

Matthew 26:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

Analysis

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death (περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου, perilupos estin hē psychē mou heōs thanatou)—literally 'surrounded by grief to the point of death.' The word perilupos indicates sorrow pressing in from all sides. Jesus quotes Psalm 42:5-6, identifying with the psalmist's overwhelming anguish. **Tarry ye here, and watch with me** (γρηγορεῖτε μετ' ἐμοῦ, grēgoreite met' emou)—the command to 'stay alert' spiritually, not merely keep awake physically.

This is Christ's most vulnerable moment recorded in Scripture. The sinless Son, who knew no sin, was about to be 'made sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21). His soul-anguish foreshadows the spiritual death—separation from the Father—he would experience on the cross when crying 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46).

Historical Context

Jewish night watches were traditionally times of prayer (Psalm 63:6, 119:148). Jesus asked the disciples to join him in vigilant prayer during this critical hour. The request 'watch with me' reveals Christ's true humanity—in his darkest hour, he desired human companionship, though his atoning work could only be accomplished alone. This was Thursday night of Passion Week, hours before his arrest and crucifixion.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's honest expression of his soul's anguish encourage you to bring your own deep sorrows to the Father in prayer?
2. What does Jesus's request for companionship ('watch with me') reveal about the incarnation and his genuine human experience?
3. How does understanding that Christ's sorrow was 'unto death' (reaching to the point of death itself) illuminate what he endured in your place?

Interlinear Text

τότε	λέγει	αὐτοῖς	Περίλυπός	ἐστιν	ἡ	ψυχὴ	μου
Then	saith he	unto them	exceeding sorrowful	is	^{G3588}	soul	My
G5119	G3004	G846	G4036	G2076		G5590	G3450
ἕως	θανάτου·	μείνατε	ᾧδε	καὶ	γρηγορεῖτε	μετ'	ἐμοῦ
even unto	death	tarry ye	here	and	watch	with	me
G2193	G2288	G3306	G5602	G2532	G1127	G3326	G1700

Additional Cross-References

John 12:27 (Parallel theme): Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

1 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1 Peter 2:24 (Parallel theme): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Isaiah 53:10 (Parallel theme): Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Galatians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Isaiah 53:3 (Parallel theme): He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Romans 8:32 (Parallel theme): He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Matthew 25:13 (Parallel theme): Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Parallel theme): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 Peter 4:7 (Parallel theme): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.