

## Jesus' Prayer – Luke 22:41-45

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Jesus' Prayer in Luke 22:41-45 provides a wonderful view into the tremendous difference between the Old Covenant under the limited form of Grace that was the Law, and the New Covenant under the unlimited form of Grace in the Blood of the Lamb.

### Theology:

1. The atonement went from a clean herd animal in the OT, to God Himself in the NT. The Passover feast went from partaking of a ceremonial meal of the sacrificed lamb, to partaking of a ceremonial meal of the Son of God Himself.
2. As the stakes for redemption and the investment by God go up, so does the magnitude and power of Grace:
  - a. The immediate effect of Justification [being made at peace with God] when Christ becomes our savior and Lord.
  - b. As God vests Himself in each believer in the life-long process of Sanctification [being progressively made holy and Christ-like].
  - c. The first having to do with the legal standard of adoption as children by God, the latter having to do with the sacramental requirements of living in the presence of God.
  - d. The first is a onetime event where we are declared righteous by God; the latter an ongoing process where Christ is formed within us.

### Text – from the Amplified Bible:

Lk 22:41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed,  
Lk 22:42 Saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but [always] Yours be done.  
Lk 22:43 And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him in spirit.  
Lk 22:44 And being in an agony [of mind], He prayed [all the] more earnestly *and* intently, and His sweat became like great clots of blood dropping down upon the ground.  
Lk 22:45 And when He got up from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from grief....

Cross reference – Mark 14:32-36; Mathew 26:36-42; John 16:32ff

### Introduction:

1. The Gospel writers gave us many clues about Jesus' ministry, and one was the link between Jonah and Jesus. Luke records Jesus' words –

Lk 11:29 Now as the crowds were [increasingly] thronging [around] Him, He began to say, This present generation is a wicked one; it seeks *and* demands a sign [a testifying miracle], but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah [the prophet]. [Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40]

- a. The obvious similarity is the 3 days Jesus would spend dead in the tomb prior to His resurrection with the 3 days Jonah spent in the whale being as good as dead until his seeming resurrection being spit out on the shore.

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- b. There is a more subtle dissimilarity with Jonah as an unwilling prophet of the Old Covenant; and Jesus as the willing, obedient Messiah of the New Covenant – Phil 2:4-8:**

<sup>Phil 2:4</sup> Let each of you esteem *and* look upon *and* be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others.

<sup>Phil 2:5</sup> Let this same attitude *and* purpose *and* [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility]

<sup>Phil 2:6</sup> Who, although being One with God *and* in the Form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God **God**], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped *or* retained,

<sup>Phil 2:7</sup> But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant [slave], in that He became like men *and* was born a human being.

<sup>Phil 2:8</sup> And after He had appeared in human form, He abased *and* humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! [the lowest and most abased death possible].

- 2. Historical Setting – The Gospel of Luke was produced some 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Luke being a doctor, scholar, and a close associate of Paul. At the time the church was experiencing great persecution with many believers being martyred. These believers were killed by crucifixion... with some being soaked in oil and set on fire to light the roadways, or by gladiators & wild animals for the entertainment of the crowd in the Coliseum. These were horrible, barbaric, painful and humiliating deaths – but historians reported that many not only accepted death rather than renounce their faith but did so willingly singing hymns and praying... much to the amazement of the Roman authorities. It is thought that 1 million Christians and Jews were killed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Because of the witness of the death of these saints, many Gentiles and Romans were convicted and received Jesus... and the Church expanded.**

### **Observations:**

- 1. The spiritual nature of prayer –**
- a. The recorded nature of Jesus' agonizing over the coming prospect of His death if taken as merely human fear of death is very unlikely. It would essentially mean that Jesus was a wimp... because many of His followers went to their deaths bravely and even cheerfully.**
  - b. It is reasonable to believe that something else was going on in the spiritual realm that we don't know about. The fact that an Angel was there strengthening Jesus' Spirit is a clue that indicates there was something wonderful and terrible about to happen in the Spiritual realm... as angels were also involved in Jesus' conception, birth, and initial ministry preparation in the wilderness testing.**
  - c. Some equate this occurrence with the "burden of sin" being laid on Jesus, added with the theological notion that the Father had to turn His back on the Son as He was "being made Sin" for us. Others would argue that "Substitutionary Atonement" was more of a transactional matter – a ransom paid to redeem humanity, and Jesus was primarily waging spiritual war against Sin and death.**

