



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior, Mark 14:32-42

"Gethsemane - I: The Horror of Eternal Punishment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we're grateful to Thee that we can come to Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Thee to minister to us through the Scriptures and know that Thou dost hear our petitions. And we would ask now, as we consider one of the most significant events in our Lord's life and ministry, that we may be led by the Holy Spirit into a deeper understanding of it, and may the truth stir us and motivate us.

We pray too, Lord, that as a result of the ministry of the Spirit that our lives may be more conformable to Thy will and to Thy word. And we would now commit each one of us to Thee and ask for Thy blessing upon us in the next hour. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the first of a two-part study of Gethsemane and our title for tonight is "Gethsemane: The Horror of Eternal Punishment". And I want to introduce our study. Tonight we will devote our attention to the first of the petitions which Jesus offered to the Father and then two weeks from tonight, we will consider the second and third and deal with one of the great theological issues that arises out of this Gethsemane account. But first, a few words by way of introduction.

The third volume of Winston Churchill's World War II history is entitled *The Gathering Storm*. In a sense, we could call the Transfiguration the gathering storm of our

Lord's life because there are some evident connections between that event and the suffering that he would ultimately accomplish upon Golgotha. If the Transfiguration was the gathering storm, there now in the Gethsemane account fall the first sheets of rain from the skies. At the summits of our Lord's life, it is evident that he saw the cross as the consummation of his ministry.

Speaking of the human nature of Jesus, I think we may say that the form of our Lord's suffering may not have been so clear to him, but the fact of it was very clear even in his human nature. You can sense in the accounts of his life that this was the thing that began to grip him very early. You can see some evidences of it in the temptation. You can see it in the incident of Cana of Galilee where the words of the virgin Mary cause him to think about his hour which should ultimately come. There were the Greeks who came to our Lord and as a result of his encounter with them, his soul became troubled. And so on through the major events of our Lord's life, it is evident that the cross looms larger and larger as the events unfold.

When you study these events in our Lord's life and put them all together, one of the things, of course, that stands out is, as we've been trying to point out, that this work of God through Jesus Christ is God's action. And, for example, in the garden, the Lord Jesus in a few moments will say, "The cup which my Father hath given me to drink shall I not drink it?" And so it is evident from those words that he speaks that he regards the suffering that he is going to endure as something that the Father has given him. So the work of God the Father looms large in the work of Jesus Christ.

Now it does not take any spiritual understanding at all to realize that it is not only God the Father who is active in the death of Jesus Christ, but also human beings because as Peter puts it in Acts chapter 2 and verse 22,  
"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and

foreknowledge of God (that's God's part), ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (and that is man's part)."

And so it is evident that not only did the Father have part in the suffering of Christ, but man also as well. But I think it is also fair to say that there is a progress in this. That is the sufferings of our Lord become more intense as he moves through his ministry. And, of course, as he approaches the time when he shall die upon the cross at Calvary, then the thoughts of that suffering begin to cast their shadows before them. And we have some evidence of that in the event when the Greeks came to our Lord and then in Gethsemane.

The old theologians used to speak of our Lord's sufferings on the cross as the *passio magna*, as "The Great Suffering". And I think that is scriptural because it is evident from the study of the Scriptures that the heights of our Lord's suffering are reached when he is upon the cross. And I think also that when we think about the atonement of our Lord Jesus, we must conclude that it is only upon the cross that the atoning sufferings take place. That is evident from a statement that Jesus made at the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper. In Luke he said, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer".

Now we all know that Jesus Christ had suffered up to this point, but here he is speaking about the *passio magna*, about the Great Suffering. So we have then God's action, man's action, and we also have our Lord's action because it is our Lord, as Paul puts it, "Who loved us and gave himself for us". We could also point out, I think, that Satan himself had a part in it. So men have a part in the suffering of Christ, Satan has a part in the suffering of Christ, God has a part in the suffering of Christ, God the Father, and God the Son has a part in the suffering of Christ.

