

Sweating Blood

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[0 : 0 0] So in Luke chapter 22 at verse 44 and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground This is our Lord in the midst of the extremity of what is probably his ultimate temptation We think in terms of the temptation in the wilderness We think of the devil coming to him there in the desert and the ways in which Jesus caused him to flee by quoting scripture at him But this is no mere play acting here with Jesus He is not just twiddling his thumbs and whiling away the time until the mob arrives before he is arrested This temptation is real It is violent and it is very very much on his mind as we can see at verse 40 and again at verse 46

His chief concern for his disciples that they should pray is that they do not enter in to temptation and again the implication here is not just that temptation is first and foremost what's on his mind but that for him the temptation is inescapable He knows it's coming He knows it is perhaps already there but for them perhaps with less strength certainly with less strength than he has if temptation comes to them they may succumb He has to glean and gather strength to resist and this will only be obtained through prayer Jesus of all people we know is one who as he pleads at his father's throne as our great intercessor does so as the one who is perfect the one who is sinless if anyone could be guaranteed the right not only to be heard but to be granted an affirmative to his prayers and petitions it is surely

Christ now you could say well yes he is getting what he asks because he says not my will but yours be done verse 42 but really we know what he wants there is this not conflict but there is this struggle this wrestling between that of him which is only human which recoils naturally from the horror of crucifixion and all that it involved he has seen it he has witnessed it you couldn't be a first century Jew without seeing the fruits of Roman crucifixion at various stages throughout your lives it would be a normal event everybody knew what was involved there would be something abnormal about Jesus if he somehow was quite unbothered and unperturbed about what was coming no he is humanly speaking if we can say irreverently terrified and yet there is that which he knows to be the burden of his entire mission that he has to go through this he has to endure what is ahead of him this is a real temptation now we all know from our own experience that in any situation of anxiety whether it's an exam or an interview or an anticipated confrontation of any kind sometimes often the waiting beforehand is often as stressful and painful as the event itself now that would not be the case with Jesus the brutality of his treatment in front of the

Jewish council the Sanhedrin the Roman scourging and the crucifixion cannot realistically be said to be less bad than the agony in the garden severe as that was but the reality of it is that this agony this temptation was absolutely the worst yet of any and all of Jesus experiences in his earthly ministry to date you know the temptation in the wilderness was bad enough this is far far worse not least because this would represent the last realistic chance to back out and run he has the perfect opportunity it's dark no street lighting no electricity his disciples are stone still away the other ones Peter

James and John are the nearest and there are stones still away and the others are further away again and they're all asleep nobody would know nobody would see they'd just wake up and look around in the garden he'd be gone over to Jesus so what nobody knows this would be the perfect opportunity and because it is the perfect opportunity and because nobody would see and nobody would know until after the event it makes the temptation all the more severe as we all know our greatest and most severe temptations are not when everybody is watching what we do because then we behave as we think people will expect us to behave it is when nobody is there to see what we are in secret is what we are in reality this is the ultimate temptation to date it is not as bad as crucifixion is going to be let's not pretend that it is in this instance the waiting is not worse than the

reality to come but it is the worst thing yet as happened in his earthly ministry and it is the most savage temptation up until now what

[6:11] Jesus is obtaining seeking to obtain tonight in this prayer as he kneels in Gethsemane in the dark is not that he might somehow magically be delivered because probably he knows what the answer is going to be but rather seeking to obtain what we might call strength to submit strength to submit now we think in terms of strength as something which we obtain in order to overcome strength in order to get the victory strength in order to win but here it seems to be that he is praying like man for what he really wants which is to be delivered from his cup and he doesn't get what in fleshly terms he is asking for but what he does obtain is strength to submit to the will of God there are those times when we may be praying desperately for something that we urgently long for and think that we must have we need or we're going to die surely and maybe for all we know

God's will is precisely that whatever he may require of us our ultimate desire our ultimate faithfulness must be to pray for strength to submit this is what Jesus obtains it is what our need is as well if we live our lives seeking always to be faithful to the will of God think how that might transform the kind of Christians that we became the kind of people that we were there is always this which slightly used to confuse me it still does to some extent in Hebrews we know that we have not a high priest Hebrews 4 verse 15 we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin now it doesn't mean that every individual detail of your life in all its modern situations in all the sophistication of our technology and so on oh Jesus didn't go through that no but what Jesus went through is infinitely greater than any temptation we experience and to that extent he has been as far as we have gone and much much further he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities he was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin he did not cave in to his temptation he received strength to submit not to temptation but to the will of God and you see this chapter 5 in Hebrews where it says about

