

Gethsemane



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GETHSEMANE

I desire to awaken my own sluggish affections by meditating a little on a theme that can never become trite or lose its tender interest to all who love in any measure the Lord Jesus; and what can be more needed in our lukewarm day, than to dwell on those sorrows that tell the measure of His love for such poor unfaithful people as we surely are. *It is His love that alone awakens ours.*

But whilst this is my subject, I am not going as far as Calvary; for there those sufferings are too profound to be exposed to any mortal gaze. The sun refuses to reveal them, and during the last three hours, from midday to three o'clock, there is not one recorded whisper from man, beast or bird, till that exceeding bitter cry: "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani," rang through that mysterious night. The darkness and the silence are in awful accord with what is transpiring on that central cross.

But it is this that gives its intense interest to Gethsemane. There we see our Lord passing through a **shadow**, the **substance** of which was borne in that darkness, and it is thus that we get some slight estimate of the substance by the effect of the shadow. If the mere shadow could cause such agony as we shall see, what of that of which it was only the shadow? May the Holy Spirit grant us to tread that "Via dolorosa" that way of suffering, in spirit with our Lord and His disciples, with the unshod feet of reverence. Nor may we hurry, but walk with the slow step of awed reverence.

Each of the gospels supplies some item that the others omit, and it is only by bringing them all together that we get a comprehensive view of the sacred scene. Turning then first to John 18, we see the eleven following their Lord down the hillside till they come to the brook Cedron,*

* More correctly "Kedron," the initial is our K, not C.

which they cross. Here we will pause for a moment, as we call to mind that a thousand years before this, an ancestor of the Lord Jesus had trodden that same path, and crossed that same brook and also in a time of deep affliction, for his favorite son, Absalom, had revolted and put his father to flight (2 Sam. 15:23). So wherever Kedron is mentioned, it is always a scene of death or judgment (as for instance 2 Chron. 15-16). Surely then there must be some significance in the very name of Kedron and I trust that my readers will not refuse to accompany me in an endeavor to arrive at that significance.

The word means "black"—it was called the "black brook." But there are several words in Hebrew that have that meaning, each of them, however, with a shade of difference. Thus "ishon," (found in Prov. 7:9), is the diminutive of "ish" and means "the little man," a term applied to that black circle in the eye we call the pupil; "in which as in a glass, a little image of a man is seen" (Gesenius).

"Chahshach" is darkness in contrast with light as Job. 18-6.

"Chamar" is also "black," but this is from scorching. This gives us the name Cham or Ham—one that is black from excess of heat.

"Shachorn" has quite a good sense, for it is from a root that speaks of darkness passing away, in "dawn;" the word itself is applied to that "black hair" that spoke of recovered health in the case of leprosy.

Finally "Kadar," whence Kedron, ever speaks of the black of sorrow. It is the emblem of mourning among us, and three times in the Psalms it is so translated: as "Why go I mourning" Ps. 42-9. Thus Kedron is "the mournful brook" and the very name becomes suggestive of the nature of the path our Lord was just beginning. The note of that joyous hymn with which the supper had closed has died away, and the next words from those sacred lips will be in tones of sorrow.

Note, I beg you, that eleven only are with Him here: there is one who cannot go one foot with Him along that path of sorrow. **Judas is elsewhere** and otherwise engaged, nor has he part or lot in this matter. It is suffering and sorrow that evidence faith and test the genuineness of profession, as not till darkness falls are stars visible. But eleven cross the brook, and enter the garden of Gethsemane; and once more we pause at the gate and ask the significance of that word, for we must not lose what light that would give us. It means the "Oil-press."* But oil was the one source of lighting in those days. No gas or electricity did they know, nor do the Scriptures speak of. It is ever, as in the early occurrence of the word, "oil for light," Ex. 25-6, and it is light that makes manifest, Eph. v. 13. Here then we shall see in Gethsemane "pressure," ("Geth") and the result of that pressure "making manifest" (oil) the perfections of Him who is thus pressed. This is the first profound truth that we get as we enter this garden and as soon as we hear its very name. Sorrow shall press Him to the earth, but that very pressure of suffering (O do let us ponder it) shall bring out only the "Oil" that shall give its holy light on His perfection of piety; and this shall justify God in hearing and delivering Him from the pains of death. But of all this we may learn later.