When we come to the Gethsemane account, I think there is another thing that we ought to mention. I know as I study the Scriptures, one of the things that makes a great

deal of difference with me is the fact that we are seeing the outworking in time of the great eternal covenant made between the persons of the Trinity, when the Father, the Son, and the Spirit covenanted together with regard to the plan of salvation.

You might have thought that Jesus Christ would come in like some superior surgeon who operates almost without emotion and perform the work of redemption, but it is not so. It is evident that our Lord enters into the experiences of his suffering and his death in a way that you and I could never understand. But, the councils of eternity, which are so theological, so technical, so doctrinal, and at times seem so far from us, now enter into the living contact with time itself. And I think this is one of the most striking things about the account of our Lord's life and ministry. We are now looking at doctrinal things becoming real, personal, vital things in the suffering of Christ.

The historicity of the Gethsemane account is beyond question; even acknowledged by Jewish unbelievers such as the great scholar, Joseph Klausner. The early church would never have created this picture of its Lord or even of its apostles. They would never have, if they were just simply inventing events in the life of our Lord, they never would have pictured Jesus Christ groveling on the ground and crying out, "All things are possible with Thee. Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me". That creates too many questions in the minds of the saints. They never would have created an event like this.

And then the apostles themselves would never have created the picture that we get of them; for while Jesus Christ is involved in this event, which is apparently very, very momentous, they are back asleep on the ground because they couldn't stay awake amid the pressures of the events. So it is evident that this event is not an event that anyone would manufacture.

As a matter of fact, the Gethsemane account has been the basis of some jeering and scoffing at Christians and some jeering and scoffing at Jesus Christ himself. Some of the early unbelievers, for example, Celsus and Julian the Apostate. They made fun of the

Christians' God who acted as he did in the Garden of Gethsemane and as he did upon the cross. And there was one wretch whose historical record is told in the days of Henry the Fourth of France, who went to the guillotine boasting about how he was going to the guillotine without being disturbed and upset as Jesus of Nazareth was, and boasting over how much better he was suffering death than our Lord. So this is not an event that anyone would manufacture.

Klausner, although he thinks the last clause of the prayer, "Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done" was an addition of the evangelist in order that Jesus might not be embarrassed, yet writes, "The whole story bears the hallmark of human truth. Only a few details are dubious". I think that's a rather amazing thing for a Jewish scholar to admit. And furthermore, when he finishes his little account of a page or two of the Gethsemane event in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, he says, "This event has left an impression upon the minds of anyone who has ever read about it forever". It's an amazing thing.

Well, now we're going to look at the first petition and I'm going to read for our Scripture reading verses 32 through 38,

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: (this is Mark 14 and verse 32) and he saith to his disciples, 'Sit ye here, while I shall pray'. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and to be very depressed; and saith unto them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch' (Those are very interesting words. Our Lord is very depressed. I wonder if some modern day psychiatrist could have helped him). And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt'. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, 'Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak'".

If we had been in Jerusalem on the night of our Lord's entry into Gethsemane, we would have noticed, I would imagine, a profound Sodom-like security that spread over the ancient city; the city that killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent unto it. With Jacob we might well have said, "How dreadful is this place", for it was evident that God was there. And if you had had occasion that night to try to find our Lord and someone had said, "Well, he's probably out in Gethsemane", why, you would have retraced your steps something like this. Jesus, remember, had offered a prayer at the conclusion of the upper room discourse and they had sung a hymn and then they had marched out over the Kidron into the garden. And if you went into that garden that night, you would have come to eight of the apostles who were outside and then you would have come to three: Peter, James and John and found them asleep. And farther on, you would have noticed a figure down upon its knees, and then falling upon its face and you would have heard some of these words that we have just read.