Jesus 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 hurt in that he feared surely if he had been hurt he would have got what he wanted he would have been delivered he would have had to go through with it he was hurt in that he feared though he were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered surely that verse 7 in Hebrews 5 doesn't really make sense does it mean God said no to his prayers his father said no you can't have the thing that you wonder this is where sometimes in translation we struggle to convey that which is written in one language and probably imagined or thought in a different language if this is a letter to the Hebrews it is probably thought in Aramaic or in Hebrew it is written in Greek and then we have translated it here into English so there's leeway for kind of perhaps misunderstanding was heard in that he feared in other words how we should understand that was heard from his fears from the place of his fears that's where he was that's where he was heard from and the sense of being heard from really means saved from delivered from his fears now the fear of Jesus

I would suggest he was not simply oh I'm terrified of crucifixion who wouldn't be the fear of Jesus is that he might falter that he might fail I say all these things reverently not wanting to suggest oh Jesus he would touch him oh whether he did it or not no but there is a real struggle here between the flesh that does not relish being scourged half to death and then having huge spikes driven through his hands and his ankles and being left spread eagle on a cross to die for hours nobody would relish that he would love to be delivered from that if he could be but in so far as the temptation will be to run from that and the opportunity will be there so easy so on a plate there is the possibility of running out he is offering up his prayers with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard from his fears he was heard from where his fears were being offered up he was heard in the sense of saved from his fears and being made perfect in other words being completed the reason that he came into the world was completed in his death in his resurrection of course and ascension but ultimately in his death it is finished he was made perfect completed the reason for why he came he became the offer of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him this is the situation of Jesus crying out for help

Jesus crying in prayer here being in agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground this temptation is absolutely the worst yet of any of Jesus experiences in his earthly ministry the last realistic chance to back out and run before events became humanly speaking unstoppable what we have here is a contrast of extreme and

unimaginable suffering stressful anxiety quite unlike anything we normally associate with the words stress or anxiety and the severity of Christ's suffering here over against the complete calm that he has afterwards when he speaks to his disciples says rise up they're coming now he's not running off quick guys get up we're going to go they're coming no it's just getting them up so they won't be caught out here come the mob he's ready to receive them remember in

[13:20] John's account of the gospel he says who are you looking for Jesus of Nazareth well I am he and they all fall backwards there staggered the idea of it his calmness is frightening and then he says again who are you looking for Jesus of Nazareth told you that I am if I'm the one you won't let these others go complete calm complete peace he has received the strength the divine strength to submit to the will of God and that is his prayer here in one sense he doesn't get what he asks for Jesus of all people doesn't get what he asks for in terms of his flesh but he gets what he asks for in terms of his ultimate needs not my will but thine be done he receives strength to submit and a condition which is illustrated here in Christ's suffering in verse 44 being in an agony he prayed more earnestly the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground first of all we notice that this comes after verse 43 where we read there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him you might think oh the angel mopping his ground saying don't worry it's okay it'll be alright you know it's not like that at all the angel is not there to bring a ray of hope it's not there to bring comfort it's almost rather like

Jesus has great suffering to undergo and it's as though he was bleeding out with his wounds or whatever and the angel comes along gives him a blood transfusion if I can speak readily in terms of illustration so that he is able to keep on enduring that's the strength the angel is there to give him so that he is enabled to keep on enduring this temptation isn't coming in a water it's not one great big sort of trap coming at you and you resist that and you push it back and that's you in the clear it is coming like waves and I'm sure we've all experienced that you've got a particular temptation and it comes against you you think no I'm going to fight this one off no Lord help me to fight this one off it recedes a bit you think okay that's me I can get on with what I'm doing and then it comes back again and you think oh not so good not so strong and resisted finally okay overcome it and then it comes back a third time and maybe that's the time you give it he comes in waves the devil is not stupid he's like a commanding officer watching with his field glasses and the attack on that spot was not very successful but there he sees the enemies weakening they're holding off still but they're thinning out there's not so many so he directs more forces to attack the weak spot he sees where there's strength and he sees where there's weakness and he goes for the weakness he's not put off by the fact that one wave is resisted maybe two waves are resisted he knows the third time he's going to get you or the fourth or the fifth he's going to keep on coming with his waves of temptation now when

