

THE RED LETTER LECTURES

LEARNING TO PRAY FROM THE WORDS OF JESUS

The Prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane

I. Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."— Mt. 26:36-39

A. *a place called Gethsemane . . .*

1. Gethsemane means, "oil press." It is located on the lower part of the Mt. of Olives across a valley east of Jerusalem known as the Kidron.
2. Olives were grown and cultivated on the west side of the mountain and taken to the press below close to the Kidron Valley.
3. Reference to the Kidron Valley goes back to the time of David. It was a dumping ground for dead bodies, both human and animals, as well as pagan idols. *See 2 Kgs. 23:4.*
4. Jesus and his disciples crossed over the Kidron Valley on their way to the Mt. of Olives. *See Jn. 18:1*
5. A portion of the valley and up the side of the Mt. of Olives is presently one of the main burial grounds for the city of Jerusalem.
6. Do you see any symbolism associated with this site?

NOTES

Prayer Quote: "The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking Him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, He will be in the last place the remainder of the day." — E.M. Bounds

p.p. Mark 14:32-42

2 Kgs. 23:4: The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel.

Jn. 18:1: When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

B. ***he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him . . .***

1. Peter, James and John were more involved with Jesus than the rest. They are mentioned together 11X in the NT. See *Mk. 9:2-4*.
2. Judas had already left the group to betray Jesus.

C. ***my soul is overwhelmed to the point of death . . .***

1. Severely grieved, very sorrowful. See *Mk. 14:33; Psm. 43:5*.

D. ***keep watch with me . . .***

1. Lit., "stay awake, shake sleep."
2. The word for watch is used 23X in the NT and is a command and warning to believers to "stay awake" for:
 - a. False prophets — *Mt. 24:42*
 - b. The day and hour of the Lord's coming. — *Mt. 25:13*.
 - c. False teachers. — *Mk. 8:15*.
 - d. False Christs. — *Mk. 13:5*.
 - e. Greed. — *Lk. 12:15*
 - f. Causing others to sin. — *Lk. 17:3*
 - g. Temptations. — *Gal. 6:1*

E. ***My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.***

1. Discuss what this means to you and your prayer life.

NOTES

Mk. 9:2-4: After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Mk. 14:33: He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

Psm. 43:5: Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Paraphrase of *Mt. 26:36-39*, from *The Message*: Then Jesus went with them to a garden called Gethsemane and told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, "This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me." Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do you want?"

II. Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
— Mt. 26:40-46

A. ***Could you not pray with me for one hour?***

1. How do you think Jesus expressed that question?
 - a. Was it a plea?
 - b. Was it an admonition?
 - c. Was it a warning?
 - d. Was it a correction?
 - e. Other?
2. Does this event have any application at all to our prayer life? Discuss.

B. ***Watch and pray . . . temptation . . .***

1. Temptation means, "to make trial of, putting someone to the test."¹⁴
2. Where does temptation originate?
See Jas. 1:13-15
3. Is the devil ever involved? If so, what is his purpose?

NOTES

Prayer Quote: When asked how much time he spent in prayer, George Muller's reply was, "Hours every day. But I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk and when I lie down and when I arise. And the answers are always coming." Source Unknown.

¹⁴ Zodhiates, p. 1135.

Jas. 1:13-15: When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

4. How do we overcome temptations?
- Watch and pray. (vs. 41). The Lord's prayer tells us how, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Mt. 6:13)
 - Look for the way of escape.
See 1 Cor. 10:13.
 - Seek help from Jesus. *See Heb. 2:18, 4:15.*
 - Resist the devil. *See Jas. 4:7-10.*
5. How did Jesus overcome his temptations?
Read Mt. 4:4-10.

C. ***may your will be done . . .***

- Some insist we should not ever pray, "if it be your will" but how did Jesus pray? See also 1 Jn. 5:14-15.

D. Paraphrase of Mt. 26:40-46, from *The Message*:

When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Can't you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert; be in prayer so you don't wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire." He then left them a second time. Again he prayed, "My Father, if there is no other way than this, drinking this cup to the dregs, I'm ready. Do it your way." When he came back, he again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open. This time he let them sleep on, and went back a third time to pray, going over the same ground one last time. When he came back the next time, he said, "Are you going to sleep on and make a night of it? My time is up, the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's get going! My betrayer is here."

NOTES

1 Cor. 10:13: No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Heb. 2:18: Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Heb. 4:15: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Jas. 4:7-10: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1 Jn. 5:14-15: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.