Returning to the garden itself, when we left it we saw eight disciples sitting, for so had He, with that tender consideration that marks all God's ways with His people, bidden them, whilst He went on and prayed—not in an indefinite place as the word "yonder"* might possibly suggest, but pointing to a particular spot—"that spot over there," as we might say. We shall see the value of this precision soon.

Three only now accompany Him along that path of sorrow; and why are those three thus selected? Surely be-

* "Geth" is "press." "Shemen" is "oil."

* Gr. ekei—"There in that place" Robinson.

cause it was that same three that alone walked with Him up the slope of the "Holy Mount," and had been witnesses of that scene of triumph and glory. Once again too a little maid lay in what we call death, but He called sleep, and all must leave the room of death, save Peter, James and John and the parents—they and they alone of all His disciples shall share the triumph of that hour of victory over death. So they, and they alone, shall accompany Him further than the eight on the path of sorrow. How meaningless is all this to unbelief! How simple—how clear—how filled with significance and divine truth to faith! For so it has ever been, and is still to this very day: those who go furthest in the path of privilege, joy and blessing are the ones who alone can, and must, go furthest in the path of sorrow. Those who have most enjoyed divine comforts must expect most sorrow; and again from that sorrow will come greater blessing in usefulness and the power of sympathy.

Would it not seem as if the mysterious doctrine of "election" were not at all confined to the initiatory truth of salvation? All the eleven had been elected, but that same sovereignty again selected or elected three from the eleven. There is ever an election, for privilege and service, from among the elect; as one of our poets has written:

"Did Jesus shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love"

But most carefully has this to be balanced by never putting aside the responsibility of the human will. And just as we refuse to admit that the impenitent sinner is elected to that impenitence, so must we refuse the thought that God select some, not only sovereignly, but arbitrarily, without any reason whatever not to be of use, and not to serve; this is never true. He knows well the natural and spiritual capacity of each of us, and selects and fits according to that capacity, never suffering us to be burdened beyond that measure. Nor are there lacking

some compensations, for we shall find that the eight that sat just within the entrance were not so severely rebuked as those who accompanying Him, were more privileged. Our own poet expresses such compensations.

“O who would dare the choice: neither or both to know:
The finest quiver of joy—the agony thrill of woe?
Never the exquisite pain, then never the exquisite bliss,
For the heart that is dull to that, can never be keen to
this.”

But now the three can go no further, and they are bidden to “tarry here in this place,” for here, in a figure, is the limit of their capacity. But on still walks the Lord without any company now—He is alone as He goes to that spot. O with what marvelous precision does the scene shadow the reality which took place in less than 24 hours from this time. In making atonement Jesus must be alone! None in heaven, earth or under the earth shares that with Him. So in that “day of atonement” that in those ancient pages again shadowed the three dark hours on Calvary, “there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he (the high-priest) goeth in to make an atonement,” (Lev. 16-17). To be a correct type, he too must be alone! But is it atonement that is here shadowed? Does “that spot there” speak of the last three hours on Calvary? Beyond all question, for note He “was withdrawn from them about a stone’s-*cast*” and on the exact spot on which a stone would fall, there He fell!

But why are we told that by Luke (22:41)? For what other reason can it be save that the casting of the stone was the divine way of judgment being executed in Israel? We make all executions as mechanical as possible. Our sheriffs pull away a support, or throw a lever and send 2000 volts of electric current through the criminal. But in those olden days, in which God was directly and personally governing in Israel, the one divinely appointed means of executing judgment when that involved death was by stoning. And those who had witnessed against

the sinner, had themselves to be the first to carry out the sentence, as it is written: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people" (Deut. 17-7).

Now throw that light on this "stone's cast," and do we not see a holy beauty, and yet one that fills us with very great awe, in that stone's cast? That was the very spot to which He had pointed when they entered the garden. His path ended where judgment fell! Thus it was with the shadow in Gethsemane, and thus it was with the substance on Calvary. Did not that path of sorrow end in judgment?

