEA** is that what Christ saw in the cup was the torture of His own soul and the redemption of ours.

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<sup>1</sup> I.D.E. Thomas pg. 137 *A Puritan Golden Treasury* The Banner of Truth Trust 2007

## DOCTRINE

This garden scene is recorded in the other gospels and in order to get a full understanding of what took place, we must borrow from all of them. Luke tells us that Jesus “...*came out and went, **as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.***” Luke 22:39. So this wasn’t an attempt of Jesus to hide or to conceal himself. Remember that He just sent Judas out to betray him earlier that evening. He knew that Judas would come.<sup>2</sup> In spite of that, Jesus went according to His normal manner of doing things. The lamb of God, was walking into the lion’s den, knowing that the fierce beast would be coming back soon.

The name of this garden, Gethsemane, is extremely symbolic for what was about to take place. Unlike the Garden of Eden which means pleasure, Gethsemane depicts an “oil press.” The Garden itself was at the base of the Mount of Olives, so it’s not a stretch to imagine that the olives from the mount were taken here, where they were crushed in order to extract their precious oil. Fitting name for what was to take place this night.

Upon arrival Mark says in v. 32-33 that Jesus “...*said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John...*” So leaving the rest behind, Jesus took his inner circle, those who were with him when he was transfigured. These three were the elite amongst them if you will. Spurgeon called them the “...*elect of the elect.*”<sup>3</sup> Remember that for later. v. 33 goes on to say that Jesus “...*began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."* We’ll deal with the disciples near the end, for now I want to focus chiefly on Jesus. On this night, Jesus said his soul was sick with sorrow to the point of death. To the point of extinction.

Leading up to this moment in the garden, we can find clues in the gospel accounts that Jesus **was dreading this day**. Luke 12:49-50 records Jesus saying “*I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and **how great is my distress until it is accomplished!***” Jesus had in view this day long before it came, however, as the time drew closer, the clouds grew darker.

When this day finally approached, Mark says in our text that he was *greatly distressed and troubled*. Other translations say that He was *sore*

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<sup>2</sup> John 18:2

<sup>3</sup> Charles Spurgeon from his sermon *Gethsemane*--Luke 22:44 February 8th, 1863

*amazed and very heavy.* Jesus was *struck with terror*. That's the biblical usage of those words. So the question needs to be asked: What was the source of this dread-filled sorrow? What was the source of this terror?

v. 35 say "...And going a little farther, **he fell on the ground** and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him." Now we know that it was a very cold night because later Peter has to warm himself by the fire. So here Jesus fell on the cold earth and Matthew records that he plants his face in the soil. Matt 26:39 says that Jesus "...going a little farther **he fell on his face** and prayed" Astonishing! Jesus the King of glory, the one who upholds all of existence by the word of His power put his face in the dirt to pray. This sinless one cast down his countenance in perfect submission and obedience before His Father. And then he prayed.

v. 36 "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. **Remove this cup from me.** Yet not what I will, but what you will." At last we come to the source of Jesus' terror. On the one hand we see Jesus here disclosing to us the unimaginable affection that He shares with the Father. He calls out "Abba, Father" or 'Papa, Father!' On the other hand, we see the Father in return giving this cup to His only Son. To take up. To drink it down to its dregs. **The cup.** That source of Jesus' sorrow, was now fully before Him, totally exposed to Jesus' gaze, and it was in the Father's hand for His Son to receive.

**So what was in the cup?** Was it the betrayal? Was it the beatings? The mocking? The scourging? The crown of thorns? The roman cross? Yes...and it was infinitely more than that. The cup contained nothing less than the horror of infinite torture...and it was targeted not *merely* on Jesus' physical body, but to the depths of His soul. Remember His statement, *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.* The chief portion of his anguish resided in His inner man. The nature of this agony far exceeds any common suffering. Luke's account testifies to this. In 22:44 he says that "...his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke is not saying that his sweat was merely **like** blood, similar to other places in the Bible where one thing is said to be **like** another. The Psalmist says that God's love is **like** the mighty mountains. No, Luke is saying that blood was being violently pressed out through Jesus' pores. This is an extremely rare medical condition called hematomidrosis. Dr. Fredrick Zugibe explains *"The severe mental anxiety...activates the sympathetic nervous system to invoke the stress-fight or flight reaction to such a degree causing hemorrhage of the vessels supplying the sweat glands into the ducts of the sweat glands and extruding out onto the skin. While hematomidrosis has been reported to occur from other rare medical entities, **the presence of***

*profound fear accounts* [for this phenomenon]"<sup>4</sup> Jesus' soul was surrounded with terror and it was causing his blood vessels to explode behind his skin. That blood was then forced out with sweat through the pores. I mentioned earlier that this took place on a cold night. Jonathan Edwards points this out and says "...*when* [the blood] *came to be exposed to the cool air of the night, it* [coagulated] *and stiffened as is the nature of blood and so fell off from him not in drops but in clotters.*"<sup>5</sup> Jesus was under such duress that the ground beneath him was being littered with clotted blood clumps.

