

Do You Feel Expensive?

BY BOB
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Jesus knew what awaited him as he crossed the Brook Kidron with his disciples. In fact, he hesitated before crossing the seasonal stream that divided the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount. Though it was night, the bright light of the moon over his shoulder cast his shadow across the stream.

The water of the Kidron was darker than usual. It ran with the blood of thousands of Passover lambs, which had run down the altar in the Temple, and then through a channel from the altar to the Brook Kidron. Jesus stared for a moment at the thick, dark stream at his feet, and his stomach clenched at the stark reminder of the ordeal that lay before him. His own blood would soon flow, he knew, like that of a lamb being slaughtered.

His face was pale as he and his men approached their customary place of prayer, the place where the Twelve had often seen their Teacher stand with his face lifted toward heaven and his arms outspread in prayer, in the manner of the Jews. Jesus halted the procession.

"Pray," he said, indicating to them that they should stay where they were, "that you will not fall into temptation." He gestured for Peter, James and John to follow him, and walked deeper into the garden.

He stopped again. "My soul," he said, his voice thick with emotion, "is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." He locked gazes in turn with each man before speaking again. They said nothing; they offered no comfort. "Stay here," he said finally, "and keep watch."

Then, his face appearing ashen even in the moonlight, he turned and walked away from them slowly, with visible effort, as though he were straining against an invisible obstacle. He finally reached his destination, but he did not stand to pray; instead, he slumped suddenly to his knees, almost as if he had been struck.

He groaned out a single word. "Abba," he groaned. *Father. Daddy.* Then, for a long moment—silence.

He shuddered, his body echoing the spasms of emotion that wracked his soul. "Father," he repeated, adding slowly, "if you are willing, take this cup from me." More sobs followed, and he added, "yet not my will, but yours be done."

Grief washed over him, and he felt his chest might burst open onto the dirt below. Distressed, he looked for aid from his closest friends—he couldn't see them. With great effort, he raised himself up-

THE PLAIN TRUTH

right and trod over to where he had left his friends; they were asleep on the ground.

"Peter," he said, rousing the big Galilean. "Are you asleep? Couldn't you stay up with me for one hour?" Peter flashed a guilty look and sat upright. "Watch and pray," Jesus implored, "so that you will not fall into temptation."

Jesus returned to his place of prayer, and the earlier scene was reenacted, this time with still more sorrow and desperation. "Please, Father, take this cup from me...if you will." His agony of prayer continued, and he feared he might lose consciousness...until he felt a hand firmly gripping his shoulder.

It was an angel. "Your prayer," he said, "has been heard."

For a long moment, Jesus studied the familiar face of the heavenly messenger, his breathing labored from the exertion of his prayers. Without breaking his gaze away from the angel, he nodded in the direction of his disciples. "And them?" he said. He paused a moment, thinking of those who had not seen him and yet would soon be able to believe. "And the others?"

The messenger returned Jesus' gaze without speaking.

The color drained from Jesus' face. He had been given a way out; in fact, he had always had it. But in the next moment, he knew he would not take it. It was still unspeakably hard to face his fate—so much so, in fact, that the sweat which rolled down his face was tinged with his blood. But by the time the angel disappeared, Jesus had been strengthened in his resolve. He would do this thing.

Admittedly, the above dramatization takes considerable liberties with Luke 22:43, the verse which says that "An angel from heaven appeared to [Jesus] and strengthened him" in the midst of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. We don't really know how the angel strengthened Jesus, nor even if they exchanged any words. But we do know that Jesus, nearly crushed by the weight of the ordeal he was about to endure, eventually awoke his disciples and

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chose his Father's will...though it led to Calvary.

That single choice in that savage garden indicates something... something shocking. In addition to the immeasurably wonderful news that Jesus' death on a cross bought our eternal salvation, the crucifixion of Jesus also announces three things which are important for each one of us to grasp, with our minds and hearts:

1. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ demonstrates how highly God the Father values you. "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not in mere gold and silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God" (1 Peter 1:18-19, NLT). By sending his only Son to be your sacrifice, God revealed what he thinks of you; he revealed his true regard for you. You are so important to God that "He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."

2. The crucifixion reveals your value in Jesus' eyes. What was it that gave Jesus the strength to face his coming ordeal? Consider the possibility that he thought of you. Not only is it possible, but it is likely that at some moment in the Garden of Gethsemane he looked down through the corridors of time, and saw you...and decided

That means that nothing you can do will ever change your worth to God. You can't make yourself worth less to him, because even while you were a sinner, he decided that you were worth Jesus to him (Romans 5:8)

you were worth every moment of anguish, every lash of the scourge, every torment, every drop of sinless blood. He might have turned back from all that faced him that night in Gethsemane; he knew the Scriptures, so he knew that he would be reviled, ridiculed, pierced and crushed (see Psalm 22, Isaiah 53). Even while on the cross, he could have summoned a legion of angels to his aid, but he didn't. He stayed on the cross, and in so doing, sent you a clear message about your worth. You were worth Calvary to him.

3. The crucifixion shows that God's estimate of your worth is unconditional. "God demonstrated his love for us," the Bible says, "in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). By sending his Son to die for you, God revealed that you—even in your sin—were worth Jesus to him. By submitting himself to death on a cross, Jesus revealed that you—even in your sin—were worth Calvary to him. That means that nothing you can do will ever change your worth to God. You can't make yourself worth less to him, because even while you were a sinner, he decided that you were worth Jesus to him (Romans 5:8). His estimate of your worth doesn't go down when you've stumbled, or had a bad day, or even when you've been fired from your job. Nor can you make yourself worth more to him, because he has already paid the ultimate price to win your salvation.

Your worth was *established* by God's *creative* power; you are a priceless human being made in his image. Your worth was *emphasized* by God's *redemptive* power; you are a precious soul for whom Christ died. And that's not only a true estimate of how God sees you; it's an unchanging one as well. □

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