- d. Jesus as the Atonement for Sin is necessarily a mystery. We don't know all the details, and Scripture doesn't explain it all satisfactorily – but we know enough that it cost Jesus something huge. Jesus being honored as the Victor in Heaven speaks to the grand scale of the event and its cosmic proportions.
  - e. Jesus' atonement breached the gulf sin had created that had separated God and humanity. God and humanity were so unified by this event that indwelling was now the birth-right of each believer. The atonement also sealed Satan's doom. Humanity has been redeemed at Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> coming, and Creation will be restored at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
  - f. Jesus prayer here had profound Spiritual ramifications to which we can only imagine... but the implication is that prayer and spiritual reality are somehow linked. With Jesus as the 1<sup>st</sup> example of redeemed humanity, we can safely presume that through prayer we are involved and engaged in the spiritual battle Jesus initiated. Paul adds that the indwelling Spirit engages God for us with a Spiritual dynamic we don't now know or fully understand (1 Cor 2:6-16).
2. The practical nature of the change in Grace from Old to New Covenant –
- a. Jonah is an example of the Old Covenant that had a form of grace... the Law operating in terms of compulsion – you had to “obey or else” is the message of blessings and curses offered by the Mosaic Covenant [Mt Gerizim – blessings, Mt Ebal – curses... Deut 11: 26-28]. Israel was offered a choice to accept or refuse God's terms with attendant blessings or curses in the Land.
    - i. OT – Jonah had a God given call and as His prophet he was obligated to act on it, but he had a choice to obey or not. Jonah as well as all the Jews of his day hated the Assyrians, and did not want them saved. He remembered their savagery and merciless killing when they conquered the Jews. They wanted them to be obliterated.
      - 1. When God called him to go East and give the Assyrians God's ultimatum to repent or else, Jonah chose to go west.
      - 2. When the storm approached Jonah went below to sleep off his guilty conscience. When awakened during the heavy storm by the crew seeking who had angered the gods to such an extent that they sent the storm, Jonah suggested the crew throw him overboard expecting to be killed and thus thwart God's call. It was against the Law to commit suicide, but if they threw him overboard that would be ok. The whale is a symbol that God's purpose cannot be thwarted even by our willful disobedience... great confidence!
      - 3. Jonah ultimately fulfilled God's call, but his being miserable at the end of the story shows that his heart wasn't in it. He merely capitulated to God's call.
    - ii. NT – Jesus had a God given call as Messiah, and He was obligated but had a choice to obey or not. God loved humanity but hated Sin. Sin is not just the garden variety wrong doing we commit, it is rather “fundamentally wrong being”... where our hearts

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are not right and we cannot stand before a Holy and righteous God. This is why God hates sin... He longs for relational interaction with humanity, which sin interrupted. The Atonement mediated through Jesus Blood was God's solution to rescue humanity. Prophetic elements of the atonement include:

1. The Atonement had to be offered in Jerusalem. When Jesus accepted God's purpose He set His sight upon entering Jerusalem. Jesus "Triumphal Entry" into the city is seen as coronation – Jesus was being hailed by the people as their King and deliverer. The leaders of the Jews had other motives.
2. The Atonement had to occur on the "Day of Atonement" the Passover. The New Covenant mediated by Jesus' blood was the logical foretold successor of the Old Covenant mediated by Moses and the blood of a lamb... the original Passover example of substitutionary death.
3. The last supper preceded the Garden episode and Jesus' prayer before His Passion. The last supper instituted:
  - a. Communion – demonstrating the new covenant in the body and blood of Messiah.
  - b. Servant leadership – demonstrated by the example of washing of the disciple's feet.
4. Whatever was going on in the Garden, Jesus demonstrated His complete obedience to the Father's purpose. Where Jonah refused and reluctantly capitulated, Jesus asked to be excused then embraced His call.

