

INTRODUCTION

A guy kept forgetting his passwords to login to his computer, so he finally changed his password to the word "incorrect." That way, whenever he put in the wrong password his computer would remind him that his password is incorrect!

We come to the passage where Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. If you think this was an easy experience for Jesus, you would be incorrect. Instead it was a battle. And I believe it was the world's greatest battle.

In many wars there are decisive battles that change the course of history. In 732, Muslim armies had swept across the strait of Gibraltar and captured Portugal, Spain, and much of France. The goal was to conquer all of Europe. But the Muslim armies were defeated at the Battle of Tours led by Charles Martel. Had that battle not been won, we might all be Muslims today.

In the War for American Independence General George Washington trapped British Commander Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown, which ultimately led to the British surrender. Had that battle not been won, we might all be subjects of the Queen's realm.

In Europe Napoleon's army was sweeping the European continent, but in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, Lord Wellington was successful in defeating Napoleon. Had that battle not been successful we might all be speaking French today.

And who can forget D-Day, June 6, 1944, when thousands of Allied troops invaded Europe and began the march toward Berlin? Had that invasion failed, we might all be speaking German today.

In every war, there is a turning point that changes the course of history. And in the battle for our hearts and souls, I believe the most important battle was fought in Gethsemane. Jesus was yet to be crucified, but I believe the real battle took place that night in Garden.

Mark 14:32-42. "They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.' Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.' Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.' Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!'"

The walk from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane was rather short, but it was very steep. Jesus and the disciples descended from Mt. Zion down into the Kidron Valley. The Brook Kidron was a narrow stream in the bottom of the valley, but nobody ever drank from the water. Josephus reported that it often ran red because the remains of the bloody sacrifices up on Temple Mount drained into the Brook Kidron. Jesus and the disciples crossed the bloody creek and walked up just a few hundred feet to an olive grove that spread across the lower flank of the Mount of Olives. That's where Jesus fought the battle for our souls. Let's learn three truths from that night.

I. JESUS PRAYED AT A PLACE WHERE OLIVES WERE CRUSHED

The Bible says, "They went to a place called Gethsemane." The name of the Garden came from the two Hebrew words, *gat shemone*, which literally mean, "Oil press." There were many olive trees there, so it would make sense to have an olive press nearby. Olives aren't picked; they have to be harvested by taking long sticks and beating the branches so the ripe olives fall into a cloth spread beneath the branches. There were three steps to crushing the olives. First, all the olives would be dumped into a round stone trough and would be crushed by a man or a donkey advancing a wooden arm attached to a heavy round stone. This olive mush was then collected and put into round bags. These bags were stacked on top of each other and a long tree trunk placed on the bags to squeeze out even more oil. That oil was harvested as the virgin olive oil. Then finally stones were attached to the tree truck to crush even more oil from the baskets.

I think it is no accident Jesus chose this place to pray. On this night, He would experience a soul-crushing struggle. You've probably seen the popular art works of Jesus kneeling calmly in the Garden with a light from heaven falling onto His uplifted face. I don't think it was anything like that.

I believe Jesus fell on His face on the rocky soil and cried out to God in agony. The writer of Hebrews describes that night when he wrote, "He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death." (Hebrews 5:7)

In fact, Jesus was under such pressure and strain, that Dr. Luke tells us "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44) Dr. Luke used a medical word we still use, thrombosis. The literal translation is "blood mixed with sweat." Jesus was under such agonizing pressure that His scalp began to ooze bloody sweat.

This condition isn't unique. A medical expert, Dr. David Teraska has commented: "Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. The medical term for this, 'hematidrosis,' has been seen in patients who have experienced extreme stress or shock to their systems. The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat."

