

Title: **GETHSEMANE'S SOVEREIGN**

Text: John 18:1-11

Subject: *Christ's Voluntary Sacrifice*

Date: Sunday Morning — May 1, 2011

Tape: John #118

Reading: *Psalm 22:1-31*

Introduction:

When our dear Savior finished His great intercessory prayer as our great High Priest before God in John 17, He arose and walked across the brook Cedron and entered into the Garden of Gethsemane. **It was in the Garden of Eden that the first Adam fell**, plunged our race into sin, and death, and utter ruin, and lost everything. **And our Lord Jesus Christ (the last Adam) came into a garden to restore that which He took not away.**

- It was in a garden where our Savior **sweat great drops of blood** falling to the ground, as He anticipated being made sin for us.
- It was in a garden where He was **nailed to the cursed tree**, when He suffered and died as our Substitute.
- It was in a garden where He was **buried**.

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- And it was in a garden where He **came forth in resurrection power**, triumphant over death, hell, and the grave!

Augustine said, “It is fitting that the blood of the Physician should there be poured out, where the disease of the sick man first commenced.”

But did you ever notice that of the four inspired Gospel narratives **John alone makes no mention of our Savior's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane?** Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all inspired to write about our Savior's great heaviness and sorrow of heart in Gethsemane with considerable detail. John was inspired to omit that altogether. — Why?

I can only guess what the answer to that question may be; but I think, at least in part, the answer is obvious. — **John's distinct objective throughout his Gospel Narrative is to show us the greatness of our Savior as the Almighty God.** So, when he described Gethsemane, he mentioned nothing of weakness and sorrow. He only spoke of majesty,

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sovereign control, and the assured salvation of God’s elect by Christ our sovereign Savior.

Our text is John 18:1-11. The title of my message is — **GETHSEMANE’S SOVEREIGN**. Let’s read John 18:1-11 together.

(John 18:1-11) “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. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3 Judas then, having received a band [of men] and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am [he]. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground. 7 Then asked he them again,

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Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. 10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Divisions: I want to call your attention to seven things set before us in these 11 verses.

1. Our Savior's crossing over the Brook Cedron was highly symbolic (v. 1).
2. Nothing has such a hardening effect upon the heart of man as religion without Christ (vv. 2-3).
3. Our blessed Savior, the Lord Jess Christ, knew from the beginning all that must come upon Him as our Redeemer (v. 4).
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered all that He suffered for us and died in our place under the

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wrath of God by the hands of wicked men because He desired to do so (vv. 4-11).

5. The death of Christ as in the place of His people demands the salvation of all for whom He died (v. 8).
6. Our dear Savior always watches over His people with a keen eye, a tender heart, and omnipotent grace (v. 8).
7. The salvation of God's elect is a matter of absolute certainty (v. 9).

1. SYMBOLIC BROOK

First, our Savior's crossing over the Brook Cedron was highly symbolic (v. 1).

(John 18:1) "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."

This Brook Cedron is the same as the Brook Kidron mentioned so often in the Old Testament.

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- You will remember that **King David**, who was an eminent type of our Savior, passed over the Brook Kidron when he was fleeing from Absalom (2 Samuel 15:23).
- It was there, at the Brook Kidron that **King Asa** burned his mother's idol and scattered its ashes (2 Chronicles 15:16).
- Here it was that the good **King Josiah** caused the polluted vessels of the temple to be burned (2 Kings 23:4).
- And all the uncleanness found in the house of the Lord in **Hezekiah's reign** was disposed of in the Brook Kidron (2 Chronicles 29:16).

Every year, on the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat was led by a fit man across the Brook Kidron and into the wilderness. The word "Kidron" (Cedron) means "turbid" or "blackness." You can imagine the filth, foulness, and blackness of it. All the blood of all the temple sacrifices rain down into the Brook Kidron! There, beside the Brook Kidron, all the waste of the sacrifices was burned. What a loathsome, repulsive stream it must have been.

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With all that in mind, turn back to Psalm 110, and see the significance of John's declaration that our Lord Jesus Christ went "over the Brook Cedron" into the Garden of Gethsemane.

(Psalms 110:1-7) "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people [shall be] willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

"5 ¶ The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill [the places] with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."