Gethsemane is a term that means "the oil press" and it's a very fitting name for Gethsemane for it was there that Jesus Christ was pressed. To change the figure a little bit, there were three men that night who were sifted. One was our Lord. He was sifted. You remember Jesus had said, "Simon, Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that Thy faith fail not". So Peter was sifted that night. The other man who was sifted was Judas. Our Lord was sifted and found to be all wheat. Peter, of course, was sifted and found to be part wheat and part chaff. And Judas was sifted and found to be all chaff.

Now our Lord is pressed and we read that he said to the disciples, "Sit ye here while I shall pray". What kind of petition do you think he offered to the Father? What do you think he prayed about? It may seem to be a foolish thing to say for any Bible student, what our Lord prayed that night, but I feel very sure in my mind that one of the great petitions that was upon his heart is evident from the petition that we have found

here in verse 36. I think that's what he intended to pray about. In fact, I think that was the chief thing that he intended to pray about because, you see, he has just finished the Lord's Supper. He has taken the cup. He has given thanks. He has given it to them. They have all drunk of it. And then he has said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many". It is evident that his death was upon his mind. That is in verse 24. So it is evident that from the time of the Lord's Supper, he is thinking about his death. And this has so gripped his heart as he draws nigh unto the time when he must suffer that he said to those disciples, "You stay here while I shall pray". And, of course, he was going to pray about the struggle of the cross that was facing him. That is evident, I think, from the context of this passage.

Now Mark also tells us in verse 33, "That he began to be greatly amazed and to be very depressed". His agitation is visible. The apostles are able to see it. Before he even speaks, they can tell that there is something upon his heart. The very first words that he utters, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death", are words that are derived from the Old Testament Psalms.

You'll notice how all of these accounts are constructed on the basis of the Old Testament Scriptures. Psalm 22; Psalm 69; here is Psalm 42. One of the commentators on Psalm 42 has described this Psalm as "the dark night of the soul". The Psalmist compares his wretchedness under affliction to the cheerless existence of Sheol.

And how fitting that is because that is precisely what our Lord is thinking about and troubled about. He is troubled because he himself must bear the punishment of men who deserve Sheol. And so it's only natural that he should reach back into the Old Testament and take out a passage which speaks typically of him. And in the words of the Psalmist who is under affliction and deep trouble, he compares his experience to the cheerless existence of Sheol. Whereas our Lord is going to have to enter into Sheol in the spiritual sense and suffer for the sins of sinners.

That word, and to be very depressed, is a very interesting word too. In the Greek text, it comes from a couple of words, which really mean "away from home": *ademos*. *Ademoneo* is the verb, but it comes from those two: *ademonos*; away from home. So it is evident that something of the separation that our Lord is to experience upon the cross has now begun to impress itself upon him. In a few moments, of course, he will cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But we are seeing the beginning of it here. He began to be sore depressed or very depressed, as my edition has it.

Now it is not but just a few moments after he has said this that he goes forward a little bit more and falls upon the ground and one of the passages says, "He fell upon his face". And so he lies upon the ground, apparently in deep agitation, writhing like a worm, pressed by the Spirit of God, as he considers the suffering that he is undergoing or going to undergo. The Psalmist, remember in Psalm 22 in the passage which speaks of our Lord so beautifully, which he will quote in "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" says, "I am a worm and no man". Well, here is the place where our Lord Jesus looks more like a worm than anywhere else. One of the old Puritan commentators has said, "He filled the silent night with his crying and watered the cold earth with his tears. More precious than the dew of Hermon or any moisture next unto his own blood that ever fell on God's earth since the creation".

Now the apostles heard this agonizing petition, "Abba, Father". Abba is the Aramaic term for father and the father that follows is the translation of it. "Abba, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou will."

Now I want to comment first about the little demonstrative adjective "this". "Take away this cup from me". I do not think that that is unimportant. When I was in Edinburgh about fifteen years ago, I heard a Bible teacher get up in the morning meeting, which was the Lord's Supper, and he gave a message on the word "this". I thought it was the most senseless message I think I'd ever heard. He talked about "this" something over



here and "this" something over there and "this" something over there. He evidently had opened up the concordance and just picked out about seven "this's" and talked about seven things that had no real relationship to one another at all. So I guess I've been a little bit afraid of this little word "this", but in this case I'm not afraid of "this". This, this is something because I want you to notice that our Lord refers to it very specifically. He says, "Take away this cup from me".

