

Gethsemane

by Robert Cummins

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CHAPTER EIGHT

We have seen all that took place in the garden, where our Lord became sin for us, took the sin of the world upon Him and into His very being. Now we shall see our Lord suffering further, suffering now the consequences of our sin. This is the explanation of all that follows Gethsemane. CHRIST not only bore our sins; He bore all the consequences of those sins as well; He suffered, after Gethsemane, all those things which, ordinarily and rightfully, we ourselves should suffer because of our sins.

In our observance of this phase of His suffering, we shall follow the account of it which is given us in Matthew 26 and 27.

In Matthew 26:47-50, we have the account of CHRIST's betrayal by one of His own inner circle. This is what sin would have done to me. It would have brought bitterness of betrayal, rejection, and of being made a means by which my friends would strike a bargain. How we see that among sinners today! Brother even sells brother. Sin makes people take advantage of their own loved ones. Mothers and fathers betray their children. They sin against friends of their own innermost circle and use them as a means of gain. Betrayal! That was my lot -- and CHRIST took it.

In each stroke falling on Him, I see my own life being freed because He was willing to take my place and receive the blow that should have fallen upon me!

Three follows in Matthew 26:50-56:

"And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”

Peter's attempt to defend his Master by physical violence. He takes a sword and strikes off the ear of the servant of the high priest. JESUS brings out something very wonderful here. "Peter, do you think I am doing this because I am compelled to? Do you think I am forced to submission? I could summon twelve legions of angels right here from My Father." JESUS wanted Peter to see that it was love which made Him choose the Cross. It was love for Judas, for these men, for His betrayers, His deniers, His crucifiers. He loved them and because He loved them He would not use His own power to compel them. He wanted them to know GOD's method.

This is one of the most serious passages in the Bible. It tells me that GOD has set me free, that He isn't going to use His power to force my will. Oh, He could do it, but He won't. He will set me free to the extent that He will let me even crucify Him; but He will not compel me to do what is good.

In the background of most of our thinking we feel that if GOD wanted to make us good, He would do so. GOD is Almighty, and if He really wanted something He would get it. When we have power to get something which we really want, we go ahead and get it if we can; so we judge GOD by ourselves.

But this story tells me that GOD will let me go to the length even of betraying, insulting, and crucifying Him. He goes the way of the Cross in order to make me realize that I have not a GOD who is going to compel me to be good. He will suffer right down through the whole program of my self-will in order to show me that He wants to win me in only one way and that is through love. What He is after is righteousness; but when you compel righteousness it ceases to be righteousness. If you get righteousness by bribery, it ceases to be true righteousness. So because of what our Lord is after, He will not compel our obedience or compel us to be good or to go the way He wants us to go, but He will let us see what it costs Him for us to go our own way.

If He were like ordinary human beings, as soon as we stretched forth our hands to disobey Him, He would wither those hands. GOD supplies our life; He could take away that life at will if He chose. And JESUS told Peter He could easily stop His crucifiers but that the Scripture, GOD's will, must be fulfilled. This does not mean a mere mechanical fulfillment. No! The whole purport of the Word of GOD is that He is after righteousness, and if so, it is not something that can be compelled.

The righteousness of the law isn't enough. The law can save no one; it is inadequate. There must be a new righteousness, and the purpose of GOD in bringing this righteousness to us is at stake in what JESUS is doing. So He goes to the cross and brings me to the Cross; and there I see what sin is. I see what would have happened to me. I see Him taking the stroke that was due to me.

O GOD, let us really see it, not only when we hear it or read it in a book, but by the revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT.

As we are taken by the Spirit through the suffering of CHRIST from the garden to the Cross, as we see stroke upon stroke fall upon Him which should have fallen upon us, something is accomplished in us that no punishment, no preaching, no schooling could ever do. We discover something about sin that we cannot discover anywhere else, and we come to hate it. We learn lessons about GOD and His righteousness that we can learn nowhere else.

The Cross throws marvelous illumination upon our lives, showing us what we are and what our Saviour is, and then binding our hearts to Him in such loyalty and devotion and love as nothing in the world can do. That is why GOD has given us in such detail the story of Gethsemane and Calvary.

"Are ye come out as against a thief?" CHRIST further asked those who came to take Him. Certainly! For He took our place and we are robbers.