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Obviously, our Savior did not physically drink the waters of that foul Brook Kidron; but passing over it He drank of the brook in his way in a spiritual sense. He drank that which is far more foul than that metaphorical brook. Our blessed Savior took the cup of our iniquities, transgressions, and sins. He drank all the filth and blackness of our sins when He was made sin for us. He drank the cup of trembling, which as our Divine Surety. Yes, He drank the very dregs of that cup that we might drink the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord; and He did it voluntarily (John 18:11; Isaiah 51:22; Galatians 3:13-14; Psalm 116:13).

(John 18:11) “Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

(Isaiah 51:22) “Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God [that] pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, [even] the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:”

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(Galatians 3:13-14) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

(Psalms 116:13) “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.”

2. CHRISTLESS RELIGION

Second, nothing has such a hardening effect upon the heart of man as religion without Christ (vv. 2-3).

(John 18:2-3) “And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3 Judas then, having received a band [of men] and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.”

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Judas was one of the twelve Apostles. Yet, Judas guided the soldiers to the Savior! John tells us specifically that Judas used his knowledge of the fact that the Lord Jesus often came to Gethsemane for prayer to lead the soldiers to Him. There he had often knelt with the Savior; and there he betrayed Him. — How shocking! — When the band of men and officers approached the Savior Judas “*stood with them.*” Yet this was a man who had been for three years the constant companion of the incarnate God.

- He had seen the Lord’s miracles.
- He had heard His sermons.
- Judas had enjoyed the benefit of the Savior’s private instruction.
- He had professed himself a believer.
- He had even worked and preached in Christ’s name!

J. C. Ryle observed, “From the highest degree of privilege down to the lowest depth of sin, there is but a succession of steps. Privileges misused seem to paralyze the conscience. The same fire that melts wax, will harden clay.”

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Beware of resting your hopes of salvation on religious knowledge, however great; or religious advantages, however many. Many there are, I fear, who know all doctrinal truth and are teachers of others, preaching true doctrine zealously, who yet prove reprobate and go down to the pit with Judas! You may bask in the full sunshine of spiritual privileges and have great knowledge, you may be known as a tireless worker for the cause of God, and yet not know God. — “*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). — Nothing so hardens the heart of man as religion without Christ!

3. **KNOWN SUFFERINGS**

Third, our blessed Savior, the Lord Jess Christ, knew from the beginning all that must come upon Him as our Redeemer (v. 4).

(John 18:4) “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?”

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One of the things that must have made our Savior's sufferings so terrible is the fact that He had perfect knowledge of all the torments He must endure as our Substitute from the beginning. He knew full well all the bitter dregs of the cup before He took into His holy hands of grace. He knew the scourging, the thorns, the cross, the sin, the curse, the agonizing death that awaited Him. No doubt, every time He saw a lamb in the meadow, every time He saw a sacrifice in the temple, He was reminded that He must soon be offered upon the altar of Divine justice as the Lamb of God.

4. VOLUNTARY SUBSTITUTE

Fourth, our Lord Jesus Christ suffered all that He suffered for us and died in our place under the wrath of God by the hands of wicked men because He desired to do so (vv. 4-11).

(John 18:4-11) "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, **Whom seek ye?** 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith

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unto them, **I am** [he]. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am** [he], **they went backward, and fell to the ground.** 7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that **I am** [he]: **if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:** 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. 10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Our Lord Jesus, was the Sovereign even in Gethsemane. **Notice, it was He who took the initiative,** not the soldiers, the Pharisees, or Judas. — *“Whom seek ye?”*

He demonstrated with Divine force that He was in total control of the situation. When our Lord said,

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“*I AM*, — *They went away backward and fell to the ground!*” **This is, perhaps, the greatest miracle recorded upon the pages of Inspiration.** It was accomplished by the Savior’s mere declaration of His Being. Here is an army of soldiers with weapons of war, falling backward to the earth, prostrated before the Lord Jesus by the simple words of the incarnate God, — “*I Am!*” Who but GOD could have wrought such a miracle? **Turn to Psalm 27:2, and you will see that this, too, was the fulfilment of Divine prophecy.**

(Psalms 27:2) “When the wicked, [even] mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.”

Isaiah spoke of the same thing (Isaiah 11:1-4).

(Isaiah 11:1-4) “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the

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LORD; 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

- How easily that same breath and those same words might have cast those men down into hell!
- Do not overlook this: — Those very words and that very Breath by which the Lord Jesus gives life, and comfort, and strength to His people, bring death, and judgment, and destruction upon His enemies (Exodus 3 — Moses at the Bush — Isaiah 51:12; 58:9; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

(Isaiah 51:12) “I, [even] I, [am] he that comforteth you: who [art] thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man [that] shall die, and

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of the son of man [which] shall be made [as] grass.”