But how far is a stone's cast? That is a most indefinite term. Some can throw a stone nearly 150 yards, but the same man may not be able to throw another stone more than a few feet. It all depends on the weight of the stone. But have we any means of computing—if not the precise weight, at least whether it was large or small, a heavy or light stone? Surely we have, for turn again to Matt. 26:39: "and he went a little further"—note, only a little, and since that little was the stone's cast, we know that it must have been a very heavy stone. Aye, my dear fellow-believer, do we not know that to be true? Who can estimate the weight of the judgment that He bore, when He made propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world.

We are, let us remember, seated in the garden with Peter, James and John, whilst but a little distance from us there lies, prostrate on His Face, Him whom we have learned to love and revere, as our Lord and Master. So near is He that we can even hear His "prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears" (Heb. 5-7), and thus He speaks:

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me—nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39.)

Let our faith now follow that cry up to Him to Whom it is addressed, and with holy fear, note its effect on that Bosom whereon He had ever lain. Very strengthening it is to ponder the ties of love that unite the Father and the Son in the mystery of the Godhead. Before there was any creation, there was nothing wanting to that mutual delight. There was such a perfection of satisfaction as needed no addition of any creature to supplement. The Father sufficed for the Son—the Son sufficed for the Father. For thus is it written:

“Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was—then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight.” (Prov. 8.)

So cries personified Wisdom, and where can that Wisdom be found but in Christ, in whom are hid all its treasures? But if any be doubtful of this application, many a clear word shall dispel all doubt:

“The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand,” says His forerunner (John 3:35), while He Himself tells us, as does the verse in Proverbs, that His Father loved Him, “before the creation of the world” (John 17:24); and many a divine word might be given were it needed.

Thus till He came to earth, there was nothing on it that could open the heavens. They remained fast closed, for He was in them. But as soon as He is here no object, even in heaven itself, could rival this poor earth in His Father's esteem, and do we not, to this very day, rejoice to see, the very floor of Heaven breaking as it were at Jordan and the Holy Mount, under the weight of the Father's delight in the Son. O never, never, can our feeble powers compass or apprehend the illimitable love of God the Father to the Son.

And now it is that very “Son of his love” who cries: “If it be possible let this cup pass from me.” What can

the response be, but "O come my Son, come back to the Bosom that is thy true and unforfeited abode!" Nay, for the prayer is: "If it be possible," and it is not! But why should it not be possible? Is anything impossible with God? What is able to prevent? Let all the powers of the universe unite in opposing, that united power would not offer the resistance of a cob-web to His will. Yet it was not possible! Some mighty necessity prevented it!

But now let us turn to the account of this same scene in Luke 22, and there we find the word "possible" replaced by "willing:" "If thou be willing remove this cup from me." Tell me, my brethren, was not that a still more irresistible plea for a Father to hear from One so beloved? What consideration could outweigh even that which must have moved His heart beyond all power of thought? And have not these very divergencies a beauty in themselves? Some may see in them nothing but marrings—we will see in them nothing but beauties. For in the gospel of Matthew He is presented to us as the Trespass Offering and so it is the divine Judgment on sin that must be borne. It is not possible that it should not be. In Luke on the other hand, we see Him as the Peace Offering, and the prominent idea is the Love that was willing to supply the victim to bear that judgment. Just as in the Lord's interview with Nicodemus, we hear first: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." That MUST be. It is not possible that it should not be. But this is followed by "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" and here the WILLINGNESS of Love in the gift is prominent. Surely we can discern the correspondence between the two accounts in Matthew and Luke in this.

But we will linger a little longer, and let the familiar light of another typical scene fall on this. Two men are climbing a mountain-side, and the younger speaks: "My Father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the Burnt Offering?" Think you that no keen

pain shot through that father's heart as he answered: "God will provide himself a lamb, my son;" and soon that lamb is found in the submissive son who lies on the altar, and the father's hand armed with the knife is raised to strike, when..... God spared Abraham his son..... He spared not His own! That was not possible, if you and I are to be with Him forever, and He was not willing that we should not be.