What are we to do with that? Nobody on planet earth can relate to Jesus in His experience in the garden. He stands without peers. The prophet Jeremiah testifies to this "*Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, **which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.***" Lamentations 1:12 This cup was filled with a substance worse than death. The unmitigated anger of Almighty God was in the cup. HELL WAS IN THE CUP. I don't mean that the unquenchable fire, or the worm that never dies, or the constant weeping and gnashing of teeth. No, those are merely signs that point to the reality. Calvin point out "*He had not horror at death, therefore, simply as a passage out of the world, but because he had before his eyes the dreadful tribunal of God, and the Judge himself armed with inconceivable vengeance...*"<sup>6</sup> **That is Hell.** There's not a place to hide today, tomorrow, or a billion ages from now from that dreadful gaze. It's constant, it's unquenchable, it's infinite. That gaze is what pierced the soul of Jesus in Gethsemane. Psalm 75:8 says "*For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.*" Jesus' eyes were fixed on that and it made him "*sorrowful even to death.*"

Although, as we've already said, Jesus was dreading this day, but this level of agony is unprecedented up to this point. In fact, Jesus led his disciples in song before making the journey to the garden-Mark 14:26. So why this new level of agony? What changed? The answer is that at this point Jesus' human nature **finally and fully** saw what lay ahead of Him in a way that was more concealed before. This was a necessary disclosure. He must have seen what lay before Him, and then voluntarily step into that

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<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hematidrosis>

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards sermon on Luke 22:44 (1.3)

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin pg. 228 *Harmony of the Evangelists* BakerBooks 2009

role in order for redemption to be secured. Jonathan Edwards says this *“Christ was going into a dreadful furnace of wrath and it was not proper that he should plunge himself into it blindfold...not knowing how dreadful the furnace was...therefore...God first brought him and set him at the mouth of the furnace that he might look and stand and view the fierce and raging flames of it and might see where he was going and might voluntarily leap into it and bear it for sinners...If Christ had not fully known what the dreadfulness of those sufferings were before he took them upon himself, his taking them upon himself could not have been fully his own act as man.”*<sup>7</sup> If it wasn't fully his own act, then we are all lost. Think of the saying *“...had I known it was going to be like this, I would have never gone through with this.”* Jesus had to fully know in his human nature what was ahead of him, and then embrace it completely, otherwise the Father could not have been appeased. His Father only accepts perfect obedience, and if He was to bear the sins of His people then His obedience had to be perfect.

That perfect obedience is seen after he makes his request to have the cup removed for he says *“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”* Christ's strongest desire is that His Father will be done. So although the curse of the cup hangs over him, he will not deviate from the Father's will.

The Father did something remarkable next. Luke 22:43 says *“And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.”* The Father strengthened His son with an angel. Jesus said He was *“sorrowful even to death.”* God heard His son and brought a measure of relief to Him. He also did something else. He sent Jesus His answer to His request. We can infer this based on how Jesus responded. He gets up. He goes back to his disciples, and when he comes back to pray, **the nature of his request changes.** Matthew records the prayer the second time he said *“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”* (26:42) No longer *“remove this cup from me”* but *“...if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will done.”* Do you see that? Jesus is no longer asking to have the cup removed, BUT instead reduces his request to have the Father's will be done. A subtle change in the language, but a drastic change in the meaning. How do we square this with Mark's text though? Mark says that *“...again he went away and prayed, saying **the same words.**”* Jesus did pray the same words in the **second petition** of his prayer *“...your will be done,”* but not the same words in the **first petition**, Matthew's text proves this out. Both are true. He continued to pray **the same words** of submission

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Edwards sermon on Luke 22:44 (1.4)

to the Father, and yet now he was praying **even more earnestly**. Luke 22:44 records his posture when he returned “*And being in an **agony he prayed more earnestly;***” More earnestly. With agony. Jesus’ prayer intensified after He was strengthened by the angel. Hebrews 5:7 records something that we don’t see in this text. It says “*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, **with loud cries and tears**, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*” Jesus cried out and wept. Loudly! “*My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.*”

So in what way does the nature of Jesus’ request change? How was it different from the first?