What is there significant about this cup? Well, in the first place, there is a oneness about all of the events of our Lord's life that needs stress. And it is evident that this particular incident is something that is of the greatest significance to him. There was only one time when our Lord was born. There was one time when he was tempted in the temptation. There was one event of transfiguration. There is one event in Gethsemane. There is one event of the cross. There is no second cross. There is no third cross. There is no continuation of the cross. As the Roman Catholic Church in its mass confesses that the once and for all death of our Lord was not sufficient. There can be no repetition of the events of our Lord's life. There was one burial and there is one resurrection. If our Lord rose twice from the dead, we should not have the Bible and the work of redemption as we find it in the Scriptures. There is a oneness about all of the events of our Lord's life and there will be a one time Second Advent to the earth. So it is "this" cup, that is it's the one prophesied cup; it's the cup that the whole of the Scriptures have spoken about. I don't think that we are stressing something that is unimportant. This cup has this oneness about it that is of the greatest significance.

But the "this" is no doubt not as important as the word cup. What does the cup mean? Well, we have a clue back in verse 23, "And he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it and he said unto them, 'This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many'". The cup? Why, the cup is the figure of his death. It's the figure of the shedding of the blood. It's one of the chief figures of our Lord's death. There are others, of course. He speaks about his death as a

baptism back in chapter 10 and verse 38. Jesus said unto them, 'Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' He speaks about his death as a baptism and the parallelism of that verse indicates that the cup likewise speaks of his death.

Now he has also spoken about his death as a road that he must travel in chapter 14 and verse 21, "The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" So the death of our Lord is likened to a cup. It's likened to a baptism and it's likened to a road that he must travel. James Denny said, "The cup? Why, the cup is the cup that our sins had mingled". And so it's the figure of our Lord's death, and, of course, his death for our sins.

Now let's come to the petition. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me". That's an amazing petition. We would never have constructed a gospel record like this. In fact, it shocks you when you come to this petition. Just remember it's only a few pages before in this gospel that we read in verse 31, "And he began to teach them (this is chapter 8), that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and by the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again". And then in chapter 9, verse 31, "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, 'The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after he is killed, he shall rise the third day'". Three times he prophesies that he is going to die and then suddenly in the Garden of Gethsemane, we hear him cry out, "Take away this cup from me". What does this tortured petition mean?

Adam Clarke, who has written a series of commentaries on the whole of the Bible, has said that "Jesus paid more in the garden than he did on the cross". Now what Mr. Clarke means by this is that atonement, partially at least, took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. That Jesus Christ made a payment in the garden.

Some of the Dutch theologians have said things that are strangely similar to that. It has even been the comparison between our Lord and the garden and our Lord on the

cross, has even been drawn by commentators. In the Garden of Gethsemane he is struggling in travail, disturbed, amazed, depressed, but on the cross, he is triumphant. So triumphant that he is able to make disposal of his mother to John and John to his mother. He holds all of his faculties in perfect control and finally cries out, "It is finished! Father, into Thy hands, I commit my Spirit". Why? Well, because the victory was won in Gethsemane rather than on the cross.

I've mentioned this to some of you, but others did not hear me, I know. Many years ago when I was a student at Dallas Seminary, I was working in the insurance business downtown and we were having the Griffith Thomas Memorial Lectures in the old Scofield Memorial Church, which was downtown on I think Live Oak Street and Harwood. And since I got off from my work a little early, I went over to the church to sit down for thirty or forty minutes before the meeting, and the lecturer that year was Dr. H. A. Ironside, who was pastor of the Moody Memorial Church and a great Bible teacher of the last generation. Well, he came in about thirty minutes early himself and nobody else was in the building, so I got up out of my seat and I went over by the great preacher to ask him a few questions.