Jesus resists the waves of temptation and he says Lord not my will if thou be willing remove this cup from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him yes he's won that vow he wants the father's will not his own human will to be done he's strengthened again because the angel knows and the Lord knows the next wave is going to be hotter still it's going to be more intense and he's going to need more strength to resist it and it is after the angel has been there strengthening him putting strength into him as it were from his father to enable him to keep going like Job says in chapter 23 verse 6 will he plead against me with his great power father's not trying to overcome his servant or his son no but he would put strength in me will he plead against me with his great power no but he would put strength in me this is what the Lord has sent the angel to do to strengthen

Jesus not to pat him on the head saying you're doing great so it's not as bad as you think maybe it won't happen it might never be as bad as you think no the Lord knows it's going to be every bit as bad as Jesus is afraid of but he sends his messenger that's what angel means messenger to strengthen him not to make him think it's going to be okay not to make it easier for him not to bring a ray of hope or sunshine but to give him the strength to endure the next wave of temptation after the angel has been to strengthen him then is the greatest wave of temptation of all being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground now this is not mere symbolism it is not mere pictorial language this is a real medical condition and it is known medically as hematidrosis which literally means blood sweat never sounds quite as impressive in the ordinary terms but hematidrosis blood sweat it's no mere symbolic description any more than you know in John 19 verse 34 where

Jesus said he's pierced with the javelin and there came out blood and water now medically what that is a symptom of it's a piercing of the pericardium that sac the membrane around the heart which after death occurs the blood begins to separate out and settle and then fluid that is left is more clear as opposed to the redness of the blood this only happens after the subject is himself completely totally dead it doesn't happen you know if they're nearly dead or not quite dead so the evidence that when the pericardium around the heart is pierced punctured from the wound that flows out not only visible red blood but the clear liquid also which is a symptom of the separation of the blood from the clear liquid from the pericardium it's you know the bible is thousands of years ahead of what later medical knowledge became like what is here this hematidrosis which is a medical condition whereby blood oozes from the forehead the fingernails sometimes the navel and other skin surfaces medical investigations of those very rare occurrences it is a very very rare condition but it is known and it is medically documented they have demonstrated that its appearance is not due medical investigations have proven that its appearance is not due to any abnormalities in the number of red blood cells in an individual or the strength of them or not any abnormalities in skin condition or appendages or skin tags or nothing unusual in the sweat glands or the sebaceous glands none of these things in other words medical investigation has pretty much eliminated any realistic claim that this condition occurs because of some kind any kind of abnormality biological or physical in the victim themselves this doesn't occur oh yes because he's got weak skin or because he's got this dermatological condition or because his red blood cells are abnormal no none of these things when it happens the only things they can find are that it happens under cases of extreme extreme stress and anxiety now nowadays one method of treating hermitidrosis is with beta blockers which have been apparently shown to produce a reduction in the frequency of spontaneous blood oozing which would in turn suggest it is something of a we might call a stress related condition although somewhat facetiously some medical accommodators have said oh yeah but you know it's not occurring more frequently in our greater high stress levels of modern living we haven't got any more recorded instances of this hematidrosis despite the stress of modern day living it's not stress like we are talking about oh I've missed my appointment [21 : 49] I'm so stressed I've got a headache oh I've got two jobs going at the minute oh I'm so stressed oh I can't keep up with all my appointments I'm so stressed it's not that kind of stress the way we use this word to indicate oh the pressure is more under me we are under more pressure than our forefathers or previous generations used to be we are talking here about crisis levels of extremity of life and death situations where the subject believes themselves to be facing absolute horror dread and terror it is not a little bit of stress it's not even heightened stress it is crisis levels of extremity it is extremely rare some modern day medical dermatological research maybe post modern for all we know I don't know has noted the presence of hematidrosis and wait for it people awaiting execution people awaiting execution anticipating their own death by whatever method is on occasion known to produce this hematidrosis blood sweat in other words it is a real medical condition it is an exceptionally rare condition and it tends to be found only in crisis levels of what we might call fear and extremity as with the pericardium the separation of blood and water recorded in John 19 verse 34 as I said the Bible is thousands of years ahead of medical knowledge and expertise in the things that quite simply in terms of without all this background biological thousands of years of experience and knowledge it just records what it sees the eyewitness accounts Jesus sweating blood in the garden because of the anxiety the extremity of his temptation and his humanly speaking fear of what is ahead of him what we have here is the preparing to perish of his outward man Paul wrote to the Corinthians 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verses 16 to 18 for which cause we faint not but though our outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day strength to submit for our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal now I don't want for one moment to say and speak into your life and say the things are something nothing like affliction who do you think you are complaining and mourning because for each of us in our individual lives the crisis the burden the anxiety the fears whatever it is you are facing they are 100% real nobody's denying that nobody's pretending it is otherwise and sometimes perhaps frequently the things that we hope for and pray for and long for we don't get them and we ask the

