



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: JANUARY 2022 by Lee Shipp

LEAVE IT IN GETHSEMANE

Jesus took His disciples over the brook Kedron, to the mount of Olives, to a garden He frequently retired to called Gethsemane. He told His disciples to sit there and pray lest they enter into temptation; saying to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, stay here and watch with Me."

He went a little further, about a stone's throw away, and then fell on His face and prayed, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, let your will be done."

His agony was so great that He prayed with a greater earnest: and His sweat became great drops of blood falling to the ground. He returned to find His disciples sleeping and woke them saying, "Rise, let us be going!"

While He was speaking, Judas arrived with a large number of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. They came with lanterns, torches, and weapons: swords and clubs, to arrest Him. Jesus went to them commanding, "Who do you seek?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I Am."

As soon as He said that He was "I Am" they all fell backward to the ground. So, He asked them again, "Who do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." And Jesus answered, "I told you that I Am: if you are looking for Me, let these go!"

Jesus continued, "Here you are, coming to get Me with swords and clubs. I sat every day with all of you in the temple, teaching you. You never tried to take hold of Me then. Do you not know that I could pray right now to My Father and He would instantly give Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Consequently, Jesus let them take Him to the rulers who asked, "Are you the Messiah? Tell us." Jesus answered by saying, "After what happens here today, you will see Me sitting on the right hand of the power of God." And they all began to ask, "Are you then the Son of God?" And Jesus said, "You say that I Am." Pilate would ask Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight!" Pilate, therefore, said, "Are you a King then?" Jesus answered, "To this end was I born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears Me."

Therefore, when Pilate heard Him say that he was a King from another world he was even more afraid. Pilate said to Him, "Do you not know that I have the power to crucify you, and I have the power to release you?" Jesus answered, "You can have no power over Me unless My Father has allowed it and given you this power."

Jesus, bearing His cross went forth to the place of the skull, called Golgotha: where they crucified Him. And Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" and He bowed His head, and gave up His Spirit into His Father's hands.

Then behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which were in those graves came out and went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Now the centurion, and other soldiers who were watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God."

"He spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross. There, on the cross, He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that were against us and contrary to us, He took it away by nailing it to His cross. Now may the Saints and the Lamb rejoice: O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, beloved, be steadfast, unmovable, and always abound in the work of the Lord; knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

In reading these select passages from the New Testament one thing becomes very clear, Jesus did not act in public the way He acted in Gethsemane.

THE PRIVATE DESPERATIONS OF GETHSEMANE

Gethsemane is the place to cry. It is the place for agony. It is where we sweat and plead with God. There, in Gethsemane, is where we can say, "No! Lord, is there not another way?" In Gethsemane you don't have to look like a magnificent Christian. You have permission to feel the pain and fear.

Often, some are under the impression that Christians should not expose their hurts. They feel that Christians should not voice their contempt for injustice. Instead, Christians should just smile and bear all the abuse without making any appeal. However, that reasoning is false. God gives us a place where we can cry and pour out our complaints, a place where we can express our pain over the way we have been treated or the injustice we have suffered. You have a Gethsemane - a place where you can "gut it out."

Gethsemane is a place where you can question this season in your life. Gethsemane is the place where you can point out your fears and even beg God for a different course. You don't have to fake it. You don't have to pretend you are ok. You don't have to hide the pain and the fears.

You have a place where you can cry and plead; a place where you can hurt and expose your wounds. For Job, his Gethsemane was sitting on top of his pile of ashes while he beheld the utter devastation of his life and family. For Jeremiah, his Gethsemane was a prison cell where he gutted out the book of Lamentations. For David, it was the secret place where his songs poured out to God. For Jesus, Gethsemane was a garden, a quiet spot where He often retreated to be with His Father. For believers who have one, it is the safety and love of a good church, a church where people love one another and where people can express their suffering and fears and find help and intercession. But the one simple fact is this, you need a place where you can cry out in desperation and throw it all upon God, as Jehoshaphat did when he cried to God, "Oh God, don't You rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? Don't You possess all power and might, so that none is able to withstand You? God, Your reputation is tied to us! We have no might against this army. We do not know what to do. But we are looking to You." And there, with wives and children, the people cried to the Lord, "We are at your mercy" (2 Chronicles 20: 3-13).

"IN GETHSEMANE IS WHERE YOU RISE, EMBRACE THE PAIN, THE REJECTION, THE HORROR AND SAY TO THE LORD "NOT MY WILL BUT THINE BE DONE" "

GETHSEMANE IS MORE THAN A PLACE TO CRY

Gethsemane is not the garden of complaint or murmur. Oh no! Gethsemane is much more than that. Gethsemane is the place you discover the deepest mystery of the cross - your love for God. For there, in Gethsemane, is where you rise, embrace the pain, the rejection, the horror and say to the Lord, "Not my will but Thine be done."