And I had been reading some of these interpretations about our Lord's struggles in Gethsemane and so I didn't want to sit right next to him because he was a great preacher and I was just a student. So I sat behind him. I remember, I leaned over the pew and said, "Pardon me, Dr. Ironside, I'd like to ask you a question if you don't mind?" And he looked at me a little gruffly because he had had all these silly questions no doubt asked many, many times. He was about seventy years of age at the time, and I said, "I've just been doing some reading in a certain Dutch theologian and he has suggested that our Lord in Gethsemane may have paid part of the penalty for sin. What do you think of that?" Well, he gave me a very sour look, as if to suggest, "You are certainly stupid to entertain such an idea as that" and said, "I believe that atonement was made on the cross".

And he turned away and I got the distinct impression that I should not ask him any more questions [laughter] that afternoon.

Well, of course, it made quite an impression upon me and just as he said that, a text of Scripture came to my mind, and I presume that it was the Holy Spirit who brought to my attention this text, but it was Colossians chapter 1, and verse 20 in which Paul writes, "And, having made peace through the blood of the cross". And that just came home to me with tremendous force and I realize that it is on the cross that atonement is made. Even though our Lord may have sweat great drops or clots of blood in Gethsemane, it was not that blood that was the price of sin. So I do not think that this is the meaning of this tortured petition. Our Lord is not praying here with reference to an atonement that is being accomplished, there is no pre-cross atonement.

Another interpretation has been given of this text by Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, the man who led me to the Lord. He has said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me" is obviously something that Jesus could never had said with regard to his physical death. He has already prophesied three times that he was going to die. So how could our Lord Jesus say, "Take away this death from me"? It's impossible.

And at that point, Dr. Barnhouse would turn to John chapter 12, and he would comment upon the famous passage there, in which we have some words that are similar to the words in Gethsemane. In verse 26 of John 12 we read,

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour". (Now remember the Greeks have just come and they have said, "We would see Jesus" and that has reminded our Lord or has brought to our attention the fact that his ministry is going to go beyond Israel to the Gentiles and, of course, that means the cross. And so we read in verse 27), "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour."

Now Dr. Barnhouse said, "No, that cannot be our Lord's petition. We must change the punctuation". Now let me say that in the Greek manuscripts, in our earliest manuscripts, there is very little punctuation. In many of them, there is no punctuation. In some of them, there is very little punctuation. Almost all of the earliest Greek manuscripts do not have any punctuation and, therefore, in the punctuating of the manuscripts, we are interpreting. We have to do that.

There are lots of people who say, "Oh, I believe that the text underneath the King James Version is the Greek text". But listen, if we were to be handed a manuscript which the Apostle Paul wrote of the Epistle to the Romans, or Matthew of the gospel, we would still have to punctuate it. We would still have to interpret it. It would not help us if we were to have the autographer. We would have to have the writers also. So the punctuation is the work of interpretation.

Now Dr. Barnhouse very justly said, "I want to punctuate that with a question mark after that word "hour" in John 12:27". Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" Why no, of course not! This is the hour that I have been speaking about. "For many times, but for this cause, came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name". That's the petition.

Then Dr. Barnhouse asked, "Well, what then was he praying about when he said, 'Take away this cup from me' if he was not talking about his physical death?" Dr. Barnhouse said, "But our Lord is going to die not only physically, but he is also going to die spiritually. He's going to die eternally. And so the petition then must be a petition that the spiritual death that our Lord is going to die will not be an eternal death". In other words, our Lord could have had no question over physical death. It must have been purely over the spiritual. And so it is a petition that that spiritual death shall not be eternal.

Now Dr. Barnhouse is not here to defend himself. He's in the presence of the Lord. I hope he's listening. If he hasn't had a lecture on this in heaven yet, maybe this will be helpful. But I should like to say, [laughter] I should like to say, now you know when I make these silly remarks like that, I'm just joking [laughter] because I imagine, if I know Dr. Barnhouse, he's going to be waiting for me [laughter] when I get there because I've said a number things about him, which he's going to straighten out when we get to heaven.

