

## #150 “Truths that Sustain No Matter What”

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What is your greatest fear, your worst case scenario? If it came true, how would you get by? How would you be sustained? How would you endure without compromising or cursing God?

Jesus faced a severe predicament, one of certain death. He knew that He had come to earth for this moment, but still He had a difficult choice to make. Can you imagine knowing the kind of pain that you would be about to experience in being crucified, and yet still going ahead and doing it? Can you imagine having hardly anyone in your court to support you and still making the right decision regardless? Can you imagine submitting yourself to the vices of the very people who hated you and made it necessary for you to be put on the cross in the first place? Can you imagine having all the power to escape and yet being obedient to the will of God anyway? We think that this was a relatively easy thing for our Savior, given that He was God in the flesh. But He was also fully a man, and insomuch as He was human, He suffered greatly. He knew what He was going to have to do, and it was a point of extreme emotional and physical duress to resolve to do it anyway. In Matthew 26:38, Jesus said, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death.” Have you ever had such grief over something or someone that you felt like you were going to die? Jesus did, and He understands.

In Luke, we get a medical picture of just how great this internal agony was. Luke 22:41-44 says, “And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.’ Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; *and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground*” (emphasis added). The condition of sweating drops of blood is called hematidrosis, and it has been documented to occur in people under extreme stress, say under a death sentence or about to enter battle. We dare not think that Jesus never was under incredible stress, for He was under more stress than most of us can imagine. He was about to face His own agonizing drawn-out death with the prelude of thirty-nine lashes. He prayed that God would offer a way out or another way to redeem mankind, but there was no other way. Christ understood that, and He committed Himself to doing God’s will rather than His own human easy way out. What a Savior we have!

It is no coincidence that this is the same passage in which Peter denied Christ three times. Peter boasted in Matthew 26:33, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” In the parallel account in Luke 22, Peter said in verse 33, “Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!” Of course, we know how things turned out for Peter. He was greatly humbled in his failure three times over, but eventually he would grow strong such that he would stand for Christ even when it meant his own death.

So how can we learn what Peter learned so that we don't fail as he did? How can we have the strength and resolve to submit to God's will as Christ did even though the stress of the situation could cause us to sweat blood or something analogous, say a panic attack, ulcer, etc.? What would make us choose not to escape with some coping mechanism or compromise rather than face our fears and the call of God upon our lives? We might not ever be given the opportunity to denounce Christ in exchange for living, but then again, maybe we will. Maybe our worst case scenario is not persecution but a loss of a loved one, a job, a home, a meal, etc. We must be ready spiritually to stand when the point of reckoning arrives. Peter thought he was ready, but he wasn't. How can we best prepare ourselves to stand when our faith is put to the test?

If we want to be sustained and endure, we must do what Jesus did, *to believe that God's will is the best thing for us to do*. It certainly wasn't the most enjoyable thing for our Savior in the short term, but long term, it gave Him the name which is above every name such that every knee will bow before Him one day (Philippians 2:9-11). He made it possible for mankind to be saved and go to heaven. This is a wonderful accomplishment that God had planned for Christ to carry out, and it was very, very good. Short term, it was hard, extremely hard, causing Him to sweat blood. But long term, it was worth it. Jesus had an eternal perspective and a faith that what God had called Him to do was best for God, for Him, and for the world. God's will is always best. If we believe that we are living according to God's desire for our lives as we believe and obey, we can be sustained. But if we begin to believe that God's will is too hard or not worth it or that God has made a mistake or bailed out on us, then we will falter. We must trust Him and surrender to His will. *Believing that God's will is necessarily the kindest, wisest, and best for us is central to being able to endure faithfully.*

We would also do well to remember what Jesus said in the closing words of Matthew: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (28:20). Isaiah 41:10 echoes this truth when God says to His people, "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Such power and reassurance there are in those words: "For I am with you."

At some point, our faith will be challenged beyond what we thought we could handle. If we want to endure by faith and obey, we must believe that God's will is best and that He is with us, being fully in control, working things for our good, and upholding, helping, and strengthening us. Do you want to be sustained? Believe this.