"I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." Again CHRIST accepts what was our portion -- utter forsaking even by those who were His own disciples who had given up all to follow Him -- condemnation by His people's religious leaders -- Peter's denial -- denial by the one He loved almost as He loved John, the one who He knew loved Him. That is the portion of sin, your portion and mine. What a bitter portion it is when you are denied by one whom you have loved and trusted, by one on whom you have depended. Denial with cursing and swearing! Then condemnation by the judicial authority!

They bound Him and led Him away to Pilate. Then Judas begins to realize what he has done. The Cross is already beginning to exert its power, and Judas is feeling something of its effect. Unfortunately he didn't see beyond the Cross. He didn't see the resurrection. He didn't see the victory that was going to issue from the Cross. He saw only something of what he had done and went and hanged himself.

"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest" (Matthew 27:11). Yes, a king, and that is what we were made to be -- kings. GOD said, "Have dominion over all the earth and subdue it." GOD has put into us the impulses and instinct of ruling. Look at a little baby when it is born; it wants to rule the household! Everybody comes at its beck and call. This instinct stays with a person right through life. All of us are dictators. We have that instinct that GOD created in us, only we have used it in the wrong way. Satan says, "If you get your way you have dominion." GOD says, "If you rule your spirit, your will, your inner being, not your outward, that is real dominion." We want to get the outward into subjection. But GOD says, "First rule yourself. Get yourself into subjection. Rule your own spirit."

JESUS testifies that He is a king, yet He is treated like a criminal. The King takes the place of Barabbas. He knew there was a cross prepared for Barabbas at Jerusalem, yet He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

He didn't want to see Barabbas crucified even though he was a criminal. He wanted rather to deliver him. Barabbas is your name and mine. Barabbas is released and set free and CHRIST is delivered up to be crucified.

Then comes the account of the mocking:

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him" (Matthew 27:27-31)

CHRIST is mocked by the mob as well as by the authorities! They took Him and mocked Him. This mocking was our portion! Man was meant to be a king and a priest, to have dominion and rule in the universe: but because of sin, he is a slave of the devil, a captive of sin, mocked by all the demons of hell, and clothed in the purple robes of sham kingship. What gloating the devil and his imps have over the soul made in the image of GOD, who, by his own choice, has taken the way of sin!

A minister friend of mine told me this story. In one of his meetings a traveling man sat under deep conviction, such conviction that the sweat poured from his brow and his whole being was shaken. The power of the Spirit of GOD was very evidently upon him. But there was a certain pleasure ahead of him, something upon which he had set his heart. After that pleasure he would yield to CHRIST -- but not now. He fought stubbornly against the wooing of the Spirit. He would yield afterwards -- but afterwards never came! He suddenly became ill and died. Perhaps we can visualize his experience if we use our sanctified imaginations.

When released from the body, the man's first experience was one of freedom. His spirit had been released from the flesh. Almost at once, however, the devil appeared and a host of his demons. They seized him to lead him away captive. As they went the frenzied man shook his finger in the devil's face and said, "It is you, it is you, it is you, that have brought me down into this misery."

"No, fool!" laughed the devil. "You, yourself, are responsible for your being here. The HOLY SPIRIT told you that this was perhaps your last chance, that you had to choose. I could not make you refuse. I merely told you about the pleasure you would miss, and what your friends would say; but I couldn't make you choose. You turned the HOLY SPIRIT down. You chose my arguments against His. Come along with us now, for you are responsible for your choice."

Oh, the look of anguish, despair, and horror which came over his face, as the man realized that he actually had made the choice himself.

Such an experience awaited you and me. How little we realize what horror we have been delivered from because of the Cross!

CHRIST took not only our sin, but all the poison, cursing, mocking, betrayal, condemnation, scourging, and spitting that goes with that sin. He takes stroke after stroke that was due to you and me. GOD make us really see it! Then we couldn't bear to hurt Him. We don't appreciate the dangers that awaited us as sinners until the HOLY SPIRIT makes us see the stroke that was due to us and then lets us see His back, His face, His cheek, His head, His hands, His feet, and His heart taking the stroke that was due to you and me!

Then they stripped Him and crucified Him at the place of the skull. Well was it named the place of the skull! That is what humanity has become -- a skull -- empty of all brains! This world that so prides itself upon its brains put a crown of thorns upon Him who was the very wisdom of GOD. It crowned His brow with thorns because its own brow was an empty skull.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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