But again let us suck the sweetness out of a well-known but never exhausted verse, by which some of us have often been moved to worship:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." (John 10:17.)

Think of it! Though the Father loved the Son before the creation of the world; though every thought, every word, every act of Jesus awoke, as we may say, fresh delight, yet all this seems actually to be put aside by that word "therefore," for it tells of something that is so overwhelming a cause of love that it makes all the rest apparently not to count at all! And what was that? He, as the good Shepherd "lays down His life that He may take it again." But is that all? Simply to lay it down in order that He may take it up? How vain that would apparently be! Aye, but it is for the sheep that He lays it down, and it is for the same sheep that He takes it again, in order that He may give to them that resurrection-life to which no condemnation can ever be attached; and that is what causes the Father to love the Son! Who then can measure the love of God the Father for us poor sinners? Can we refrain from worship?

No moment in all the history of the earth, from Adam to the present, ever compared in the issues that hung upon it, with that that lay between the two words: "Me" and "nevertheless." You will note that I have made a slight pause between them. Thank God that separation is not literally justified. At once, with no interval, did the "nevertheless" follow the "me;" and another prayer rises from that

Sufferer, that His Father's will may be done at all costs, even if that involves His draining that bitter cup. O truth too precious to be hurried over, Well may we ask, what was that will? Again let us throw our minds back to the day of Jewish altars. Mark an ox loses its life, and its blood is poured out at the base of the altar. The Father is looking at the sacrifice: the Son is looking into the Father's Face and as He looks He speaks: "Thou art not pleased my Father, why not pleased?" "True, my Son, that sacrifice has not done my Will at all: it has not removed the barrier that still separates Me from my beloved creature, man. The veil is unrent: I am unable to go out, and man is unable to come in, for sin still interposes; Nay, I am not pleased, my will remains undone."

Still sacrifices and offerings follow each other. Oxen, and goats and lambs are slain, but all are giving no pleasure to His Father. Then the Son again speaks: "Mine ear hast thou opened—it is of Me that the volume of the book speaks, and it is to Me that all these ineffective sacrifices point. I come, lo I come, for I delight to do thy will O my God." And here He is, in shadow fulfilling that will, even whilst shrinking in His holiness from it. O divine Perfection! How utterly inappropriate would any lightness be in Him here! His very perfection is measured by His fear.

But what then was it that was such an awful terror to that Holy One? Let us see first what it was not. It was surely not the physical sufferings, attendant on that cruel death by crucifixion, extreme though even they must have been in that infinitely sensitive organism, His perfect human Body. Let the Jew spit on His Face: let the Gentile follow in inflicting that gross indignity: let the thorns of a mocking crown pierce His brow: let the Roman rods plow long furrows on His back: let the nails break through nerves, muscles and bones, not one word does He utter, not a groan or sigh is recorded. All that may well have been included in that "shame" of which it is written that

He "despised" it. (Heb. 12:2). No, it was not these sufferings, or this shame, that He feared.

But there are those who teach (and good men too they are) that His fear was lest Satan should slay Him and so prevent His reaching the Cross, and by that effecting the atonement for all sin that should forever shut his accusing mouth. It is also false, for no creature—devil or man—had any power to take life from Him. He lay it down voluntarily. The whole plan of salvation would be ruined were not His death voluntary. No indeed, He had no fear of any taking His life from Him.

There remains the one sole reason—O my beloved fellow-sinner, my beloved fellow-saint, here it is: He feared the being made what you and I are! Let us ponder it, and can we do so quite unmoved? The mere shadow of being made that awful thing, SIN, caused the sweat as of blood in His agony. Estimate, if this the effect of the shadow, what the suffering that the Substance of that shadow must have caused!! What becomes such a scene in which you and I have so vital a part but silent awe and penitent, and perhaps not tearless, adoration. As we thus look upon Him here, the words of Job come to mind and must we not make them our own? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6).

But it is this very fear that is the "oil" that comes from this press and evidences His piety, and it is for this very "fear" that He is heard (Heb. 5:7) and is saved—not from dying, but "out of death." The answer to that cry then is in His resurrection.

