

FAITH IS ACTION

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Gethsemane

The Olive Press

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“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” the Holy Spirit asked through Paul in Romans 8:35. “... Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness...” (no money, no job, unemployment benefits have run out; welfare is not fairing well, and Social Security is not being social), “...or peril, or sword (terrorism and war)?”

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (vs. 37).

In spite of these verses and countless others in the NT that describe trials of faith, even *fiery trials*, that Christians face, there are some who erroneously teach that Christians should not suffer these things. They have laid down their crosses, and they don't believe that they have to wrestle in prayer anymore. The modern thing is to just confess your problems and burdens away, rather than to put on *the whole armor of God* that enables us to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11-18).

Let me say this up front: If one is not fighting the battle, he is already con-

quered! Satan has duped him, and he no longer poses any threat to his kingdom. He may go contentedly and even prosperously on his way, *playing church*, while the battle for souls is raging Paul enjoined Timothy: “*Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). I am not looking for an easy way or an *easy gospel*. I intend to stay on the battlefield for the Lord until I die! (I'll take my R&R in Heaven!)

Jesus never made the way of discipleship look easy. In fact, He purposely stated: “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Lk. 9:23).

We are engaged in a spiritual combat wherein we “*wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies*” (Eph. 6:12), and we are commanded in 1 Tim. 6:12: “*Fight the good fight of faith!*”

The Term “Agony”

The word that is translated *fight* in this verse is very powerful in the Greek. In fact, the very same word is also translated “*strive, contend, and agony*” elsewhere in the NT. From the Greek AGONIZOMAI we derive our English word *agony*. This is a transliteration from the Greek, which means that it has been *anglicized* from the original language and brought directly over to the English. Such is the case in Luke 22:44.

*“And being in **agony** he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling own to the ground.”*

The primary English meaning for *agony* is *intense suffering*. Most dictionaries, however, give a secondary meaning which is *to wrestle, fight, contend for a victory or prize*. Generally, the *suffering* is the *result* of such intense fighting and wrestling, and so **suffering itself** became the more common English meaning for the term *agony*.

But in the Greek, it is the **struggle itself** which is meant. The root word in the Greek is AGON; which was the *arena, stadium, or place* where the great Olympic games were held, where the great athletes earnestly contended, struggled, strove, fought, and agonized for the prize. “...*This they do,*” Paul said, “*for a corruptible crown.*” (The crown was but an olive laurel that literally began to fade and die from the moment its branches were plucked from the tree.)

*“And every man that **striveth***

(AGONIZOMAI) for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

If you are not *striving*, if you are not *contending*, you are not going to receive this crown! If you have already laid down your armor and your cross, and you are already reigning (Paul stated in 2 Cor. 4:8 that some are already reigning without us), you better enjoy it, because you are not going to reign with Christ in His eternal kingdom: “*For if we **suffer** (with him), we shall also reign with him*” (2 Tim. 2:12).

The Garden of Suffering

When Luke stated that Jesus was *in agony* in the Garden, he meant that He was *in combat* with the power of darkness (vs. 53). He was in a *violent struggle*. He was in a *fight*. Paul’s command to Timothy, “*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...*” in Greek would read, “*Agonize the good agony,*” because it is the same word found in Luke 22:44. If you were a boxer and went into the ring to fight, unless your opponent had two broken hands and was as blind as a bat, you would experience some *agony*. *Even if you came out the winner*, you would know that you had been in a fight! The first time Ali and Frazier fought, Frazier came out the winner, but afterwards, he went to the hospital for a week. He was *in agony!* I’ve seen some of those fighters who had just won the championship, and

they were smiling behind closed eyes and crooked mouths. This agony was the *result* of their fighting.

In Gethsemane, Jesus was in combat and warfare. He struggled so violently that Luke said that “*His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*” (vs. 44). The Greek word translated *drops* is THROMBOS, from which we get our English word *thrombosis*, meaning *a clotting of the blood*. Jesus was in such a spiritual battle and such physical agony from it, that His sweat was oozing like blood clots through His pores. Luke is the only Gospel writer that records this fact, and he was a physician, so he knew what he was saying.

His agony was so great that the Father had to send an angel to strengthen Him or He would have perished physically, and God wasn’t going to let Him die, because He had not won the victory yet. So powerful was His warfare with Satan and the forces of darkness, that He prayed and warred to the point of physical exhaustion and potential cardiac arrest.

We love to sing that old hymn “*I’ll go with Him... with Him, all the way...*” I ask you, Christian friend, Will you go with Him *in the Garden*? If you won’t go with Him in the Garden, you won’t go with Him in the heavens! If you won’t suffer with Him in Gethsemane, you won’t reign with Him in eternity.

Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha

Jesus’ sufferings *commenced* in

Gethsemane—*the garden of agony* where He prayed intensely. From there they led Him to **Gabbatha**. This Aramaic word refers to the pavement surrounding Pilate’s Judgment Hall where the Roman soldiers cast lots for His garments in mockery. His suffering *continued* there as they beat Him with the flesh-tearing cat-o-nine tails and pulled out His beard. Finally, after questioning, scourging, mocking and bruising Him, they led Him to **Golgotha**—*the place of the skull* where He *completed* His sufferings by crucifixion on a Roman cross.

There is a modern doctrine that has stated that Jesus had to go to Hell for three days to suffer for our sins. How can we suffer with Him if He suffered in Hell? I’ll tell you where He suffered: He suffered in the Garden! He continued His sufferings in Pilate’s Judgment Hall, and *He finished it on the cross, on top of Mount Calvary!* And like Paul said in Gal. 2:20: “*I am crucified with Him.*” In fact, he said in 1 Cor. 15:31, “*I die daily.*”

We face a daily battle to buffet our body and kill our flesh, and submit our will to God. For the latter, Jesus had to pray three times in the Garden! When He had prayed and struggled so until His sweat came as blood clots, Luke says that He then “*prayed more earnestly,*” but the Greek says “*more intensely!*”

The Olive Press

The name *Gethsemane* is from the Aramaic, and means “the olive press.”

One of the most venerated places on the face of the earth, it is located at the foot of the Mount of Olives. In this Garden are some of the oldest, if not oldest, olive trees known to man, even the very olive trees that grew there when Jesus agonized in their shadows. It is just as holy as Calvary, because here Jesus entered *the olive press* where He suffered and agonized until His sweat came forth as bloody clots, even as the olives were pressed until every drop of oil was extracted. Do you know how they would press the olives? *By crushing them.*

First the olives were crushed in an *olive mill*. This was a large vat with a round bottom (like a gigantic bowl) that was hewn from stone. Inside, in an upright position, stood a huge wheel-shaped stone which fit the contour of the vat. This wheel had a hole in the center into which a large wooden beam was placed, which was hitched to an ox or donkey. The animal would slowly turn the wheel, which weighed a ton or more, by walking in circles around the mill. As the stone crushed the olives, the oil drained through a hole in the vat.

Following this operation, the now crushed, mangled olives were then placed into huge straw containers shaped like washtubs. They were stacked one on top of the other. The *olive press* was a tremendous weight, over a ton, that was hung from a beam and cantilevered over the stacked baskets. It was maneuvered in such a way as to press down on the baskets

until every ounce of remaining oil was squeezed out of the already crushed olives. The baskets were left under the press for several days to insure the pressing of the last drop!

Gethsemane was truly Jesus' olive press. He was literally crushed until He declared, "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*" (Matt. 26:38).

He was in the *press*. He was in such a crushing press that the Father had to send an angel to strengthen Him, or I believe that He would have died. He told His disciples, "*I am exceeding sorrowful, even unto death... I am so full of grief and in such agony, that I am ready to die.*"

His physical body was reacting like someone's who is having a coronary thrombosis. His blood pressure was so great that every blood vessel was about to burst. He was in the *pressure cooker* like no other human being. He was in the press and in the struggle for you and for me and for all mankind! Our redemption hung there in the balance—If He didn't win this fight—*If He didn't drink the cup of sufferings*; even though it was possible for the cup to pass, God's integrity and the validity of His Word would have been worthless; for the Redeemer had to die on the cross.

His Double Agony

Jesus faced a *double agony* in the Garden. The first was to *humble Himself and become obedient to the will of the Father*, which He had fulfilled all the way up to that hour. This is the

only time in the Bible that it is recorded that He prayed three times for anything. He never had to pray more than once for anything, because whenever He prayed the Father heard Him. But in the *olive press*, for the first time, He had to pray once—twice—**three times** to bring His will under, in obedience to the Father's will.

(If you're ever at the place where you know the will of the Lord, but you are having a battle doing it, get in the *olive press*. Get in the agony and pray, "Lord, I really don't want to do this thing, but nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done!" The Lord understands: He had to pray that same prayer three times. Go to *Gethsemane*, the Garden of Prayer, fall on your knees, and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Like our Savior, you will feel the press; you will feel the warfare as self will and disobedience are pressed out. The Son of God battled with self, and so will you and I.)