Your life will change in Gethsemane. There, in that place before God, you will see the horror as God does. You will see the injustice and understand - the ungodly shall not prosper! There, in Gethsemane you will understand that you were not a victim - you were chosen.

God is in Gethsemane. It is there that He meets you in your need. It is there that He gives you the revelation of what He sees, and you realize it is not a tragedy after all - it is a triumph!

From Gethsemane, you will fasten your grip upon the hand of God. You will receive humiliation as glory. You will take the reproach and draw it in close to your heart. You will drink the cup. You will embrace the shame, the pain. There, in Gethsemane, you agree to the spectators caught up in the drama as they mock you. You will agree to your friends forsaking you. You will agree to the blood and the gore. You will agree to the hammer, the nails, and the wood. You will agree to the infamy, the shame, the treachery, the loss of reputation for the rest of your life. You will agree to the lies and rumors which will never die.

LET US RISE AND BE GOING

You will leave Gethsemane. You cannot live there. It is a passage, not a destination. Just like the cross; it is a passage and not a destination. Glory is the destination! Furthermore, you will leave Gethsemane differently than the way you went into Gethsemane.

Jesus left Gethsemane by saying to His disciples, "Rise, let us be going ..." (Matthew 26:46). He would not go alone. He was determined for them to be fully awake and present for the events soon unfolding. They watched Him in Gethsemane. They watched Him in His agony and Jesus was determined they watch Him in His glory.

It is as if Jesus is saying to His disciples, come with Me. You failed Me. You didn't pray for Me. You didn't comfort Me. But now, come with Me and behold My glory, My triumph. He was not rebuking them. Though He had every right to forsake them, He did not. He chose them to come and watch, to be with Him.

I appeal to many of you who are fed up with the church. The church slept while you were suffering. The church didn't pray for you. The church didn't comfort you. Please, don't throw the church away. Go to the church. Invite them to be with you. Tell them to rise and come with you. Let them be a part of the glorious things God will do through your life. Release the believers who failed you. Help them get out of Gethsemane with you. Encourage them like Jesus did the disciples; tell the church – you have seen me in my suffering, come with me and see me in my glory.

## **PUBLIC DECLARATIONS BECAUSE OF GETHSEMANE**

Jesus was not sweating blood before Pilate. Jesus was not in agony before the Sanhedrin. Jesus was not pleading with God for a different way as He subjected Himself to false accusations before the High Priest. Instead, He was a soldier. He was unflinching. He was not the one on trial, hell was on trial – sin was on trial. He was not facing His judges – He was the judge.

He would not leave Gethsemane weak, whimpering, and confused. Instead, He had His orders, and He was ready to go. He would be kind to the unkind. He would love the unloving. He would do the work while every voice blasphemes. He would sacrifice His life for the abusers. He would march like a soldier into victory. He would demonstrate to every living thing how much He loves and adores His Father.

Believer, what about you? How are you leaving Gethsemane? Are you different? Will you be kind to the unkind? Will you fervently love the cold hard-hearted spouse you are married to? Will you do the work of God with joy? Will you pray and bless those who abuse you? Will you soldier on in the midst of pain and mockery? Will you demonstrate to every living thing how much you love and adore Jesus? When you think there is no hope, will you hope? When you cannot take it anymore, will you receive the Father's mercy so you do not faint?

In the private garden of Gethsemane we cry, we suffer and plead. However, in the public, we are soldiers with the shout of victory – because we cried in Gethsemane. In the private garden of Gethsemane we cry to our God. However, in the public, we decorate His sacred honor with our praise!

Yes, cry, pour it out to God. But get up from there with the conviction that the Lord is your God and rejoice. For those who kneel before God in Gethsemane, will sit as kings before their enemies!

Jesus' demeanor carrying the cross was totally different than His demeanor laying over a rock and sweating blood in Gethsemane. There goes Jesus marching out of Gethsemane making His Father look glorious. He was the Lamb King marching to vanquish hell and sin. I imagine Jesus thinking as He carried that cross to Calvary: you see Me carrying a cross, but I see Me carrying an atomic bomb. You see Me walking in the will of the Romans, but I see Me walking in the will of my Father. You see Me walking in defeat, but I see Me walking in victory. You see Me as the spectacle of men, but I see Me as the darling of heaven, the adoration of Angels. I am not a prisoner of Rome – I am the warden of the prison of Hope!

## **HOW DO YOU REPRESENT GOD?**

Life here, in this corrupt world, is not about our particular happiness. Life, all of life, is about communion with God and making Him look glorious. Regardless of what you say you believe, the truth of your testimony is all about how you represent God.

