

Alone With God In Prayer
Luke 22:39-46

As I read these words given to us here in the Book of Luke, I try to imagine what might have been going through the mind of the Lord Jesus in those very special moments as He and His disciples prepared to leave the Upper Room and journey to the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew well all of the very difficult events that were about to take place.

He knew that this would be the last time that He would meet with these men in this way before those horrifying events of the cross would take place and would change everything they all had been accustomed to over the past three years.

Had that have been me, I probably would have delayed leaving for many reasons, and I would have wanted to say just one more thing, giving these men just one more instruction.

But it was time to leave. And Jesus knew that it was time. He knew that He needed to go ahead and get on about the next step of the journey that He was on, this time to suffer and to die on that awful cross. But first He would need to get alone with His Father and pray!

And so, after giving some final instructions, He and His disciples left the Upper Room and they went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives. Listen to those words given to us in Luke chapter 22, beginning in verse 39,

³⁹ And he (the Lord Jesus) came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:39-46)

Before we begin our consideration of these very special moments in the life of the Lord Jesus, I would like for us to first take a step back from them and carefully consider how these words and these events even came to be written down on this page.

Why is it important for us to pause and to do that? It is important because our minds have a way of questioning all that we read, and not just questioning, but doubting their authenticity and truth. That is part of the war that we have been warned about, the war that the principalities and powers of darkness bring into our minds. They intentionally bring doubts and questions.

And so, as we read these very special words about this very important time in the life of the Lord Jesus, we do want to be confident that all that we read here is pure and infallible truth.

So then, how did these words get onto this page of scripture? Jesus had spoken about such things just a few hours earlier, while he was with His disciples there in the upper room.

There He had told them about how they, and many others like them, would soon receive a very special gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and about how He, the Holy Spirit, would live in them and would minister to their hearts and souls, and would bring to their minds not only the things that they had observed and learned while they walked with Him each day, but they would also know about many, many other things, things that they could not have observed or learned, but would know about anyway, events and details that those men would need to write down and pass along to future generations in books that would later be called "The Gospel". Those words from John 16:12-15.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15)

Folks, this promise is exactly what is taking place right here, with these words of scripture that we are reading today. These words tell us intimate details about the personality and the character of the Lord Jesus, and about His innermost

suffering, details that no one could know, especially Luke, the writer, because Luke was not there that night.

But neither could the disciples have told Luke or anyone else about these things, because the disciples were asleep while Jesus suffered those great sweat drops of blood and the angel ministered to Him. All those things were unseen and unheard by human eyes and ears.

And how did the other writers of scripture know the many things they would put down in their writings? Did they just do good research? Luke actually said that he did, but was that the reason He knew these things and recorded these things?

No! That is not the reason! Yes, Luke and the other writers of scripture were very important instruments in the plans and purposes of God, but these words that they wrote in these scriptures were not their words.

These were divine truths, truths known only to the Holy Spirit, truths that were placed within, "breathed into", each of the minds of the writers by the Holy Spirit. Listen, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read,

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Note those words carefully, "All scripture is God-breathed". Folks, much in the same way that the Lord Jesus "breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam so that He became a living soul", so too did the Holy Spirit breathe these words and the truths within them into the minds of Luke and the other writers.

Some of the translations use the words "inspiration of God", or "inspired by God". But these words "God-breathed" give a much clearer understanding of how these words of scripture came into Luke's mind and are now being revealed to you and me.

Unfortunately for us, our twentieth-century concept of the meaning of this word "inspiration" is one of modern interpretation, having the meaning of "creative ideas", or "stimulated insight", which tends to attribute the meaning and context and intent of these words to a man's own thoughts, in this case, Luke. And by doing that, it can take away from the true authority and authorship of

these scriptures and can imply fallibility, proneness to error . . . the logic being that, if a man is fallible, which he is, would not his writings also be fallible, prone to error!

Yes, Luke was a very special “chosen one” of God. And yes, God did pass these words through Luke’s human mind and personality, just as He did with Paul and Peter and John and Matthew and all the others who wrote down these words of scripture. But as we are told in 2 Peter 1:20-21,

²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

It was God’s Holy Spirit who gave these men these precious words of scripture. He did that because He knew that our human minds are better able to comprehend His truths when they are passed through a human perspective.

And so then yes, we do see human perspective revealed all through these words of scripture. But again, much in the same way that the Lord Jesus “breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam so that He became a living soul”, so too did the Holy Spirit breathe these words and the truths within them into the minds of Luke and the other writers.

And may I say that the same holds true for our reading of these words. Because as the Holy Spirit dwells within us, within you and me, and we yield our hearts and minds to His leading, He, the Holy Spirit, will take each word that we read and will interpret and explain its meaning clearly and without error within our minds.

That is why I have said on many occasions that I can read these words from most any of the common translations, the KJV, or the NIV, or the NKJV, and confidently know that God’s Holy Spirit will interpret them to me clearly and without error. My confidence is in God’s Holy Spirit and not in a writer or a translator, and especially not in my own abilities to understand.

So then . . . with that being said, “What does God’s Holy Spirit want you and me to know about these very blessed truths and events that were taking place in these last hours of Jesus’ life? And what does He want us to do with these truths once we have received them?”

It is this . . . first observe in these words that the Holy Spirit has revealed some things within the divine character and personality of the Lord Jesus that each of us needs to accept for our own.