In the *olive press* Jesus was compelled to drink the cup of sufferings, and His human flesh did not want to do it anymore than yours or mine would. He wrestled as He cried out to the Father, "***If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt!***" He knew that He had to drink the cup, and this ultimate struggle of His will is recorded in Hebrews 5:7-8:

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him

from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Through he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered."

He prayed and cried with such strong tears until He had to be strengthened by the angel that He might pray *more intensely!* After He prayed the first time, He returned to Peter, James, and John looking for human sympathy and support, but found them sleeping. "*Can't you watch with Me one hour?*" He asked. The Greek word for *watch* means to watch with vigilance, as a watchman on the wall looking for the enemy.

If you already have the victory for yourself, you need to get in the *olive press* and watch for your brother and sister. In order to have revival somebody has to go to the *olive press*; someone has to go to *Gethsemane* and watch in prayer! (Eph. 6:18).

For thirty-three-and-one-half years, Jesus was the perfect servant. Paul brought this out beautifully in Phil. 2:5-8, where we learn that this great and glorious Being, the Word of God by whom all things were made, humbled Himself and became *a man*, and not only that, but *a servant!* He had no other ambition but to do the will of God. The Psalmist prophesied it, and Paul quoted in Heb. 10:9: "*Lo, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) I come to do thy will, O God.*"

The Son of God came to do nothing but the will of God, and the will of God was for Him to drink the cup

of sufferings and death to pay the price to redeem man. Nothing less was acceptable—not even His humbling Himself to lay aside His deity:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” This was not enough. This was only the **first part** of His humility!

He had humbled Himself to be a man, yea, the lowest of men, a servant, and this He did by choice and not force. But now, in the Garden, He faced the final stage of His humility and obedience to the Father:

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself (further), and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

It boggles my mind to think that this Majestic One would lay aside His glorified form and take on a servant’s form and limit Himself to humanity! But that was not enough: He had to become obedient to His Father’s will *to the point of death, even the death of the cross!* He would become a curse for you and me, for it is written, *“Cursed is he who hangeth on the tree!”* (Gal. 3:13).

So Jesus did not take the cup the first time, but being in agony, He went to His disciples for human solace, only to find them fast asleep. No one would watch with Him in His agony. He suffered in the olive press *alone*. (I imagine ole Satan taunted Him saying, *“These are the ones you are dying for,*

and they can’t even watch with you in your agony!”)

Neither did He take the cup the second time, but again He returned to His disciples only to find them sound asleep. No doubt, the devil was really preaching to Him now: *“Look at your disciples; they can’t even watch with you one hour, and soon Peter will deny you, and Judas will betray you with a kiss, and the very ones that you wish to save will pluck out your beard and beat you to a bloody pulp, and then stick you up on a cross and mock you!”*

When He had sought help again from His disciples and found none, God sent the angel to strengthen Him, and He jumped into the arena of agony and *prayed more intensely!* His Father was demanding Him to take the cup, the devil was pressing Him, and His disciples were asleep, while Judas was on the way with the betrayers. But this time He won the victory! He not only prayed, *“Father, not my will, but Thine be done,”* but, as it were, He grabbed the cup and drank every bitter dregs of the cup of sufferings and death! Then He entered into the *second battle of His agony!*

The Second Agony

The record of Jesus’ second agony is found in **John 17**. This was His prayer in the Garden for *you and me, and for everyone who would ever receive Him as their Savior*. There He began to intercede for us, and He could not do this until He had drunk the cup. When He had won the battle

over His own self will, He poured out His soul unto His Father for all of His little ones, saying, “*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (Judas)... Neither do I pray for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*” (vv. 12 & 20).

Then He rose up and came to His still-sleeping disciples and said, “*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*” (Matt. 26:45).

He prayed the prayer of faith for everyone of us who wants to go to heaven. Jesus had told His disciples beforehand, “*No one can pluck you out of My hand*” (John 10:28). It may not have looked true in reference to Peter, but Jesus had said to him just hours before, “*Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat...*” (This was done by crushing it under the wheels of ox carts.) “*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when you have the victory again, go and strengthen the brethren*” (Lk. 22:31-32).

I believe the Holy Spirit is saying to us that there will be no travail for souls until we get in *the olive press* and take the cup. I once knew a dear saint who would pray so intensely for souls that her nose would bleed like a fountain. She prayed in *the olive press!* And we are not going to say some sweet little slogan and get souls

saved: We are going to have to go to *the olive press and agonize for souls!* “*When Zion travailed, she brought forth the manchild!*” (Isa. 66:8).

The devil is betting that most of the Church won't go to *Gethsemane*. No, they are too caught up with materialism. I believe God wants to prosper His people, but not to consume it on excessive lusts. He wants us to have our needs supplied, and then be stewards of the Gospel (Ref. Deut. 8:18).

