

(Matt. 26:36) – In these verses, Matthew was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give the account of the awesome and terrible agony and sorrow in the garden of “*GETHSEMANE*” which our Lord experienced as He grew closer to the necessary experience of His suffering unto death. What He went through here was for the sins of His people imputed to Him. Sin brings suffering and death, and our Lord was (and is) sinlessly perfect in Himself. But the Father had laid our sin-debt upon His Son, and, as a result, He had to suffer, bleed, and die, for without the shedding of blood (death), there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). There are things about this that are very difficult for us to understand, but it helps to remember the amazing constitution of Christ’s Person. He is both God and man without sin. Some of the things He experienced and did in His life can only be attributed to His deity. Others can only be attributed to His sinless humanity. We must say, however, that everything He did was an act of His entire Person as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect.

Another fact that we must always recognize is that at no time did Jesus Christ ever sin or become (or was made) a sinner. He was never contaminated with sin. He was legally guilty and condemned for OUR sins imputed to Him, but He remained the Lamb without blemish or spot throughout His life on earth. However, in His holy and sinless humanity, He did experience the sinless infirmities of human flesh. He hungered, grew tired, sorrowed, wept, suffered pain and agony, and, finally, He died (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15). Hebrews 2:10 tells us that He, as the Captain of our salvation, was made “perfect through suffering.” This does not mean He was made morally pure and perfect in Himself by His suffering. It means that by His experience of suffering unto death, He accomplished a perfect work bringing forth a righteousness by which God has justified His elect (Rom. 8:33-34). Here, Christ told His disciples, “*SIT YE HERE, WHILE I GO AND PRAY YONDER.*”

(Matt. 26:37-38) – He took Peter, James, and John on further with Him, and He “*BEGAN TO BE SORROWFUL AND VERY HEAVY.*” His soul was troubled on the same account six days before (John 12:27). We must understand that our Lord was beginning here to experience suffering and pain that He had never experienced in His human body and soul before this – “*MY SOUL IS EXCEEDING SORROWFUL, EVEN UNTO DEATH.*” He was going a little further away from them, to vent His grief, and pour out His soul unto His Father. He told His disciples to wait there “*AND WATCH WITH ME.*”

(Matt. 26:39) – He “*FELL ON HIS FACE, AND PRAYED.*” It is impossible for us to know the intense agony as He was going under the actual experience of His Father’s wrath pouring down upon Him. His suffering was much more than simply bodily. As Isaiah

prophesied of this time, Christ was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows being oppressed and afflicted and pouring out His soul unto death (Isa. 53:4-7,12). Luke recorded that *“being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”* (Luke 22:44). He suffered in His very soul to the point that He cried, *“O MY FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME: NEVERTHELESS NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT.”* Many people misunderstand this and portray it as if the Savior had a moment of sinful doubt, but this is not so. The “cup” to which He referred was the cup of His Father’s wrath, given to Him by His Father, and which He willingly took upon Himself to drink in His suffering unto death (Matt. 20:22; 26:27-28; John 18:11; Isa. 53:10). This cup represents the love of God towards His people for which He made His Son to be “the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In this cup God is shown to be both just and the Justifier of His people in and by Christ.

What does it mean that He prayed, *“if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me”*? Was it an expression of sinful doubt or even cowardice? Absolutely not! He had already said that He came into the world and, therefore, must go to the cross (Matt. 16:21). I believe this is a statement intended to make the point that there is no other way possible. It is intended for us. It is true that Christ was by Himself where none of His disciples could hear Him, but He knew these words would be recorded in the Scriptures for the benefit of His people later on. When He said, *“Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt,”* He is showing forth His willingness to bow to His Father’s will for the salvation of His people (cf. John 17:1-5; Heb. 10:4-10). His will and the Father’s will are one and the same.

(Matt. 26:40-41) – The disciples who had spoken so boldly before showed that they, like all of us, are just weak and sinful men. God has truly given us a willing spirit, but we are too weak in our flesh to stand the temptation we face in this world. We are totally dependent upon God’s grace and power in Christ to save, preserve, and bring us to glory.

(Matt. 26:42-44) – He went away again and prayed to His Father, *“O MY FATHER, IF THIS CUP MAY NOT PASS AWAY FROM ME, EXCEPT I DRINK IT, THY WILL BE DONE.”* Again, we see His agony in facing the prospect of suffering not death. This was all according to the necessity of His work to save us from our sins and the sovereign will of the Father to glorify Himself through Christ.

(Matt 26:45-46) – In returning to His disciples, He lets them *“SLEEP ON NOW”* and rest. He knew *“THE HOUR IS AT HAND”* for Him to be betrayed and arrested. He knew that they would face some trying times and trials. Then, He tells them, *“RISE, LET US BE GOING: BEHOLD, HE IS AT HAND THAT DOETH BETRAY ME.”*