But does not all this teach us the profound significance there is in the name: "Gethsemane?" Throw any man into a haunt where he is surrounded by blasphemy and every form of wickedness: is not his own state told by the way he is affected by such an environment? If he is a Christian, does he not suffer? If he is a carnal worldly Christian he may not be greatly affected, if spiritual he surely

will. In direct proportion to the measure of his holiness will be his suffering. Measure then the holiness of our Lord Jesus by the cries, and tears of anguish, and the bloody sweat. His was the very perfection of holiness.

Still before leaving this solemn theme I am compelled to ask you to consider with me one fearful figure of sin that we all naturally shrink from speaking of at all, but since it had its part in causing that holy fear, we cannot ignore. Let us turn then to the offerings of Leviticus, and we pass the Burnt, Meat and Peace offering without finding that repulsive word. But as soon as we come to the Sin-offering we read: "And the skin of the bullock and all his flesh with his legs, and his inwards and his dung—even the whole bullock." Do you note that word that we shrink from repeating? By that sin is symbolized! And so it is ever. Wherever that word occurs in any sacrifice it is because sin is there. Look at that lovely creature the Red Heifer of Num. 19. Not a spot or blemish of any kind can be discerned in or on it. But it is "made sin" and as such slain outside the camp, and then note "one shall burn the heifer in his sight, her skin and her flesh and her blood with her dung shall he burn." O can you wonder at the sufferings: the strong cries and tears of Gethsemane when it was pressed upon His holy Soul that He was to be made that in the sight of God? Let us in spirit join hands and sing with a dear saint well-known to some of us,

"In His spotless soul's distress
I have learned my sinfulness.
O how vile my low estate,
Since my ransom was so great."

But now there is a streak of light breaking through the darkness of the scene:

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him." (Luke 22-35.)

Do we not well walk with unshod feet here, and in all our enquiries into these holy mysteries to cleave very

closely to what is written? How could any creature, even though an angel, strengthen Him to whom they owed their very existence? As far as I am aware no human commentator will help us greatly to an answer to that question. But I trust I am not going too far in believing still that Scripture itself does give divine light even on this; and that it is divine, will be shown by its maintenance of His divine dignity, even in the strengthening that is brought to Him. Think of the difficulty of harmonizing such apparent incongruities as strengthening One who has limitless power! If the explanation does that, and both maintains His Deity and yet strengthens, must it not be true?

See then what always and alone strengthened Him all through His path here. A poor sinful woman discerns His glory, even as He sits a weary Man on a well-side; and, discerning God in Him, her sad heart finds its rest in the God who could tell her of all her sad sinful life and yet had given her living water; and lo we hear Him saying: "I have meat* to eat that ye know not of." He was strengthened by that poor sinner's discerning His glory, and receiving what His love would give. So when the Centurion discerned that same divine glory, and expressed that discernment in the words: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," did not His comment: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," show how refreshed He was? Did not the Syro-Phenician, too, when she took the place of the "little dogs" and received far more than a "crumb" from His table—did not she strengthen Christ? O, it is a dull ear that does not catch His delight in the words: "O woman, great is thy faith!"

Aye, and even on the cross did not the poor thief's discernment of His glory strengthen Him, when He

* "meat," Gr. brosis—not flesh, but any food as giving strength and refreshment.

prayed: "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom"? Surely all these refreshed His Spirit and so strengthened Him. Then let us see if we can find in Scripture any forecast of this scene in the garden that shall show us how the angel also strengthened Him. Look at the title of Psalm 102:

"A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord."

Who can fail to see here that same One who

"In the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5, 7) ? and where, in all the Gospels, have we any record of anything of that kind save in Gethsemane? The Psalm then has this scene in Gethsemane in view, and the intent of the Holy Spirit is to bring Christ as the poor man before us in the Psalm, in the Epistle and in the Gospels, and all referring solely to the scene we are considering. Holding this carefully in mind, let us turn to the first chapter of the same epistle to the Hebrews and there we see the same One in company with angels, but being so far above them by divine decree, as the divine Son is above every creature and because of that immeasurable preeminence, it is written:

"Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Then a little later in this same chapter we hear a quotation from the same Psalm, 102, that refers to Gethsemane, ascribing divine glory as Creator to Him: "and thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail" (Ps. 102:25-27. and Heb. 1:10-12).

