**Introduction**

I’m sorry on a midweek evening, when all of our brains including mine have probably shut down for the night, focusing on a bit of heavy doctrine. But the scene in Gethsemane always pulls me to the Athanasian Creed. After what we know that creed for – giving us solid language for the Trinity – it proceeds to give us solid language for the two natures of Christ.

“Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man…”

It goes on to define the perfect man as “composed of a rational soul and human flesh.” And that creed will echo that a bit later “for as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.”

And this is important for a couple of reasons. Among all those ancient heresies there is one – Monophysitism – that asserted that the “rational soul” part of the man was subsumed into the divine logos, or perhaps never even present. That Mary provided the human flesh and the divine logos was always the animating spirit. There are a bunch of variations, but the council of Chalcedon in 451 declared them anathema. Reiterating the two natures in one Christ. And this was important for the stated reason that “what was not assumed, was not saved.” The Athanasian Creed puts it this way, “one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into the flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God.” We are saved by being found in Christ. We are saved because humanity in Christ participates in the divine nature. If Jesus was only the flesh, then only the flesh was saved. If the flesh was fake – another strange ancient heresy – then only the spirit was saved. But Jesus had a full human nature – “rational soul and human flesh.” So the fullness of what we are has been saved.

**Text**

Now this could be so many angels dancing on pin heads, except for Gethsemane. Jesus prayer, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Which will is Jesus talking about here? It would be something ruinous for all creation if the will of God was split. If the Son was desiring something different than the Father. The “unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity” would have been ripped asunder. I hope that I don’t have to elaborate, that in your gut you can feel the wrongness of that path. Yet Jesus says that his will in this is contrary to the Fathers.

According to his human nature there is a rational human soul. And any rational human soul staring at the cross would desire to have that cup taken away. If he did not, he would not have been human.

**Application**

And it is here that we see the ongoing passion of the Christian life. “Being in agony he prayed more earnestly.” It’s that word agony. Our English word is a direct import from the greek word. Latin did the same thing. Lately we’ve made agony more physical, but while true agony might have physical manifestations – “his sweat became like great drops of blood” – true agony is a ripping of the soul. A split in the will.

And I say this is the ongoing passion of the Christian life because we have been joined to Christ. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence. And in times of testing or temptation, we have exactly this agony. The Spirit desiring one thing, and the rational soul another. And all of this sounds rather too bloodless for when you go through it. Luke’s drops of bloody sweat are much closer.

What we see in Jesus are the promises and actions of God. When we are in agony, in the midst of testing, “an angel from heaven was present strengthening him.” We are not alone. If we were we would not last a moment. But God has commanded his angels concerning his people. They are present.

They are present most likely to clear the way for our prayer. “Being in agony he prayed more earnestly.” The last two petitions of the Lord’s prayer – “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” are their for a reason. God will is certain done without our prayer. Daily bread comes to the just and the unjust alike. But what we most need is to be delivered from our agony. “That God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world and our sinful nature may not deceive us…and that we might win the victory.”

For deception is what that agony is really about. When we are in agony, something has us confused that there is a better path for us than the will of God. Jesus prays “not my will, but yours.” Because the will of God will be done. When we pray that, we pray that it may be done among us also.

The old hymn gets it perfectly. Learn from Jesus Christ to pray. Learn from him to bear the cross. Learn from Jesus Christ to die. Savior teach us so to rise. Amen.