But anyway, if you just think for a moment, and I hope you are thinkers, if you'll just think for a moment, the very texts that Dr. Barnhouse pointed us to, with regard to his physical death, are the texts that refute his own theory. Because, you see, in all of those texts, which say that Jesus Christ is going to die in Jerusalem, they all say that he is going to be raised again on the third day. So our Lord could have had no question about that either on his own basis. So Donald, I'm sorry, that interpretation is not the interpretation of the word of God that grips our minds. What is our Lord saying when he says, "Take away this cup from me"?

Well, now we must remember that our Lord Jesus was a divine person who possessed a human nature and a divine nature. Therefore, because he is a perfect human, he must enter into all of the experiences of life. All the struggles, all of the testings; he himself speaks in verse 38, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into testing. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak". He's just himself entered into testing. And so he must pass through all of the experiences that are endemic to human nature. He cannot himself fail to pass through any of the struggles that any man would pass through having been given this task to perform that he has been given by God. So this is a prayer out of his human nature.

Now it is evident that it is a prayer out of his human nature because it's a prayer. God doesn't pray. God doesn't have to pray. Praying is something men do. And so the very fact that he prays, shows that this is something that comes from his human nature

and in a moment, angels come and minister to him; strengthening him. Now angels do not strengthen deity, but angels can strengthen men. You see, this is something that arises out of our Lord's human nature.

The interpretation that the church has placed upon this petition of our Lord is the interpretation that this is a prayer that, if it should be within God's will, this way should not be taken. And I don't think there is any other interpretation that can possibly satisfy us. I learned a long time ago in the study of the Bible that if tradition points us, generally speaking, to interpretations, if tradition points us to them, you should have strong reasons for abandoning tradition.

I have seen a great deal of arrogance on the part of 20th Century interpreters who did not bother to acquaint themselves with what biblical traditions in interpretation were and have offered interpretations that were so half baked that it's amazing that they were able to gain the credence of any thinking person. But sad to say, there are too many people who listen to others preach the Bible and do not study the Scriptures for themselves. I hope that you don't come to hear me preach in order to follow my interpretations, per say. I hope that I stir you up enough so that you will study the Scriptures for yourself. So that you will be able to say to me, "You're right". [Laughter] I saw somebody asleep then and I wanted to be sure and wake them up. [Laughter] So then this is a petition that if it should be within God's will, this way should not be taken.

Now then, we must not study this petition of our Lord apart from that final clause: "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done". Calvin, probably the greatest interpreter since the days of the Reformation, Calvin was not perfect. There are errors in Calvin's interpretation. Not too many, but there are errors and here the Great Reformer went astray. He let something slip out of his mouth that he should have never let slip out of his mouth, but he attributed the slip to our Lord. Calvin said, "Christ corrects and recalls that wish that had suddenly escaped him as if our Lord when he said, "Take away this cup from me" had let slip something that he should not have let slip and now he hastily

recalls it". No, our Lord's petition, "Take away this cup from me" is bounded always by: "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done". And so it is, "Lord, if it should be within your will that the great plans and purposes be accomplished by some other means than Golgotha: nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done". So there is a submission inherent in our Lord's petition.

About fifteen years ago, my daughter came home from high school and I was studying the Gethsemane account, and I called her into my study because I wanted to ask her a question. And I said, "Grace, sit down. I've got a theological question for you". And she said, "What?" And I said, "Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, 'If it be possible, take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done'. Did he sin in asking God to take away the cross?" She said, "Oh, no, Daddy. He did not sin. He was simply asking was it necessary". And that I think is the spirit of our Lord's petition.

Now this last clause is of the greatest importance for us. I think if that clause had not been there, then I must say this clause is my sheet anchor. If it were not there, my faith in the Son of God as the Redeemer of the world would reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. But the fact that he adds that last petition, the last part of the petition is the thing that keeps him within the perfect will of God.

