



We all understand pressure! Everywhere you go there are those who are encountering some of the greatest stress of their life. The pastors feel the pressures of the ministry but know they are called. The professional knows too well the pressure of making one wrong move. The poor feel the load of being under a financial burden that they are not able to pay. The physically challenged are often faced with decisions that determine the outcome of their recovery and know too well the pressure of choice. I

think you get the general idea. We all have burdens to face and have also been through difficult days. The blessing is not that we are exempt from pressure, but that Jesus understands what we are going through and can help us.

There were three times, at least, in the life of the Savior where He was under a tremendous burden. In the wilderness, **He won the victory over Satan**. On the cross, **He won the victory over sin**. In the Garden of Gethsemane, **He won the battle over self-will**. Every time He was faced with extreme pressure, He taught us what to do.

This garden experience was very different from the other two accounts. In the wilderness there is a devil you can see. At Calvary there is a cross you can see. However, in the garden there is nothing visible as the source of this battle. What a lesson for us all! Sometimes we are feeling great stress and pressure. Often times, as I talk with people about their problems, they tell me they are really not sure what is even causing them to feel like they do. It is one thing to be under a load and it is something else not to be able to point to any one single cause. The pressure is still just as real to the person going through it even if they can't touch it or put a name on it. The burden is still there.

As we look at these verses, the first thing I see is the **grinding in the garden**. The word Gethsemane means "**oil press**" or "**olive press**." In this garden, the olives were placed onto the millstones to be crushed by the weight of the press to extract their oil. There were four different pressings of the olives. The first produced the oil used for holy things associated with the Temple. The second provided the oil for home cooking. The third pressing yielded oil for medicine. The last was used for soap, beauty aids or household applications. In short, everything in the olive had to come out under the load of the press. Olive oil may only cost us a few dollars but it cost an olive everything that was in it!



*Olive oil press in Israel*

We see the pressure upon the Savior in His **sweating**. Luke records the account and says, "**...his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground**" (Luke 22:44). What a strange place to bleed. In a beautiful garden the crimson color is no longer seen on the flowers but it now covers the ground. How awful that sight must have been to those who were with Jesus! **It teaches us that sometimes we can have an ugly problem in a beautiful place**. You go through life and just achieve what you always worked for only to face illness, pain or loss. The pressure can make us sweat but none of us have ever sweated like Jesus did in the garden.

The burden is also seen in the **separation** by the Savior. The disciples tarry at the appointed place but Jesus, “...went a little farther, and fell on his face...” (vs. 39). He kept on going when those He loved had stopped. Pressure will drive us to a place where we feel others are not able to go. There is a loneliness involved with real stress. There are some things that we must go through alone.

Again, the pressure is visible in the **sleeping** disciples. Jesus leaves them and returns on three occasions only to find them asleep each time (vs. 40, 43, 45). What makes us keep going back to things that don't work when we are under pressure? The results are the same but still we think our friends or family can help us somehow. We know only God knows and can give us relief.

Finally, you see the pressure in the **seeking** of the Savior. The text teaches us that Jesus, “...prayed the third time, saying the same words” (vs. 44). You know it is real when you keep praying the same thing. The need is so great that all you can do is speak the same words over and over again. Nothing else matters and you must get an answer from God!

The wonderful thing about this teaching from the life of Christ is we also find there is **grace in the garden**. When Jesus came the third time and found the disciples still sleeping, He speaks to them and says, “...**Sleep on now...**”(vs. 45). Something happened on His third trip in prayer. Nothing had changed concerning the will of the Father. The pressure was there but it just didn't bother Him anymore.

When I read those words spoken by the Master, I could not help but think of all the things that had bothered me so much throughout my ministry. It was a sudden reminder that there are some things we all just need to “put to bed.” Things are not going to change. We just need to let it sleep and find peace in Him. When someone that you have depended on, has let you down don't let bitterness grow in your heart. When disease comes and your spouse has lost their memory of your life together, don't argue with the Lord about it. As you care for that child who is disabled, please don't get angry with God. If a church has voted you out of your position and broken your heart, don't try to get even. The best thing we can ever do with anything putting a burden or distress on us is to “put it to bed!”

How long will your pressure continue? I am not able to answer that completely. I know Jesus prayed three times but He was the Christ! Paul prayed three times before he found His grace sufficient to overcome the thorn in his flesh but he was an apostle. If they both prayed three times then we may have to intercede 300 times. However, grace will come and it will be enough for you to “sleep on” and get rest over it.

There is one other thing that I must mention about this experience. We also see the **gardener in the garden**. Jesus goes from this garden and faces the cross. From Calvary, He is taken to a tomb. On the third day, Mary has come to see her Lord. When she looks in she sees two angels at the head and foot of where Jesus had laid. She turns aside and hears another voice of comfort. The voice of Jesus! The Bible then records that “...**She, supposing him to be the gardener...**”(John 20:15). When He spoke her name, she knew it was Jesus! She thought Jesus was the Gardener because He was! He had cultivated the Garden of Gethsemane to give us hope in the hour of pressures in our life.

You may be going through one of the most difficult times ever. All hope is not gone. Others may not be able to lift the load. I just want to remind you during your time of pressure, “**This is only a test.**” Jesus knows and understands so just keep saying the same words. The Gardener of Grace will give you all you need to get to the point where you can “put it to bed.”