If then the Psalm speaks as clearly as possible of the Lord's sufferings in Gethsemane, as it surely does—if a portion of the Psalm is transferred to that Scripture that

tells of His infinite superiority to angels, as it surely is—if the angels are bidden to worship Him, as they surely are—if this discernment of His divine glory ever did strengthen Him, as it surely did—if in Gethsemane we see an angel strengthening Him: is it not the most inevitable, scriptural and divine deduction, that this angel of Luke 22, 43 was uttering the adoring words of worship that the Psalm provided, as above, and in thus reminding Him of His unchangeable glory—His Power and Godhead by which His Person was eternal, and no death could hold Him—strengthening Him? It is, I can but think, conclusive.

His foes were busy in that dark hour: His friends were sunken in slumber, but all heaven was awake, and one of its dwellers is swift to worship Him! Surely God Himself has given us the explanation of this phenomenon of a creature strengthening Christ: it could be done in no other way.

But let us further confirm it by regarding the antithesis of “strengthening,” that is, “wearying.” It was a weary Man who took His seat on Sychar’s well. It was a strengthened Man who a little later sat there. The rejection of His love in Judaea wearied Him. The reception of it in Samaria strengthened Him. So in the day of Ahaz, when, with assumed piety, he refused the offered sign, Isaiah says: “Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?” (Ch. 7-13). Unbelief wearies, Faith strengthens, and it is the angel’s confident, “Thou remainest” that strengthens Christ, “even whilst those heavens that are the works of thy hands are being rolled away, and the earth is departing from its foundation, still Thou remainest”—and it was that that strengthened Christ in Gethsemane!

But no angel of light broke the darkness of the last three hours on the Cross! There was no such strengthen-

ing during those hours. In this, too, how far did the suffering in the substance exceed that in the shadow!

Nor can we, even yet, leave this incomparably affecting scene, for if the light of the Paschal moon does not suffice, a Voice shall reveal to us what is occurring in the shade of the olives.

“And his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.”

And how fitting it is that the pen of Luke should tell us this, for it is He who brings our Lord before us “with the face of a man” (Rev. 4-7); that is, in this gospel, we look into a human Face, and see in it all the perfect human emotions of love and anger, joy and grief, and as here, of unmixed sorrow and suffering passing over Him. We shall see that Face in all its radiant glory before long,—is it not well to look on it here in deepest suffering, and which yet only shadowed an infinitely deeper?

Now, the word “sweat” occurs but three times in all Scripture, and there certainly would appear to be a very striking relation between these three occurrences.

First in a sin-darkened garden we hear:

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake * * * thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee * * * In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. (Gen. 3, 19).

Here then we see death and the curse closely related to the sweat, and so intimate are the links that connect man with his earth, that the man’s sin brings the divine penalty, not only on himself, but on the earth too, and the sweat on his brow that accompanies his toil shall tell of the curse on both.

But ages pass, and at last bring with them another “garden,” and in it another Man, on whom no such curse could ever rest, for no sin that demanded it could be laid to His charge. Yet mark, He sweats! Nor does that speak here of the effect of mere physical toil, for there was none

of that, but of the very suffering of death and the curse in a shadow. We must note too, carefully the words: "as it were great drops of blood." These words "as it were" are not introduced here without divine intent, and they assure us that there is a significance deeper than lies on the surface. We remember that it was "AS a dove" that the Spirit descended upon him, and it is precisely the same word used as here. It was not literally a dove, but "AS it were a dove." The dove must be seen as a symbol of a divine Visitant to earth, that is the Holy Ghost. Precisely so here, we must not stay on the surface of these sweat-drops of "as it were blood," but ponder their awful significance. They speak of the curse being borne in mighty travail of soul, and yet here, only in shadow. The **Blood** itself that makes atonement, shall flow later: this is but the shadow, and so it is "as it were." It is the very shadow of the travail of His Soul that thus is expressed on that suffering Brow. If the shadow could have such an effect, what of the substance?

