

Well, my friend, hearing this all about Jesus the Shepherd with His Sheep, His knowledge of His sheep, His resolve towards them, and all His sufferings for them, again I ask, 'Are you moved, melted, motivated in true repentance and love and devotion to Him'?

To lead us further yet to such a response of true faith, perhaps even initially so, or else afresh, notice still our fourth point about the Shepherd with His sheep, thinking yet of His love for His sheep. Here I have to be brief. We are told in verse 45 when Jesus returns the third time to Peter, John, and James, and finds them sleeping still, He then says to them, "*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.*" There is some debate as to what Jesus really meant by these words, but I would suggest to you the following interpretation. Here, the "Shepherd, [Jesus the Saviour] Who has been asking the disciples to watch with Him, is now tenderly keeping vigil over them. Jesus stands over them, lovingly saying to them, as it were, 'You may sleep on, my dear disciples. I will be the almighty Saviour God for you and I will save and keep you unto the end. I will give you rest!' What we have here, accordingly, is as one commentator expressed it, "one of the most touching pictures in the Gospel". Oh, the love of the Shepherd for His sheep, even His sinful erring sheep! Who can tell the depths and heights and width and breadth of its infinite measure? And that for His own Name's sake always, and never on account of anything about us or in us.

Behold the Shepherd with His sheep! This passage in Matthew tells of His knowledge of His sheep, His resolve for His sheep, His sufferings for His sheep, and His love for His sheep. Does this all make you see too and confess how blessed to be one of Jesus' sheep? If you are not yet one of His sheep, when will you be? When it is forever too late? Jesus sincerely calls all to be His sheep and living members of His flock, and hearing of Him as so great a Shepherd for His sheep, is there anyone who will not be so? What endless reasons to glory in Him, and how endlessly sorry all will be who will not do so. Behold the Shepherd with His sheep, and seeing Him as also described in Matthew 26 just, will you not too be moved in repentance, melted in love, and motivated in devotion to Him, indeed, truly so and increasingly so? Can any other response be right? Amen.

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**BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

*Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America*

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)*



### BEHOLD THE SHEPHERD WITH HIS SHEEP [2]

We are studying from Matthew 26:31-46 about Jesus Christ as the Shepherd of His sheep. Last week we saw from these verses how Jesus, as the Shepherd, knows His sheep and what is His resolve for them. Continuing with our study we consider now Jesus' sufferings for His sheep. Matthew tells us about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. It brings us then right into this unfathomable subject, how Jesus suffered sinners to save! Jesus' resolve to be there completely for people like us, you and me, meant for Him the curse, the cross, the condemnation of God upon Him as Sinbearer. It meant for Jesus Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Gehenna, Golgotha! Indeed, what we all deserved, Jesus Himself suffered and endured. See how the text brings this out.

What does Jesus say when He comes into the garden? We read in verses 37b&38, "...[He] began to be sorrowful and very heavy [deeply distressed]. Then saith He unto them, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.*" The word "began" [He began to be sorrowful] doesn't mean that Jesus didn't already know about suffering much for the gospel's sake, sinners to save, but now the climax of His sufferings was about to begin! We know from Luke 22:44 it was at this time in Gethsemane that Jesus also sweat great drops of blood from His deep agony of soul He was suffering. So great was Jesus' agony of soul, suffering in the sinner's place, that we read Jesus cast Himself face down on the ground in fervent prayer to God His Father. And Jesus asks even, as we read in verse 39, "*O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*"

We learn from this that Jesus, in His human nature, was shrinking so from the sufferings required to accomplish the salvation of sinners like us, you and me. It was not that Jesus would not do all that needed to be done, but what needed to be done would require such suffering on His part that He shrank from it! Jesus asked if there could be any other way sinners to save, and if so, please to give Him that. But if not, He would do all that needed to be done. Notice how when Jesus prayed the second and third time, His words are a little different, bringing out His constant willingness to do all that was required, however horrible the sufferings in body and soul would be. In verse 42 Jesus says, "*O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.*"

What is it, would you say, that made Jesus so shrink from the cup of suffering He was given to drink? I cannot answer that question completely. No, far from it even! For who knows all Jesus endured as Sinbearer and Saviour of sinners? But just consider these four details about His suffering. For one, in His suffering Jesus was made sin for us, as Paul also states in II Corinthians 5:21, "*He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in [and through] Him*". Jesus was made sin for people like us, not in the sense that He Himself became a sinner, no, not at all, but God laid upon His Son the iniquity of us all [Isaiah 53], speaking of God's people throughout the ages. Now just imagine this, Christ Jesus Who was infinitely pure and holy always, and so repulsed by sin, being made sin, literally the Sinbearer, in the sinner's place. What sufferings that brought to Jesus...who can tell how immeasurably so!