Lord and the Lord says no the Lord prevents us almost like it seems he conspires against us to prevent the thing we long for and ask for and think that we so need we feel as if we're dying part of us is dying when the thing we long for we don't get or the thing we are tempted for we resist we know ourselves if you resist some particular extreme temptation as part of you think oh I'm just going to die if I don't get that thing if I don't actually fulfill that desire oh part of me is going to die yeah part of me is going to die it's called dying to sell the outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day strength to submit but our light affliction our affliction is not light it's not to ourselves it is not unimportant it's not insignificant the Lord knows that he's not trying to diminish what you're enduring but rather he wants you to be able to compare the suffering the affliction of now

Jesus said you know to the people who came to arrest him this is your hour and the power of darkness now he didn't really mean 60 minutes now I've started the clock when 61 minutes comes that's your time up no he doesn't mean okay you've got 60 minutes you've got an hour no he means this is your short time of victory the power of darkness in fact their time of victory was less than 24 hours less than a day a full day because within the day Jesus was dead by three o'clock in the afternoon and this is late the previous night so it's like within nine hours within less than 12 hours Jesus is dead and it is finished this is their little moment of victory this is their hour and the power of darkness now I know it is horrendous what is ahead of Jesus and it may seem like it is horrendous what is burdening your soul just now and whatever it may be that has burdened you in the past or for which you may carry the scars of the past but it is by comparison for the substance the weight of glory it is by comparison a light affliction in so far as it is for a short time by comparison a limited time compared to the eternal weight of glory the substantial heavy serious weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal

Jesus does not get what his humanity asks for Jesus of all people who deserved to get what he prayed for deserved to get what he asked for but still even this most extreme plea is tempered with this desire that not his will but that of his father be done that he would have the strength to submit and he has given it he is heard in that he feared he is heard from his fears he is saved from that greatest fear of all that he might somehow somehow hinder he might somehow interfere with his father's will if his flesh got the better of his divinity if his temptation was succumbed to father if thou be willing remove this cup from me now lest not my will but thine be done there appeared an angel out of them from heaven strengthening him we read that and we think oh good that's nice no it's not it's giving him strength to endure more strength to keep on going it's enabling you to go back into the fight again so when the next wave crashes on you it's being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground he might address us there it is in the darkness of the garden philippians tells us remember of course being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself or as we would say emptied himself he humbled himself even further not just becoming a human being but became obedient unto death even the death of the cross which he knew what it would entail wherefore god also hath highly exalted him you see the eternal weight of glory is not an instead of to the suffering to the affliction which is immediately before us it is a result of it is a both and they are as necessary to each other as heads are to tails for the validity of a coin of the realm otherwise it is a fake double headed coin double tailed coin it's a fake it's a forgery it's not real and you can't have the crown of glory without the cross of affliction

[30 : 43] Jesus said whoever would come after me let him take up his cross daily and follow me wherefore god hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father I love to think of that verse perhaps it's the bad part of me but I love to think of Muhammad bowing the knee to Jesus and acknowledging he's the greatest I love to think of Richard Dawkins bowing the knee and saying yes I was wrong you're right Lord Jesus I love to think of all the ISIS terrorists and those who have sneered at and slaughtered and abused the Lord's people down the ages bowing the knee before Jesus and looking up at him and saying he is the greatest yes every knee bows we confess Jesus Christ is Lord maybe it's just a bad bit of me that wants to grow perhaps but certainly it is cause for courage that this is the victory the

