**Intercession in Gethsemane**

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.  
(1 Peter 2:21)

Gethsemane is a regular experience for Intercessors. In this dark place we learn to wrestle with our calling, resist the intensity of Satanic attack and join our will to the selfless will of the Lord. Unless we can come regularly to this place and endure the agony, we will never be able to experience the deepest level of intercession. This presents us with many challenges:

* Overcome self –

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

In Gethsemane, the battle is always the same, even if it takes many forms. It can be summed up like this: - God says to us "go!" The enemy says "no!" Once this battle line has been drawn, then the old battle between self and the Lord’s will is fought out again in our hearts and lives. The enemy does all he can to stop us, and we have to have a strong enough character to resist him and obey the voice of the Lord. This is very painful. Our emotions, our lives, our health, our family, our work and our leisure all come under attack. Our resolve is weakened, darkness surrounds us, and God seems far away.

This is the nature of the struggle in Gethsemane. Anyone who approaches such a place with anything less than deep concern is a fool. Jesus struggled in the heat of this battle. An angel had to come to strengthen him. As it was for him, so it will be for us. And we have to fight this battle many times, with little or no earthly support – perhaps on some occasions with hostility from our earthly friends.

Why must we endure in this way? Because this is where Jesus won his battle, and it is where we will win ours. We must win in Gethsemane, learn to intercede and then live in the move of that intercession in our hearts and lives.

It is a tough place. How can we stand? St Theresa helps us again: -

"In prayer and sacrifice lies all my strength. They are my unbreakable weapons."
* Embrace loneliness

At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. (2 Timothy 4:16)

Being alone with God has a long tradition. Elijah knew it. (1 Kings 17:2-6) Habakkuk knew it. (Hab.3:17-18) Paul knew it. (2 Cor.11:23-33) None of these people liked the loneliness, but each knew that it was their appointed path, and found the strength to walk in it.

Those who are in Gethsemane have to be encouraged to welcome and embrace the loneliness. This is very hard, because it goes against our need for personal friendship and advice. But we have to survive without them in Gethsemane, otherwise our longing for human company will pull us backward and out of Gethsemane. We don’t want that, because it means being out of the intimate presence of Jesus, and we do want that.

We have to make a choice. If we want to be God’s servants, filled with power, crying for the Nation, we have to walk into Gethsemane, and welcome it. If we don’t want to be God’s servants, and don’t want to save the Nation, then we should not be here in the first place.

It’s a tough challenge to welcome loneliness, to embrace it like a friend. Charles de Foucauld was a French Missionary who devoted his life to Tunisia, and he was very much alone. He longed for companionship, and even built some small rooms for those who he hoped would join him. No one came. He was shot and killed by Taureg rebels in 1916. He died, as he had lived, welcoming the aloneness which he believed was the Lord’s way. He wrote a prayer called “The prayer of abandonment. All who are called to embrace Gethsemane should reflect on it.

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures - I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.

* Bear the pain of the world

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” (Mark 15:34)

Now it gets really hard, and this is where so much intercession falls down. It is not enough to see the pain of the world, or even reflect the pain to the Lord.
The pain of the soul is in the heart of the Lord, and if we are going to intercede, then that pain has to become ours -really ours, incarnated into the pains and suffering of our body. Jesus said “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” We have to enter that pain, and then from that position, begin to cry out.

Myrna, an Intercessor from Damascus wrote of this experience in her diary. Here is a small part of what she wrote. It gives us a glimpse of what it means to bear the sorrow. Do we have the courage? Each of us has to answer this question ourselves:

Myrna suddenly screams aloud: -Oh Jesus.... For your sufferings, Lord. Oh Jesus, oh Jesus, have mercy on me, your sinful maid. A physician touches her foot then her hand and Myrna painfully screams: - Oh Lord.... Ah Jesus, I beg you, I cannot take it anymore, Lord. I am in an immense weakness. I cannot see my eyes any more. Oh Jesus, I implore you Lord... I cannot endure as much as you, Lord.” Myrna's feet are one on top of the other. Several times we tried to separate them but she sets them back in the same position, as Christ on the Cross, in the shape of an “X”, the right foot on top of the left foot. - Oh Jesus, have mercy on me, oh Jesus - For your glory, oh Lord. Myrna continues with a weak voice: - For the forgiveness of sinners, of which I am the first (three times). I feel a nail driven in my head. Oh Virgin I implore you. ...

* Resist the abuse of the enemy

“The thief comes to kill and steal and destroy.” (John 10:10)

The enemy is not going to back off from those enduring Gethsemane, but attack harder. I have written about the struggle against the enemy in the material “Warfare to the last breath” and readers should look at that for a fuller explanation of this abuse.

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But we can clearly see the abuse - pressurising the son of God, mocking his resistance, suggesting an easier way. We see this in the temptation stories (Matt 4:1-11). This is a bitter abuse to withstand. It undermines, and it always comes when we are at a low ebb, and usually alone. It is a hallmark of the darkness. We can't see our way ahead. Against this abuse, we have to step out on the way to Calvary, for only there can the soul be saved.
But prayer is warfare, and we have to enter Gethsemane knowing this truth. Prayer is warfare to the last breath. There is no option of turning away from the enemy.

It is within the Gethsemane experience that we begin to mourn, cry out and repent. We have to enter willingly, knowing not only the pain and struggle we will have to endure, but also seeing beyond it not victory but Calvary. This is tough - but the soul of Ghana is desperate, and needs desperate remedies.

**To encourage us, here is a vision of the cross. It is not an easy vision but it is the reality of the intercessory experience in Gethsemane.**

*I saw Jesus standing, holding his crown of thorns. I came closer and he offered it to me. “You have to embrace this crown” he said.” You have to wrap your arms round it, and hold it to yourself. Then you will understand the price I paid, and the price my people must pay.”*

*I held the crown to myself, and it hurt. It was like clutching broken glass. it cut into my spirit.*

*Then I let go, but the imprint of the crown was still there.*

*“Now you can walk with me along this path” he said.*