And then think of it, here we come to a second detail specifically about Jesus' suffering, how Jesus, in the last night of His life and on the cross especially, suffered and bore the full righteous wrath of God against sin. Indeed, Jesus suffered no less than the equivalent of the eternal holy wrath of God for all the sins of His people! In a way that we again can never fully grasp, Jesus would suffer in body and soul all the eternal hell sinners like us deserve in and of ourselves. Jesus suffered it completely in the sinner's place, without any let up or any mercy. The Bible expresses in many places no one can endure to stand before the fierce anger of the Lord against sin, but Jesus would suffer and endure it all, as it would be poured out upon Him. In Nahum 1:6a we read this question: "*Who can stand before His [God's] indignation? And who can abide in [endure] the fierceness of His anger?*" Well, Jesus as human being and Saviour of sinners, in the sinner's place, suffered and endured the full fury of God's righteous wrath against sin. The cup of wrath that Jesus had to drink from God, the Holy One, so that there might always be a cup of blessing for His people is too terrible for us to know or to describe. But that Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was in such anguish before drinking should so teach us and tell us how terrible is sin, our sin, yours and mine, and what an almighty Saviour is needed shall anyone ever accomplish true and everlasting salvation for sinners like us.

The Gospel is, Jesus, of course, is the almighty Saviour for us, and that which was given Him to do by the Father, He would accomplish, as expressed also in Jesus' prayer three times saying, "*Thy will be done!*" Jesus' threefold prayer in the Garden in no way expressed unwillingness on His part to suffer as required to save sinners, but it brings out the immeasurable depths of sufferings that would be required. What wickedness on your and my part ever to think little of even the least sin, since the slightest sin in thought, word, and deed requires what Jesus suffered and endured, shall there ever be salvation from sin for anyone of us. How terrible to have to suffer that righteous consuming wrath of God against sin on your own in eternal hell, if not believing yourself in Jesus and following after Him. Either

Jesus pays for your sin, or you do yourself. Do you understand this too, dear friends?

But speaking still of Jesus' suffering for His sheep, think yet of this other detail that made His sufferings such an inexpressibly agonizing matter! Consider the fact that when Jesus was made sin in the sinner's place and would pay the punishment for that all, it meant also that His own Father in heaven would have to turn His back on Jesus, as later would come out in His fourth word from the cross, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Jesus knew as Sinbearer and Substitute for sinners that He would be so identified with iniquity that the hosts of heaven, including His own dear Father in heaven, would have to look the other way, and forsake Jesus to suffer this wrath of God all alone in the sinner's place. Jesus did not shrink so much from the shameful and painful crucifixion and death He would suffer, as from this, that as Sinbearer, in the climax of His sufferings, He would be forsaken by His own dearest Father! It was already something for Him to suffer as Saviour being despised and rejected of men, and having His disciples fail Him and forsake Him, and having Satan in full relentless assaults against Him, but to have His dear Father justly and really forsake Him! Oh, this was torment of soul too great to bear for Jesus, and if it were at all possible, He would be spared from this. But Jesus knew He could not be spared from it if He would be the Saviour of sinners and for the gospel of grace to be true, and so He gave Himself to suffer and endure all that had to be, for sinners like us to save. Jesus, God's own dearly beloved Son, allowed Himself in His humanity to be forsaken by God His Father that we sinful people of ourselves, trusting in Him, might never be forsaken by God the Father. How this precious gospel of such amazing grace and love should so overwhelm our souls once and over and over again! Is that the effect of this gospel on you too?

That it may be so truly and repeatedly in your life, and mine, think yet of one more detail about Jesus' suffering that Matthew brings out, namely, how He had to suffer so alone. When we suffer, then especially it is good and comforting often to have someone else with you and by you, but think of this now, exactly then when Jesus was in such anguish and as His sufferings became more and more intense even, then He was made to feel and be more and more alone too. His sleeping disciples brought home Jesus' aloneness in His sufferings for sin. Jesus knew loneliness like no one else, and that just when He suffered so infinitely much! How true in this regard what one wrote:

It was alone the Saviour prayed  
In dark Gethsemane;  
Alone He drained the bitter cup  
And suffered there for me.

Alone, alone, He bore it all alone;

[Thus] He gave Himself to save His own,

He suffered, bled, and died alone, alone. [Ben H. Price]