After this what should we expect the third occurrence of the word to speak? but of the result of that primal curse being borne? So it is:

"The priests—shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat" (Ezek. 44:18). It is the millennial day, and Jerusalem is altogether a new creation (Is. 65-17:8), so the servants of God, who tell out the character of His service, must never wear anything that shall remind of the curse so perfectly borne away. Death and the Curse have passed forever and not one single bead of sweat must stand upon the brow of any who serve Him. That would destroy that witness to the efficiency of His atonement that even the bodies of the redeemed must render.

But the holy scene draws to its close with one of those paradoxes in which there is no contradiction. As He returns to His disciples for the last time, He says:

“Sleep on now and take your rest, behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; behold he is at hand that doth betray me.”

“Sleep on,” “Rise up!” How can both be done at the same time? Let us at least meditate a little on the apparent anomaly. “Sleep on now,” for the only opportunity you will ever have of watching with Me one hour is gone forever, so sleep on. O sad word for them all. Yet He shewed that He knoweth our frame and remembers that we are but dust, for He recognized the willingness of the spirit, as well as the weakness of the flesh (Matt. 26-41). It was night, and that favoured sleep. Deep must have been the exercises passed through that day, and that too favoured sleep. They were filled with sorrow, and that too favours an escape by sleep. But still the one opportunity was gone, and they may as well sleep on now. Peter shall be used as none other at Pentecost; but never again shall he watch with Christ in Gethsemane. James shall seal his testimony with his blood, but never watch that hour. John shall suffer in Patmos “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” but never watch with Him in Gethsemane—that is gone forever, so let them sleep on!

Still is it night, and still do the same Powers of Darkness, that pressed about our Lord in Gethsemane, press about even us, His poor, frail followers. Still therefore are there swift-passing opportunities that this short life alone gives of knowing “the fellowship of His sufferings,” in rejection by a religious, but yet in very truth an unchristian world. How valuable then is even this life: not however in the sense of our poet Browning

“How good is man’s life, the mere living,
The leaping from rock unto rock,
The rending the bow from the fir-tree, the shock
In the cool silver pool”

No, no, but for the opportunities it gives for witnessing in a scene of sin and sorrow, of God's Antidote to both in One, and only One—Jesus our Lord. What would those who are now unclothed spirits give for one hour of such opportunity as is ours today, but may not be ours tomorrow, for this very day we too may hear that word: "Sleep on now," and we too may follow the "great majority," and opportunity of this sort be gone forever!

But there are two ways in which this time of watching and witnessing may be brought to its end; and those diverse ways may possibly (for I would not dogmatize) be suggested in our Lord's paradoxical words "Sleep on" and "Rise up." To how many have the words: "Sleep on now" come since that first beloved witness "fell asleep," crushed by the stones of his murderers. But there is surely an alternative for: "we shall not all sleep," and an hour shall come in which the shout of the Lord shall awaken all that sleep in Him, and then shall the other word sound, "Rise up" for we shall all be caught up to meet Him in the air, to be forever with Him. No severance among those who love Him then. No sleep shall mar their service then.

But now we must bid farewell to the sacred scene, which, in bringing before eye and ear the "shadow," tells us of that awful "substance" that passes all telling. We may surely say that it was because of its limitless nature, exceeding all our powers, that it was thus hidden by the midday darkness. May God in His grace forbid that we ever forget Gethsemane, till we see His Face on which were the "great drops as it were of blood," and O that our meditation might lead to a holier closer walk with God till that same happy hour.

But certainly we shall never forget Gethsemane then, for eternity will tell, not only of the love of the Son who took the bitter cup, but also of the love of God the Father

who for our sakes, spared not even that beloved One,
but put that cup into His willing, yet shrinking Hand,
and He drank it. Peradventure we shall sing there, but
with sweeter note, the very words that we sometimes sing
here, and never without some feeling:

“Measured by that cross, that darkness
O how deep God’s love must be:
Deep as were Christ’s depths of anguish
Is the Father’s love to me.”

—F. C. J.

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