



The Baptist Hour Messages

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THE SHADOW OF GETHSEMANE

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Scripture: Matthew 26:38-42

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples" — John 18:1.

When Jesus entered the garden of Gethsemane, He was swallowed up by the shadows of the olive trees which grew there in abundance. But the real shadow of that moonlit night was not about the body but within the soul of Jesus. This is one of the most sacred hours in Jesus' earthly life. Therefore, as did Moses before the burning bush, so must we before the ageless olive trees remove our shoes for we are indeed upon holy ground. John omits many details of the event. Therefore, within his framework, we shall turn to the other Gospels for a consideration of the shadow of Gethsemane. In reverse of their order of occurrence as we note the betrayal of Judas, the failure of the disciples, and the agony of Jesus.

The conclusion of the event in Geth-

semane is marked by Judas' kiss of betrayal. The Greek word says that he "kissed him much." With words Judas fawned upon Jesus, but with his heart of unbelief he betrayed Him to His death.

ATTITUDE

This suggests the attitude of those of you who are not Christian. With one breath you condemn Judas, yet with the other you enter into his betrayal. You shower Jesus with your kisses of respect and love, but you withhold from Him your faith.

In so doing, so far as your own soul is concerned, you betray Jesus to a meaningless death. Our Lord willingly died that you might have eternal life. But you make His death in vain for yourself in scorning His salvation. Of you Jesus spoke as in Matthew 15:8 He said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

Thus you can betray Jesus with scant

praise. You demonstrate that He is worthy of your love. But refusing to trust in Him as your Saviour, you plant upon Him the kiss of death. And what is more, you place the kiss of death upon your immortal soul.

Leaving Judas will you walk deeper into the shadows of Gethsemane where you find the sleeping disciples. Leaving eight of them near the gate, Jesus took Peter, James, and John deeper into the physical shadows and into the shadow of His own soul. This was not the first time that they had enjoyed an unusual intimacy with Jesus. They were with Him at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1) and at the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mk. 5:37). Now they are permitted to stand on the very threshold of His personal sufferings.

Only a few days before John and James had asked Jesus for the choice places of honor and power in His kingdom (Mk. 10:35ff). To which Jesus replied, "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?" To which they replied,

apparently without thoughtful consideration, "We can" (v. 39).

Peter, on the other hand, had only a few hours before boasted of his un-failing loyalty to Jesus, even unto death (Mk. 14:29-31). All three of them had given an oath to Jesus, an oath based upon their human powers of endurance. But Jesus knew that while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41). They placed their dedication alongside that of Jesus. They must be taught the folly of self-reliance and the absolute necessity of their abiding faith in Jesus. Now the time has come for Jesus to drink the cup, to be baptized in sorrow and suffering, to prove His loyalty to God and man to the point of dying. Can Peter, James, and John follow Him even now? There is a poetic parallelism in the words "And he (Jesus) went forward a little." When these self-confident disciples had gone as far as they could, Jesus went a little further. And while they slept, Jesus was busy. It is always thus.

ASLEEP

Many of you see yourselves in these sleeping disciples. Like them you belong to Christ. Once you avowed your fidelity to Him. You longed to be a mighty servant for Christ. But, while you trusted in Him for salvation, you relied in your own strength for fidelity. But like these disciples, overwhelmed by the sorrows, hardships, and allurements of life, you are asleep to the urgency of true discipleship. While God still agonizes over a lost world, you are insensible to its need. You are not openly sinful, but you are viciously idle. God has made you a watchman upon the walls of Zion, but you are a sentry asleep at the post while Satan pillages and plunders the souls of men.

Jesus died to save the world, but without your faithfulness to Him, many will never be saved. And in your own strength alone you are doomed to failure. Only in Christ and His strength can you succeed.

But I also speak to many who, unlike these disciples, recognize your weakness. For that reason you refuse to follow Jesus at all. The oft-used excuse for not becoming a Christian, "I am afraid that I cannot hold out," is the stumbling block in your path to Jesus. Therefore

Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for April

Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs

Theme: ANSWERS

April 5—"The Answer to Despair"
(Acts 2:38)

April 12—"The Answer to Inquiry"
(Acts 4:12)

April 19—"The Answer to Intimidation"
(Acts 5:39)

April 26—"The Answer to the Unanswerable"
(Acts 7:54-60)

Hear them on
THE BAPTIST HOUR
Read them in
THE BEAM

you can find hope in this scene. If you cannot hold out, neither could Peter, James, and John. Jesus knew when He left them there that they could not. But He did so nevertheless. While they did not stand guard, God did. While they suffered little, God suffered much. The result was that the powers of evil did not thwart the redemptive will of God.

The glorious truth is that in your salvation you do not do the holding out. God does it for you! You are not saved by your own powers to begin with. Your salvation depends upon the power of God in Christ. While Jesus struggled in Gethsemane, Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:19 that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself . . ." And that which God redeems He guards (II Tim. 1:12).