The beauty of Jesus' love for His Father was demonstrated by His glorious suffering. Sure, Jesus could have called for a legion of angels. Imagine the stateliness of that possible scenario. Heaven opens, a legion of angels descend, the masses of humanity humiliated as they realize the bond between Jesus and the Father in heaven. But instead, Jesus dried His tears and joyfully took the cross to perform what would most please His Father. It was not in the demonstration of power that Jesus proved His love for His Father; rather, it was in the posture of suffering! Likewise, you also have the opportunity to prove your love for God by the posture of suffering. Sure, God could annihilate or incapacitate Satan on your behalf. Obviously, people would be impressed with your relationship with God. However, the lasting impression of your love for God will not be in the moments of power but in the moments of suffering joyfully!

The beauty of the Father is seen through you when you renounce the promises of Satan and take pleasure in the greater glory of Christ. Take Job as an example. There he is on his ashes. No doubt he is devastated in pain and suffering. Instead of rejoicing in God because the storm did not take

the lives of his children or that angels came down from heaven and destroyed those who robbed his wealth, he sits bankrupt before the world and cries, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ..."* (Job 13:15). Suffering joyfully for God's glory shows the world how deeply your heart adores and worships the Lord. You can't fake joy in the midst of suffering. You can try but people can smell the hypocrisy a mile away. Taking the cup of pain in Gethsemane and joyfully marching to the cross is supernatural. Supernatural love!

Mine is a valid joy because I'm happy in Jesus even if I must drink the cup. If I am called to carry sickness in this mortal flesh, if I am chosen to be despised by all then I will bear it joyfully for the One my soul adores. I will not spend my time whining about life – I will rejoice. I will not live blaming people. I will forgive them. I will not live with bitterness because of my wounds; instead, I will be healed and help others heal. I will not blame the church, people, or circumstances; instead, I will take every occasion to be like Christ. I will not go around thinking I have all the problems; instead, I will consider myself chosen - chosen to be an expression of love to the world for my beautiful Father. Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart that the King is in residence there!

## **SOLDIER ON**

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:35-39).

Do not take Gethsemane with you to the cross. Leave it there: the confusion, the agony, the trouble. Rise up, soldier. March on. Embrace the place that God has called you to. The mockers do not win! Pilate does not win. The Romans do not win. You are chosen to bear the glory of the Father. Everything: the persecution, the famine, the peril, the sword does not change the fact that you are more than a conqueror through Him that loves you. You win! God wins! And the triumph will be displayed throughout eternity.

Be different than the others. Because you had a Gethsemane you shall have a resurrection. Be careful how you act, how you speak. The soldier marching into war does not speak of death but life: the life of heaven, the life of Jesus, the life of victory, the life of peace, the life of forgiveness, the life of freedom, the life of joy.

Does your life show people that Jesus is exceedingly more wonderful to you now than He ever was? Can people see that you love Him more? Don't walk with your head down. Don't live depressed. Don't give the impression that you are a victim of bondage. Nobody forced you to Christ! Nobody is forcing you to go outside the city to bear His reproach. No sir, you volunteered!

## **DO NOT BYPASS GETHSEMANE**

Beloved, do not bypass Gethsemane. Do not think for a moment you can bear the assignment set before you. You cannot skip Gethsemane for Calvary. You will not endure the suffering. You need the place of crushing first. You need to cry. You need to pour out your lamentation and fears.

Refuse Gethsemane and you will be destroyed. You will be unhealable. You will miss the resurrection from all this suffering. If you refuse your Gethsemane, you will come to believe that your crucifixion was something unjust and meted out by cruel men. Your life will end up defined as a victim. You will blame God. You will blame the church. You will blame people. You will live oozing out the infections of abuse and injustice. Your life will forever look like abuse. Your life will scream, "I was abused. I was mistreated. You do not know what they did to me. They ruined my life. I will never trust people again." Perhaps that is where some of you are. You shrink back and think, "Oh God, that is me. I'm bitter and angry. I missed the glory. I missed my Gethsemane." I have good news for you! If you have already been crucified and missed your Gethsemane it is not too late. Like you, most people miss their Gethsemane. Numbers of people have considered the fact – I did not know these things when I was so brutally mistreated. I resisted; therefore, I had no Gethsemane. Today I am angry, untrusting, unlovable!

Here is your good news. Gethsemane is simply your hour of finally aligning your will with God's. When you agree, accept, and embrace that your life is loved by God, that you love God, and that you are not left to chance then you are having your Gethsemane. When you realize you are not a victim to circumstance but, instead, you are chosen - then you are having your Gethsemane. The thief had to have his Gethsemane while nailed to the tree! Maybe your Gethsemane will be the moment you close this chapter!

Oh, and how do you know when you have had your Gethsemane? Good question. Simple answer. You know you have had your Gethsemane when you can say, *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."*