(Isaiah 58:9) “Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I [am].”

(2 Corinthians 2:14-16) “Now thanks [be] unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one [we are] the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who [is] sufficient for these things?”

Notice this, too: — **Our blessed Savior took the cup of God's wrath willingly. He was not forced to take it, but was determined to take it** (v. 11).

(John 18:11) “Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

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Yes, He prayed three times, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” How He trembled at the prospect of being made sin for us and dying under the just curse of God’s holy law as our Substitute! Behold, the bloody sweat! — Yet, He bowed to His Father’s will. — “Not my will, Thy will be done!” Then, He rose up from prayer went out to meet Judas, the Pharisees, the Priests, and the soldiers, healed the wounded soldier, told Peter to put up his sword, and said, — “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” — Yes, the Son of God died as a willing Sacrifice! He is our willing Savior. Behold Him...

- In the Covenant, standing forth as our Surety!
- In all His Old Testament appearances (Abraham, Moses, Manoah and His Wife).
- In His incarnation!
- Throughout the days of His earthly life.
- Going up to Jerusalem and to Calvary!

He did not die because He could not help it. He did not suffer because He could not escape. All the soldiers of Pilate’s army could not have taken Him,

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had He not been willing to be taken. They could not have hurt a hair of His head, had He not given them permission. The Lamb of God, our Savior was a willing Sufferer, a willing Substitute, a willing Sacrifice.

He set His heart on accomplishing our redemption from everlasting. He loved us and gave Himself for us, cheerfully, willingly, gladly, in order to make atonement for our sins and save us. This was “*the joy set before Him*” for which He “*endured the cross and despising the shame.*” — The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our great Savior is far more willing to save than we are to be saved. He died as a willing, voluntary Substitute. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep.

What an example He set before us to follow. In His obedience to His Father, suffering death by His Father’s will, He is not only our Redeemer but our Example too. **The only way we can live in this world in peace is by continually bowing to our Father’s will.** He is the truly wise man who has learned to say at every stage of his pilgrimage,

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“Father, give me what You will, place me where You will, do with me as You will; not my will, but Your will be done.” That is the man who has the mind of Christ. May God make it mine!

5. JUSTICE DEMANDS

Fifth, the death of Christ as in the place of His people demands the salvation of all for whom He died (v. 8).

(John 18:8) “Jesus answered, I have told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”

Our Savior here declared to these soldiers, the representatives of law and executioners of justice, “If you take me, you must let these go their way. You cannot have the Shepherd and the sheep. You cannot punish both the Substitute and those for whom He is punished. Let these go their way!” — That was not a request, but a command, a command to which justice must and will acquiesce!

“From whence this fear and unbelief?”

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Has not the Father, put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?

“Complete atonement Thou hast made
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whate'er thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place
If sheltered in thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with thy blood?

“If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

“Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,

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Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”

Augustus Toplady

6. TENDER WATCHFULNESS

Look at verse 8 again and see this, *sixth* point: — Our dear Savior always watches over His people with a keen eye, a tender heart, and omnipotent grace (v. 8).

(John 18:8) “Jesus answered, I have told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:”

Here is an instructive picture of all our Savior’s dealings with our souls. He will not allow you “*to be tempted above that which you are able to bear.*” He holds the winds and storms in His hands. He will not allow His own, however sifted and buffeted, to be utterly destroyed. He watches over each of His redeemed tenderly. Like a wise physician, He measures out and mixes our cup with infinite skill, infinite care, and infinite love. — Let us lean our souls on this precious truth. In the darkest hour the

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eye of the Lord Jesus is upon us, and our safety is sure.

7. SURE SALVATION

Seventh, the salvation of God's elect is a matter of absolute certainty (v. 9).

(John 18:9) “That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”

God's elect shall never die!

- The decree of God demands it!
- The blood of Christ demands it!
- The seal of the Spirit demands it!

Would you have this salvation? Would you have this great Savior? Come to Him, and this salvation is yours. — Come to Him, and He is yours!

“Come humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with your guilt and fear oppressed,

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And make this last resolve.

'I'll go to Jesus, though my sins
Like mountains round me close;
I know his courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

'Prostrate I'll lie before his throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone
Without his sovereign grace.'

I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;

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For if I stay away, I know,
I must forever die.

But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (Delightful thought!) —
As sinner never died!”

Amen.