Now the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with me and my interpretation. Did you know that? He does because he says in the 5th chapter, when he describes this Gethsemane account, he says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared". And so he states that our Lord, in this petition here, which he offered in Gethsemane, was heard because he feared. In other words, because of his godly piety, that word might be rendered. And that is the exposition of "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done". It was his godly piety that caused him to say that.



"Gethsemane, part I: The Horror of Eternal Punishment" by S. Lewis Johnson  
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Now I'm going to ask you to turn over to the Lukan account because we are going to look for a moment at the expression in Luke in which we have the words, "An angel came and ministered unto him". Luke chapter 22 and verse 43 and verse 44,

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. (Notice that expression "strengthening him") And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat (we don't say that in nice circles; his perspiration) was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Now I want to say a word about this angel strengthening him. And then I want to say a word about the great drops of blood. I should, of course, point out that these two verses are verses over which there has been a great deal of scholarly debate. Because many of the ancient manuscripts do not have these two verses. And if you have a good edition of the New Testament, you probably have a note somewhere to the effect that the manuscript authority for these two verses is not as strong as for most of the verses of the Gospel of Luke. But almost all of the textual critics agree that if these verses are not part of Luke, they so obviously are part of the genuine evangelical tradition that they represent truth concerning this event. In other words, some say, I don't think they belong to the Gospel of Luke. They are not in the best manuscripts and there are some internal reasons for eliminating them, but they so obviously represent a genuine interpretation of our Lord's ministry and there is a great deal of manuscript support for them. So perhaps some scribe knowing of this tradition, inserted this true tradition in the Gospel of Luke.

Now I personally feel that they are genuine and so I don't have that problem myself, but you may have a note like that in your New Testament, and if you do, I want to assure that there is good support by almost all of the authorities for the genuineness of this account. Even if some may say, "I don't think it was in Luke's gospel originally".

Well now we want to look at this word "strengthening". "An angel appeared to

him from heaven strengthening him". Well what is strengthened? Our Lord is groveling on the ground, crying out these tremendous petitions, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup be taken away from me," and an angel appears and strengthens him. How does the angel strengthen him? Well, in the first place, I'm sure that the moment our Lord saw the angel coming, he said, "Ah, my Messianic authority is confirmed by heaven itself. For an angel comes to strengthen me and I know that I am in the center of the will of God even in this struggle; for heaven is interested in me". That would be one way he was strengthened. His own Messianic consciousness would have been strengthened. And I'm sure that when he saw the angel, he leapt for joy in his God.

And yet he was strengthened, undoubtedly, physically because he was under such a weight from the Spirit of God, and such a tremendous pressure because of the suffering that is now almost immediately before him, that there was some danger apparently that he might succumb in the garden before his hour should come, and so one of the means for keeping our Lord alive until the time of the cross is the strengthening of the angel. Remember he has said in these Gethsemane accounts, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death". And I suggest that if that angel had not come, our Lord may have succumbed. All of this, of course, is governed by what, you theologians? By what? The sovereign decretive will of God who works all things according to his counsel.

In other words, the angel came because it was God's will that the angel should be the means for the strengthening of Jesus Christ. And yet the angel, undoubtedly, hurt our Lord also because he not only came to strengthen our Lord; not only was our Lord overjoyed as he thought about heaven being interested in him, but he is strengthened in order that he might suffer more. So in a sense, when the angel came to strengthen him, he strengthened him for more suffering and deeper suffering. How terrible the angel then becomes from that point of view. He intensifies the pressure that is upon our Lord in the direction of severer suffering. In other words, he works toward death by strengthening

our Lord so that he can suffer more. He presses blood out of the pores of Jesus Christ. And he does that. The angel is the means for that.

Did you notice that it is just after the angel comes to strengthen him that we read, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground". And so it is evident that the angel has come to strengthen our Lord for more suffering and suffering to the shedding of blood in this unnatural way.