Perhaps the most hated King in French history was Charles IX. In 1572, the Catholic monarch ordered the St. Bartholomew massacre, in which over 10,000 French Protestants were killed. The stress from his guilt drove him crazy. He died at 23 from hematidrosis. Blood began to seep

through his pores, and he died in agony. This condition is rare, but most people die of it. That's how close to death Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

II. JESUS WAVERED WHEN HE LOOKED INTO THE CUP OF SUFFERING

Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me." "Abba" was the most affectionate term a Jewish child ever used to their father. It meant "Daddy" or "Papa." Jesus said, "Daddy, you can do anything. I'm asking you to take this cup from me." The phrase "to drink a cup" meant to experience something. Earlier, Jesus had asked James and John if they were able to drink of the cup he was going to drink. He wasn't talking about a real cup; He was referring to the experience of suffering and death.

The night before the cross, Jesus peered into this cup, and what He saw caused His blood to freeze. The contents of this cup caused the Son of God to recoil in horror. So what did Jesus see in this horrible cup?

A. He saw emotional isolation

When you read about the life of Jesus, it's clear He enjoyed being with people. The common people heard Him gladly and His enemies called him a friend of tax collectors and sinners. And children flocked to Him, and He took them in His arms and blessed them. But the closer He got to the cross, the more alone He found Himself. Early in His ministry there were thousands following Him. He fed 5,000 people on one occasion and 4,000 another time. But as He began to talk about the demands of discipleship, the crowds left Him like rats leaving a sinking ship. This night He was down to only 12. Then one left to betray Him. And then He took three disciples with Him deeper into the garden and asked them to pray—but instead, they fell asleep. And when the mob arrived, all of them turned and ran away. Jesus had to walk the lonesome road to the cross all alone. I believe He shuddered at the thought of being forsaken and deserted by His disciples.

B. He saw the physical pain

Jesus was 100% God, but He was 100% human as well. As a man, he experienced physical pain just like we do. He had nerves running through His body. As He looked into that cup, His humanity shuddered at the thought of the physical pain He was about to face. He knew rough hands would grab him and twist His arms behind His back. He knew He would be beaten and spit upon, that His beard would be plucked from His face. He knew a crown of long, hard thorns would be crushed down on His head. He realized brutal soldiers would mock Him, and make sport of their torture of Him. He foresaw that His back would be bared and His hands lashed above His head to a whipping post. He could already hear the whistle from the cat of nine tails whipping through the air over and over again, thudding and tearing into his back. He knew that nails the size of railroad spikes would be driven into His hands and feet, and a spear would puncture His side. He saw all that and said, "Please, Daddy, take it away."

I've never had major surgery, but I've been told many times by patients, that the worst part of major surgery was waiting for it. The dread is often worse than the experience itself. Just imagine the dread Jesus experienced that night.

C. He saw the spiritual shame

As terrifying as the isolation and physical pain were, I believe neither of those came close to the dread Jesus experienced on a spiritual level. Remember, Jesus was Holy God in the flesh. And in that cup He saw the sins of all of humanity. His holy nature recoiled at the thought of drinking in all that shame and disgrace.

Can you remember a time when you did something really rotten? Don't dredge up the details of the deed, instead, just recall the shame and disgrace you felt. Remember that feeling of filthy guilt? *Jesus never once felt that.*

But on the cross He took in His body all the sins of the world. I know most of you are pretty good people, but think about the vilest criminals in our world. Consider the child abusers, the rapists, and every serial murderer. In that cup was all the sickening, disgusting shame of every wicked act. And the Bible doesn't just say Jesus took our sins, it says that He BECAME sin for us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus had walked through the moral garbage dump of this planet for 33 years, yet He had never been soiled by sin. Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted every way we are, yet He did not sin. And yet the prophet Isaiah prophesied God would lay on Him the iniquities of us all. That is an intensive verb in Hebrew that means the Father crushed the sins of the world on the Suffering Servant. So, as Jesus saw the emotional, physical, and spiritual suffering, He wavered and asked His Father to take it away.

III. JESUS SHOWED US HOW TO FIND PEACE IN TIMES OF PRESSURE

Jesus said, "Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Just as the olives were crushed three times, Jesus returned to pray the same prayer three times. When He prayed the third time, there was a turning point. He said, "Father, you know what I want. My desire is to take the cup and throw it away. I want to avoid the loneliness, pain, and disgrace. But, Father, I cherish You more than Mine, so I'll do what You wish. "

Besides adding the detail about His sweat falling like drops of blood, Dr. Luke adds another detail about an angelic visitor. The Bible says, "'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." (Luke 22:42-43)

We don't know what the angel said or did, we just know that he gave Jesus strength. Maybe he said, "Beyond the cross, there is the empty tomb." Maybe He said, "This is the reason you came here, to die as a perfect sacrifice."