Lord ultimately wants in Matthew and Mark's account of this incident we don't have the sweat like great drops of blood that detail is missing from Matthew and Mark but what they do have is that they have that Jesus takes with them a little closer than the other disciples which Luke doesn't mention Peter and James and John he leaves the other eight and he takes these three a wee bit closer and he says to them you know you stay here and pray while I go yonder why does he take these three he takes these three also when he goes in to heal Jairus' daughter to release her from the death he takes these three also when he goes up the mount of transfiguration in other words he took with them as the witnesses of his agony those who were already witnesses of his transfiguration and glory they had seen him glorified on the mount of transfiguration now they are seeing him before they fall asleep anyway in his agony in the garden and this is not a coincidence this is because the two are completely and totally interwoven they are interconnected the glory and the agony the two sides of the one prime remember when Jesus is transfigured we go back to Luke's own account of the transfiguration Luke 9 verses 30 and 31 who appears with him Moses and Elijah the personifications of the law and the prophets and there they are speaking with Jesus the gospel of the personified the good news the word made flesh and what are they speaking about they appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he should accomplish to Jerusalem they're talking about with them about his death his death his agony his crucifixion all that he endures it is bound up with his glory they are part of the same thing and it is the same inner circle Peter James and John who witness the transfiguration and the glory who also are called to witness the darkness and the suffering and the agony these two are interconnected in the life of Jesus and I would say if you with all sympathy and with all encouragement and with all love they will be interconnected in the life of you and me and every soul who truly follows Christ there is no escaping of the one in the pursuit of the other Jesus prayed as none ever prayed that this cup might pass from them his sweat was like great drops of blood he did not get what humanly speaking he asked for he was heard in that he feared but the answer was no the father's will would be done the glory would be secured because the darkness and the agony would be gone through the angel strengthens him that he might endure yet more whatever it is the Lord is calling you or has been calling you to endure you may testify if you are honest that he has provided the strength with a cure to endure it whether by angel whether by his spirit whether by strength whether by the word of his word written or whether by the friendship or support or prayers of an encourager a friend in Christ a member of your family by some means the Lord has sent his messenger not to encourage and soothe you and make it all go away but to strengthen you hitherto have the Lord helped us when the next wave of temptation breaks over your soul it may well be more intense and hot and fierce than the last one was or than anything before but it will not overwhelm you without you first being made ready to receive it what we need to pray for to the Lord is not that we would escape such suffering or agony as we may be called upon to endure but that rather like

Jesus we may be given strength to submit being in agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground and when he rose up from prayer and was come to his disciples he found them sleeping for sorrow and said unto them while you sleep ye rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation and then they come for him and he meets them with that unimaginable calm because it is true for him what he said would be true for his disciples and we go back to chapter 12 we see that he taught them when they bring you into the synagogues and unto magistrates and powers take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer or what ye shall say for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say come the hour come the supply as God taught the prophet he gets most put in the mouth of Moses about Asher one of the tribes of Israel the shoes would be iron and brass and as thy days as thy days so shall thy strength be for what you need the Lord will supply maybe not what you would ask for maybe not what you would wish let's not pretend otherwise we all would rather walk in the sunshine in the ease and in the calm of a pleasant and trouble-free life the Lord does not promise us such but he does promise us a glory hereafter but that glory is bound up with the affliction and the darkness and the agony and the temptation which is not light nobody's saying oh it doesn't really matter what you're going through it matters it is serious it is solemn it is painful it is to be endured it is not to be enjoyed but compared to the weight of glory laid up for those that love him and follow him faithfully it is but a light momentary affliction it is the hour and the power of darkness this is your hour and the power of darkness Jesus said it's not just an hour it's more than a night but it's less than a day their little day is gone in a flash

God's eternity awaits what we need need from the Lord is his grace and strength to submit to his will when you are in the will of God not only is there the strength which he alone supplies there is the peace which passeth all understanding that is what you must pray for that is what we must seek not an escape not by being able to dodge the bullet but rather in the midst of our agony as Christ was in his agony and did not receive what he of all people might have had the right to ask he received instead the grace to endure and fulfill the will of the father he received strength to submit that is what he had that is what we too must pray for that we may have the grace and the calm to face it which he alone can supply let us pray you