"WHO SHALL SEPARATE"

One of the greatest passages in the Bible is Romans 8:29-39. It begins with the foreknowledge of God and His predestination concerning salvation. In this connection "foreknowledge" simply means that God knows in advance who will accept Jesus or reject Him. Predestination does not mean that arbitrarily some are predestined for heaven and others for hell. It simply means that God has predestined that all who accept His call to salvation will be saved; all who reject the call will be lost. God calls all sinners to repentance. He is calling you right now. If you accept Jesus you will be saved. If you reject Him you will be lost. But notice what God says about those who accept His call.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To this glorious promise of God I can only "pray you: in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20). And leave the holding out to Him!

I can say that to you in absolute confidence because of what was happening in the innermost recess of the garden. We are hesitant to intrude, but for the

sake of all of you who are lost, let us reverently draw near.

When Jesus left the three disciples He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). Earlier in the evening He confidently prophesied victory over it (Jn. 14:1-3). But now from the calm assurance of victory He enters the agony of the battle itself. His only weapons were prayer and the Father's will.

ROCK OF AGONY

Three times Jesus prayed. First, Matthew 26:39 tells us, He fell on His face. Tourists may now see the "Rock of Agony" upon which tradition says He prayed. So overburdened was He that He did not kneel, but fell on His face. His first words were a loud outburst. "O my Father . . ." (Matt. 26:39). Mark records Him as using the intimate language of childhood, "Abba, Father . . ." (14:36). Hebrews 5:7 says that He prayed "with strong crying and tears." And what did He pray? "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me (here was the voice of the Son of Man): nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (here was the voice of the Son of God) (Matt. 26:39). For one hour He prayed thusly, and then came to find the disciples asleep. Presently He returned and knelt down (Lk. 22:41). Note the difference in posture. There is confidence now. The foregleam of victory appears in Jesus' second prayer. "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42).

The Father showed the Son that He did not so will when He sent an angel to strengthen Him (Lk. 22:43). Realizing this Jesus returned from a second look at the sleeping disciples. Luke (22:44) says, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." This was the final struggle before victory. Luke, the physician, notes that the sweat was thick, clotted blood. Had not the angel ministered to Jesus, He would have bled to death in Gethsemane, before the cross. Satan was getting desperate! In the wilderness after three unsuccessful attacks the

Devil left Jesus (Matt. 4:11). Now after three assaults, he is vanquished. Jesus is victorious! "Oh my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42, 44). Carlo Dolce's picture of this scene shows the drops of blood as they fell being kindled into a heavenly light. Thus the shadows were dispelled by the light of victory—Jesus' victory and ours.

THE CUP

What was the "cup" which Jesus prayed to avoid? Some say it was the cross. But only incidentally is this true. Jesus was not cowardly afraid of physical suffering and death. He had suffered before. He knew that the resurrection was only three days away. The "cup" was that which His death involved. The answer to our question is found in II Corinthians 5:21. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." When Jesus died on the cross, He was not sinful but *sin* for or as a substitute for you. Thus His pure soul that had never sinned for the moment drew

back from the horror of becoming the very essence of sin, that God might punish sin in Him. But He surrendered to God's will. He took your sin upon Himself that you "might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But while the shadow over Jesus was dispelled in His victory, the shadow of sin is still over you. Its shape is that of the avenging sword of God poised to strike. Only God's grace delays its downward plunge into your soul. On the cross, Jesus became sin for you. He can become so actually only as you allow Him to become sin for you as you submit your will to God's will. God in Christ has done all that He can do to save you. Thus your salvation depends upon you.

God's final invitation in the Bible is "Whosoever will . . ." (Rev. 22:17). Will you? Are you willing? God is waiting. Jesus is expecting (Heb. 10:13). The Holy Spirit is pleading. I beg of you, in Christ's stead, to make His prayer of submission yours as you pray, "Thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42).

THE SHADOW OF PILATE'S HALL

March 8, 1959

Scripture: John 18:28-32

"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early . . . Pilate then went out unto them, and said, 'What accusation bring ye against this man?'" — John 8:28-29.

The trial of Jesus has been described as judicial murder. Although He was tried under the two greatest legal systems of ancient times (Jewish and Roman), it was illegal in almost every respect.

It was contrary to Jewish jurisprudence. Jesus was arrested without a formal accusation. Some of those who were to sit in judgment plotted His arrest with the predetermined purpose of putting Him to death (Jn. 11:47-53). He was examined before the trial in an effort to get from him an admission of guilt (Jn. 18:19-23). The trial was held at night and on a feast day. False witnesses were made to give testimony which did

not agree (Mk. 14:49; cf. Deut. 19:15). The prisoner was brutally handled (Lk. 22:63-65) and under oath forced to give the testimony upon which He was condemned (Matt. 26:63ff). The court had no authority to pronounce the death sentence (Jn. 18:31). The sentence was pronounced on the same day of the trial. It was a unanimous verdict (Mk. 14:64) in which case Jewish legal practice said that He must, therefore, be acquitted.

The Roman trial was illegal in that once Pilate declared Jesus innocent (Lk. 23:4; Jn. 18:38). He should have been released. Pilate's efforts thereafter were a travesty upon Roman justice as he sought to bargain with the Jews to save his own skin. For that reason we shall confine our message to the shadow of Pilate's hall as we study the plight of this poor sinful man. In such light will you see