Here, with all the demands and the busyness that took place within His daily ministry, Jesus needed to make a concerted effort and habit of pulling Himself away from everything that could hinder Him and then to isolate Himself alone with God the Father. Those words in verse 39 . . . “And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives”

I confess that I still do not adequately comprehend the divine combination that was present within the Lord Jesus, of Him being both fully God and fully man. But by faith I know that He was both.

And we can assume that it was the “man” part of Him that needed to be taken aside to reestablish whatever separation might have taken place within all the stressful events of His day.

So then, here we see two of the innermost aspects of Jesus' character and personality. First, He knew that He needed to always maintain a deeply intimate relationship with God, His Father, and He disciplined His heart, soul, mind and body to do exactly that.

Secondly, He knew that for all of time that would follow, men and women like you and me would be reading these words to find how we should conduct our daily life responses to God the Father. And here, Jesus demonstrated for us so that we would forever know exactly what we should do, both as a daily habit and also and especially in those times of great stress. We should, we must pull ourselves away from all of the consuming activities of the day and Pray . . . Pray!

Folks, as the Son of God, Jesus was ever and always “one” with His Father. But in His flesh, He needed to continually discipline Himself to obediently bring His flesh, the “self” part of Him into submission. That was because He was being tempted in every way, moment by moment, just as we are tempted, and His flesh, His human self, needed some of the same discipline as does ours.

And this is a very special instruction to you and to me. Yes, now that we have received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, we are ever and always “one with Him,

and one with God the Father, and one with the Holy Spirit". But in our flesh, our self, and in its many troublesome activities of the day, a separation can easily take place. And left unchecked, that separation will grow and grow until we have so little connection remaining with Christ that we look and feel and live as if we barely know Him.

Some of your and my dearest loved ones are in that condition right at this moment. And I grieve for them.

But this discipline that Jesus demonstrated here is what it takes to keep that grievous separation from taking place!

Listen folks, if the God of the Universe thought it necessary to develop and maintain such customs and habits, then how much more do you and I need to do the same!

And so here we read in verse 39 that Jesus came out and went, "as was his custom", to the Mount of Olives . . .

Why the Mount of Olives? Probably for no special reason other than that it was secluded, private, a place where Jesus could be alone as possible. It was His "prayer closet".

And I know that there were many, many times that He could not go there. And although another similar place is not mentioned, Jesus did the same wherever He was. Why, because it was part of His character, as it should be with yours and mine.

It is my understanding that one of the functions of the shawl that He and the other Jews wore around their shoulders was so that they could pull it over their heads, shutting out the rest of the world and by doing that could have an immediate private "prayer closet".

But again, such habits of prayer must be consistent, as with Jesus, a custom that we follow every day.

Folks, one of the most heathen of all religions, the Muslims, do exactly that, they pray five and seven times a day. Why can't we discipline ourselves to do far better than that?

And not only that, to teach our loved ones to do it also! And yes, I know that if we involve them we will not be truly alone with God, but we really can do both, just as Jesus did. Listen! Verse 39,

³⁹ and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:39-40)

Jesus knew the value of the intimate relationship that prayer provided as He communed with God the Father in prayer. And He wanted that same relationship to be in the hearts and minds of His disciples.

And here especially, Jesus was so very aware of all the things that were soon to take place in His life. And He knew that He needed to resolve any doubts or questions that were in His mind before those stress-filled events began to descend upon Him.

And you and I must do the same! We must set aside time every day for intentional concerted prayer. And if we are not accustomed to that kind of prayer, we ought to get accustomed to it, just as we see that Jesus did.

Yes, I know that most of you probably already do have at least some allotted times of prayer. But may I just take a moment and give each of us a strong exhortation about doing even more. And may I also revisit exactly how and why we ought to be praying so fervently.

And may I start with the basics of prayer by asking, "What should our prayers be like? What should we be saying to God as we pray?"

The disciples asked Jesus that very question and He gave them an ideal pattern to follow as they prayed. He said in Matthew chapter 6,

⁵ ". . . when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ Pray then like this: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen. (Matthew 6:5-13)

These are precious words and they are the very breath of God. But may I encourage you to understand that these words are only the beginning of a “prayer life”. They serve as a pattern, a guide, for all the many things that you and I should say to our Lord as we commune with Him each day.

Also, in your attendance in your church you might have learned a handy acronym for prayer. It is helpful and easy to follow. It is A C T S.

A – Adoration

C – Confession

T – Thanksgiving

S – Supplication

We see each of these elements within the Lord's Prayer. And if this acronym is helpful for remembrance, then we should probably use it.

And we must keep these elemental principles at the forefront each time that we pray. We must not allow ourselves to just immediately rush headlong into making supplications and petitions, asking God for the things we want or need. He already knows our needs before we ask for them. Instead, we need to always first spend some of our moments worshiping and glorifying Him, then move on to our requests.

In our next study, it is my hope and desire to carefully consider some of the deeply intimate thoughts and considerations and sufferings that our Lord experienced as He prayed there in that Garden.

But may we close for today and remind ourselves again that these precious mysterious words on the pages of the bible are ever and always the “God breathed” truths of God! And they are not only intended to be a blessed

comfort as we draw near to the presence of God, they are also able to instruct us in ways of righteousness.

And then also, to remind us that we really must pull away as often as we can from the busyness and the noise of the day, and there commune, face to face with God. He will surely bless you and me for doing it.

In Matthew chapter 11 He calls to each of us saying,

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Pray with me.