Dr. Howard's here. When I get through this exposition, he's undoubtedly going to say, "I'm going to suggest your name for the staff at one of the hospitals in the area because we may have an illustration of hematidrosis in this". That is when the tiny capillary glands rupture and blood is mingled with sweat. Apparently our Lord's sufferings were such that there were great clots of blood for thrombi is more than just the shedding of blood like water, but there is a thickening of the blood. What we have here, in essence, is shuttering human nature; an indomitable will struggling together, to accomplish the will of God. The indomitable will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the shuttering human nature in which the person of God, the Son, found himself. And the struggle is a struggle in which the human frame seems to give way and the blood is shed on the ground of the Garden of Gethsemane.

It's almost as if the blood of Jesus Christ was driven out of him by the pressures within. In fact, I think we can say the blood of Jesus Christ was driven out of him twice; first, at Gethsemane and then at Golgotha. In Gethsemane it was by an internal agony. On the cross, it was by external affliction.

Now (just five minutes) I want to say a few words by way of conclusion. Why the poised calm of the upper room and now the restless agony, the black shadow of Gethsemane? Why do we have such a beautiful petition of John 17 in which our Lord progresses in logical fashion through that prayer? Why do we have such a tremendous contrast between the Lord's prayer in John 17 and the prayer here in which our Lord

comes back with the same petition to the Father? The repetitive praying, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me". It's almost as if he is hung on this repeating of this same petition. Why the anguish? Why the struggle? Why? Is it possible that he stumbled on the way to Golgotha? Why did he not come to death stoically and arrogantly like a Socrates? "Scorn for this superior resignation", someone has said concerning Socrates. He didn't even die like the martyrs died. He doesn't even suffer as they did, with the victory that they had upon their faces.

Now be careful! Be careful! Don't blame our Lord in comparison with the martyrs because all of the martyrs say that the reason that they were able to bear their sufferings is because of their trust in him. So it's evident that they did not regard our Lord as falling to pieces in Gethsemane. They trace their calm to him. May I suggest a few things? In the first place, Jesus Christ's task differs from every other man. His task was to suffer the penalty of sin. Socrates did not have that task. Stephen did not have that task. No other man who has boldly and courageously died ever had that task. One would have to be in hell for a little while to understand what Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. You would have to go down into Sheol yourself and know what was down there before you could understand what was tearing apart Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And I'd like to say something else. He's a human being who is a human being in a way very different from any other human being. He's a sinless human being and you and I ought to shut our mouths when the subject of Gethsemane is brought up because we do not know what the effect of sin is upon a sinless soul; for we are sinners. What effect does the light have on a photographic plate? Tremendous effect. What effect does a light have on a stove plate? Nothing. You see, we are so different from our Lord that we cannot understand the effect of sin upon a sinless human being. So we ought to shut our mouths.

“Gethsemane, part I: The Horror of Eternal Punishment” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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And I say something else. Others may subordinate death to their thoughts; that is suppress it. When we are getting ready to die, we think about all kinds of things and try to keep our minds off of the fact that we are going to die physically. But our Lord cannot do that. He must look death full in the face. He's different. Others' heroes conquer death, the death of the body, by means of the power of the soul, or by the power of the spirit. They suffer the experience of death only on one plain, but our Lord must suffer death on the plane of the body, on the plane of the soul, and on the plane of the spirit. He doesn't die like other men. Human beings face only an individual struggle. He bears the responsibility of all who are in the body; all for whom he is acting as representative. He stands for them.

No wonder then the anguish. No wonder he grovels on the ground in Gethsemane. It's not the cause of my faith failing that Jesus Christ struggles in the dust of the Garden of Gethsemane. It's the source of my love for him! That's why I rejoice in the things that cause others to stumble because I know that he has worked in my heart and he has brought me to trust in him by his irresistible grace and sovereign election. I have something else, but time is up. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee. We're thankful that the word of God has recorded in all of its plainness, in all of its starkness, the sufferings of Christ. Now we know how much...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**