All we know is that when Jesus returned the third time, He had found peace. His head was held high; there was fire in His eyes. It was if He was saying, "Go ahead, devil, hit me with your best shot!"

So what is your personal Gethsemane? What crushing experience are you facing? Is it a bad marriage? A health issue? Your job? What is putting pressure on you like an olive press? Whatever form your Gethsemane takes, you can find peace in your pressure by doing what Jesus did.

A. Surrender your will to God's perfect plan

Jesus prayed, "Take this cup away from me." Let me give you a 21st century paraphrase: "Get me out of this mess!" You may be asking God to change your circumstances, and He's more interested in changing you. You want Him to fix the problem, and He wants to fix you. Like Jesus, never hesitate to ask God for what you want. But you must always add, "Not MY will, but YOURS be done."

Can you think of another Garden in the Bible? On the first pages of the Bible we read about the Garden of Eden. God put two people there and shared His will with them. But Eve and the First Adam asserted their will over God's will and it led to the ruin of humanity. They said to God, "We know Your Will is NOT to eat the fruit, but it's what we really want to do."

In 1 Corinthians 15 Jesus is called the second Adam. This last Adam was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He surrendered His will to God, and it led to the redemption of humanity. We face the same choice every day: My will or God's Will?

B. Charge into your challenge claiming God's peace

Life is a series of battles. But if you know the Lord, you have a distinctive edge. In 2 Chronicles 20 King Jehoshaphat found himself facing a much larger opposing army. He did what Jesus did in the Garden. He fell on his face before the Lord. "Lord we do not have the power to face this vast army. And we don't know what to do." Have you ever felt that way? I'm outnumbered and I don't have a clue. But notice the next thing he prayed. "Lord, we do not have the power to face this vast army. And we don't know what to do. But our eyes are on you." That's the key, don't look at the enemy—keep your eyes on the Lord. God sent a prophet to tell Jehoshaphat, "Don't be afraid, because the battle isn't yours, it is the Lord's." So Jehoshaphat was so certain of victory that he placed the choir on the front lines and they marched out singing praises to God. When the enemy heard the sound of singing, they were confused and started fighting among themselves. And by the time the Israelite army arrived, all their enemies were defeated. Always approach your battles with the front line of praise. Here's a great promise in Isaiah 26, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." (Isaiah 26:3)

CONCLUSION

Gethsemane was where the world's greatest battle was fought. What was the real battle that night? It was whether or not to drink the cup. Would He drink the cup, or toss it away? The Father wasn't forcing Jesus to do it. On that night, Jesus told Peter in Matthew 26:53, "Don't you realize I could call on my Father, and he will instantly put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

A Roman Legion was 6,000 soldiers, so we're talking at least 72,000 angels. And in the Bible, angels aren't cute little chubby babies with wings—they often appear as armed soldiers. So based on Biblical truth how much damage could those angels have done that night? In 2 Kings 19:35 we read that one warrior angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. You do the math; twelve legions of angels could wipe out 13.2 billion people, nearly twice the population of planet earth today.

But Jesus squared His shoulders and walked out of the Garden to a cross and then out of an empty tomb. I love the song Sandy Patti sang entitled, "The Day He Wore My Crown." She sings, "He could have called His Holy Father and said, 'Take me away, please take me away.' He could have said, 'I'm not guilty, and I'm not gonna' stay; I'm not gonna pay!' But He walked right through the gate, and then on up the hill. And as He fell beneath the weight, He cried, 'Father, not My will.' And I'm the one to blame. I caused all His pain. He gave Himself, the day He wore my crown."

Thank God Jesus won the Battle of Gethsemane. And because He submitted to His Father's will, we can experience freedom, peace, and forgiveness.

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B. Physical pain

C. Spiritual shame

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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