Jonathan Edward’s says that “*...the purpose of the second request [and third]...is that God’s will might be done in that...the end of His sufferings [would manifest] the Glory of God and [that] the salvation of the Elect may not fail. [Jesus] had an extraordinary sense of how dreadful the consequences would be if God’s will should fail of being done. He having now such an extraordinary view of the terribleness of the wrath of God, his love to the elect tended to make him more than ordinarily earnest that they might be delivered from suffering that wrath to all eternity, which could not have been if he had failed of doing God’s will or if the will of God in the effect of His sufferings had failed.*”<sup>8</sup> Jesus was praying that His mission would not fail. It’s as if Jesus was praying “*Father, if you’re going to torture me, I pray that torture would be infinite, so as to vindicate your great glory in the saving of sinners. I pray that you would keep me from failing under this infinite retribution and that you would not hold anything back, but put on me the exact punishment that your holy justice requires. I pray that I would be thoroughly bruised and crushed beyond human recognition, bearing the weight of sins, **so that** your precious ones that you have given to me will not fail to be saved.*”

Jesus, like all of us, has a hierarchy of values. Vindicating God’s glory, saving sinners, were His chief concerns when he came into the world. His torture was the only currency that guaranteed those things being accomplished. His last prayers in the garden were prayers that asked for that to happen. God so loved that he did not remove the cup from His Son. Christ so loved the world that he prayed that the Father would perfectly pour out the cup upon Himself.

What were his disciples doing during this great agony? They were proving that Jesus was the hero of this story. His inner circle, the elect of

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid* (2.2.2, 2.3)

the elect were on their backs while Jesus was on his face. v. 37-38 records *And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* Jesus wasn't asking for extraordinary feats to be accomplished by his disciples, he was asking for just a few minutes. **"Could you not watch one hour?"** What ingratitude these men had! What ingratitude we have! How many times since we have been following Christ have we failed to watch and pray with our Savior? How many times this week? This type of ingratitude knows no equal. And yet, there is hope in this story, because the hero is Christ, not the disciples and not us. In the garden, when he was on his face, they were on their backs. When he was sweating blood, they were snoring. It's easy to fall into the trap and to look at the disciples with contempt, but how often do we find ourselves yawning at those drops of blood? **Three times** Jesus came upon his disciples and they were sleeping. v. 40-41 records *"And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?"* The contrast in this passage is amazing! While they could not think of anybody but themselves, Jesus thought of everybody but Himself. Calvin using his imagination says this "[It's] *as if [Jesus] had said, "Though you take no concern about me, do not fail, at least, to think of yourselves; for your own interests are involved in it, and if you do not take care, temptation will immediately swallow you up."*"<sup>9</sup> To the end, this type of love is foreign and alien to us. There is no illustration other than the cross itself that demonstrates this type of care that the Savior shows in the garden for those He loves. For us.

Finally Jesus' agony in the garden is finished and he says to his disciples in v. 41-42 *"It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."* We'll see this final garden scene next week and the kiss that seals the deal.

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<sup>9</sup> John Calvin pg. 235 *Harmony of the Evangelists* BakerBooks 2009

## APPLICATION

### **For those who have not been born again:**

Jesus gave a dreadful warning in Luke 23:31 *“For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”* Jesus was the green tree and He was terrified to face the wrath of God. If you have not been born again, Jesus asks somewhat rhetorically *“what will happen?”* Thomas Watson says this *“The torments of hell abide forever...If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousand years a bird should come, and take away one grain of sand, it would be a long time [before] that vast heap of sand were emptied; yet, it after all that time the damned may come out hell, there [would be] hope; but this word FOREVER breaks the heart.”*<sup>10</sup> Don't perish. Repent. Turn away from your sin and into the arms of the Savior. Christ pours out his love on murderers, adulterers, homosexuals, liars, fornicators, drunkards, rapists, God-haters. That is scandalous love. He can only do this because what he accomplished when he drank that cup. The atonement started in the garden. Jesus got a full view of what was coming and he stepped into that role. He willingly, and obediently took up his cross and laid down his life as a substitute for all who would believe. You can't earn this salvation. You can't do enough good deeds for this salvation. You can't pray enough for this salvation. You can't give enough for this salvation. It's received by faith alone. Not by believing facts, but by internalizing the promise. Trusting that Christ alone can save you from the wrath of the Father. Trusting that Christ alone, the God-man, can make you righteous enough to stand before Him. Trusting that Christ alone can take your sin and cast them into the deepest ocean and remember them no more. Trusting in Christ alone plus nothing. Trusting that when Christ said it is finished, He meant it. .

### **For those who have been born again:**

Know for a fact that Jesus swallowed up that cup for you. We deserve to be in hell as long as God reigns in heaven and Jesus Christ looked on you and me with compassion and sweat blood for what was coming. That did not stop Him. Why? Because He loves you! This text is a MEGAPHONE for that love. Christ greedily gulped that down for us. *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”* Romans 5:10

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<sup>10</sup> I.D.E. Thomas pg. 137 *A Puritan Golden Treasury* The Banner of Truth Trust 2007