The Garden of Prayer

I spend a lot of time in the Garden of Prayer, but not for myself: “*I am praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (Eph. 6:18). You would be surprised how when you are watching and meditating in prayer, that God will lay someone in need upon your heart, and you will pray and travail in the Spirit for him. You may even see that person later and he say to you, “*Oh, have I been in a battle today!*” Then you will know that you were watching! You then were “*strong to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please yourself*” (Rom. 15:1).

I grant you, you are going to have to pray to be able to drink the cup, but it is time we prayed! If you haven't been able to drink the cup, then you must *pray again!* Jesus had to keep getting down on His face in prayer until He could drink the cup. If you haven't won the victory over self

yet, get in *the olive press and pray* until self's will runs out of your spirit like the oil that was pressed from the olives under that crushing weight.

I believe the Christian's greatest enemy and hardest battle is that of *self will—not the devil!* A Christian will resist the devil, the world, and sin quicker than he will his own self will. He can resist Satan and all of his temptations as long as they do not interfere with his self will. In most cases, the only time that he will be tempted to sin is when it goes along with his own will. If that desire is not already in his heart, he will laugh at the temptation. He only has trouble when he is confronted with the suggestion of the thing that he already secretly desires to do in his heart.

When self will is at the wheel, you can go no where. If you are battling to get the victory over self, *stay in the olive press!* When you find it hard to do what you know to be God's will, your must go to Gethsemane and enter the arena of agony until you pray through to the victory. If you don't come up with the victory the first time—*pray again!* If you think you're going to die—hang in there! God will send His ministering spirits to strengthen you to endure. (Don't worry, He won't let you die: There are not very many praying anymore!) When that strength comes, *pray more intensely!*

Then when self is defeated, you can enter into the battle for souls and wrestle with the demons that have

your loved ones in bondage to sin and alcohol and dope and the lusts of the flesh. And if you join our Lord in Gethsemane, in His suffering and drinking the cup with Him, then you will reign with Him in His glory, and sit with Him in His throne room, even as He is seated at the Father's right hand in power (Rev. 3:21).

The Cup of Suffering

Mark 10 records the account of when James and John came to Jesus asking Him to grant that they each be seated on His left and on His right in the kingdom. Jesus told them that they did not know what they were asking: "*Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?*" He asked. "*We can,*" was their naive reply. To this Jesus remarked: "*Ye shall indeed.*"

And so they did. In fact, James was the first of the disciples to be martyred for the sake of Christ. Likewise, many today would aspire to great positions in the eternal kingdom, but they don't want to join Christ in His sufferings and His agony in *the olive press*. But for those who will, the promise endures: "*If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*" (Rom. 8:7).

Paul's use of the term *glorified* refers to the dead in Christ being raised up and the living to be changed, and together being clothed with a glorified body fashioned like unto His glorious body, immortal and incorruptible. And one of the conditions to be glorified with Him is, *to suffer with Him*.

“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:13).

It has been my privilege on a couple occasions to visit the Holy Land and tour the places where our blessed Lord lived and died. Of these, our visit to *Gethsemane* was without doubt, one of the highlights of the pilgrimage. As we viewed the ancient, gnarled olive trees, which are kept alive by special care and feeding, standing in the place where Jesus suffered so intensely, we were moved by the Holy Spirit to prayer and weeping which overflowed our hearts.

It was a moving experience without

equal, to physically kneel in the holy garden where Jesus travailed for me. But in the spirit, I was no stranger to *Gethsemane*, for I had been there many times before in prayer! During the more than 50 years that I have been saved, Jesus has led me often-times to this Garden of Prayer. I have felt the agony of the *olive press*, even as Paul testified that he was “*pressed out of measure above strength, in somuch that he despaired of life*” (2 Cor. 1:8), and another time “*pressed in spirit.*” (Acts 18:5).

If you are a true Child of God who has a love and a vision for the Body of Christ, and for the brethren, and for souls—you *too are no stranger to Gethsemane!*

HEMATIDROSIS: A medical condition caused by severe emotional anguish, when chemicals are released that break down the capillaries in the sweat glands, resulting in bleeding. The sweat then is tinged with blood. This is what Jesus experienced in *Gethsemane* (Luke 22:44). It also sets up the skin to be fragile and very sensitive. so when He was flogged the next day at Pilate's whipping post, greater damage was done and greater blood loss. This causes:

HYPOVOLEMIC SHOCK: Heart races, blood pressure drops, kidneys fail, causing great thirst (John 19:38).