### Implications:

1. What is going on in this passage? What type of prayer is this an example of? While intercession may be a possible option, I believe this is more clearly an example of Spiritual Warfare.
2. The Garden prayer experience can be seen as the preparation for Jesus trial, death, and resurrection much like the wilderness period of prayer and fasting was preparation for the commencement of Jesus' ministry. Jesus demonstrated that purposeful and focused prayer was His preparation for these major ministry objectives... with regular prayer support in between. Immediately following each preparatory event the text says that angels ministered to Jesus – this is an important clue as to the spiritual nature of these events.
3. The immediate result following Jesus death was the earth [creation] in convulsions and the Temple Curtain being torn from top to bottom. These are clear illustrations that something monumental occurred in the spiritual realm.
4. The type of prayer that Jesus' demonstrated both in the Wilderness and in the Garden are neither light nor casual – they were prolonged, focused, and intense prayer of preparation.
5. The primary ministry of the original church elders, the Apostles – was teaching the Word and prayer. This should be our ministry focus as well.

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6. Non-canonical Jewish and Christian texts identify 3 Arch-angles – Michael [warrior], Gabriel [herald], and Lucifer [worship/praise]. God's judgment of the serpent [Lucifer] in Gen 3 after the Fall speaks to his Fall from heaven – “you will crawl on your belly in the dirt” is God's judgment; offered with a promise – the “seed” of Eve [Messiah] would crush [destroy] the serpent.

### Conclusion:

1. This interpretation also brings a logical harmony of redemptive history revealed throughout Scripture, and sheds light of the necessity of the Cross and the cosmic implications it wrought.
2. It also sheds light of a misunderstood segment of Scripture – where Jesus' exclaims with His dying breaths “My God, my God... why have you forsaken me?” This is an obvious reciting of Psalm 22:1... and when you read the text it is an obvious poetic reference to what Messiah was undergoing in crucifixion. The Jews in hearing this would know its significance – Jesus was preaching that His crucifixion was prophesied by King David (another clue because of Jesus Davidic roots and Israel's Messiah coming from David).
3. In preparation for ministry and the spiritual warfare involved, Jesus engaged in focused prayer.

### Applications:

1. When you are faced with decisions... especially significant ones such as family, career, financial or ministry... what sort of preparation do you engage in?
  - a. To what extent is prayer especially focused prayer involved? Over what period of time? Intercessory prayer needs to be thoughtful, diligent, focused, and persistent. This is different than contemplative prayer where we bask in God's presence and listen to His thoughts.
  - b. Is prayer a diligent and strategic precursor to action for you, or an SOS afterthought?
  - c. In light of what we have studied what do you intend to do differently? When will you start? Who are you relying upon to help keep you focused and hold you accountable?
2. Are you aware of a clear calling that you have received in your life to serve God in some fashion?
  - a. Remember that all believers are expected to be maturing as disciples and conscripted to obedience in advancing the Kingdom of God.
  - b. Are you aware of what your calling is?
  - c. How are you preparing for it?
  - d. What part does prayer and spiritual disciplines play in your preparation?
3. If you are like me, many decisions are made seeking reasonable comfort, avoidance of difficulty, and aversion to pain or suffering. While not necessarily wrong... there is I think a mistaken notion that any sort of service has to be painful or unpleasant in some jungle in some far corner of the world. God is likely asking you to stand your ground in loving faith believing right where you live and work.

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4. Each of us is imbued with innate talents and abilities at birth. God will also provide supernaturally necessary giftedness and ability to accomplish our ministry calling. Your priority should be exploring what passions and interests God has given you:
  - a. Are you aware of any specific gifting He has given you in preparation for ministry?
  - b. What things are you most concerned or passionate about in ministry? Do you have an interest that is more of a burning priority that could be God's beckoning?
  - c. How are you exploring, discovering, and developing your giftedness?
5. Jonah is an example of a person called to God's mission field who denied and fled his calling... but was used anyway. Jesus is an example of obedience and acceptance of the calling... even to the extent of being a suffering servant [Isaiah 52:13ff].
  - a. Are you being obedient to God's call on your life?
  - b. Are you a "living sacrifice" or a "moving target"?
  - c. What are you planning to do about it?