

“YET NOT WHAT I WILL, BUT WHAT YOU WILL”

Mark 14:27-52

Key Verse: 14:36

“Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

According to Mark’s account, Jesus prayed at the beginning of his ministry (1:35), in the middle (6:46), and at the end, as we see in today’s passage. In this way Jesus’ life was characterized by prayer. Jesus’ prayer in today’s passage is unique. Jesus surrendered himself to God’s will to save people from their sins through his suffering and death. This was the most painful struggle for Jesus. Jesus had known this time was coming. Yet when it finally came, Jesus needed a time of prayer in order to obey the will of God, not reluctantly but willingly from his heart. Through this prayer we can see the suffering of the Messiah who reveals the depth of God’s love for sinners. Through this prayer, Jesus invites us to participate in his suffering which leads us to his glory. Through this prayer, we also learn how to overcome crises. We face times of crises of various kinds, such as sickness, depression, mental illnesses, accidents, failures, difficulties with children, financial setbacks, social alienation, and so on. How to respond is important. Some people abuse alcohol and drugs. Others indulge in pornography or video gaming. Still others eat and sleep too much. Yet others run away and try to forget about it. But when these kinds of crises come, it is time to come to God in prayer. Let’s learn Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer and live a victorious life.

When we look at this passage, the atmosphere was serious. Jesus was betrayed by a beloved one and abandoned by all of his disciples and handed over to his enemies. His top three disciples were indifferent to his struggle and sleepy. Jesus was left alone. No one understood him. No one supported him. Let’s see how Jesus dealt with this time of crisis.

First, Jesus prepares his disciples (27-31). Jesus had been with his disciples for over three years, living a common life with them, doing everything together. They were like a band of brothers who had experienced many hardships and formed a deep bond of affection and trust. To any human being, knowing that all such beloved brothers would fall away would be hard to bear. It would be easy to give in to self-pity, blame them, and lose hope for them. But Jesus understood their weaknesses and loved them and kept his

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hope for them to the end. So he helped them prepare to confront the trial that was coming. He said, **“You will all fall away, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered’”** (27). Sheep without their shepherd become directionless and are harassed and helpless before enemies, like children without their parents. When their shepherd Jesus was struck, the disciples could not but scatter. In this hard situation, Jesus was not shaken at all. Why? It was because he trusted God based on his word. Jesus knew that God rules over everything according to his will. When crises come, it is easy to think that certain persons are in control. But Jesus did not think that Judas Iscariot or the Jewish leaders were in control. He knew that everything was in God’s hand. Jesus trusted God, even in the time of betrayal. When we trust in God, we are not shaken in the time of crisis. Jesus knew that God would give him final victory. So he said, **“But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee”** (28). Jesus planted resurrection faith and hope in the hearts of his disciples and gave them clear direction to have a meeting in Galilee. There they would be restored in their relationship with Jesus. With this hope, they could go through the impending crisis.

How did Jesus’ disciples respond? They should have acknowledged that Jesus’ word was true and humbly admitted that they were weak and accepted his promise. But when Peter heard Jesus’ words, his pride was hurt. So he declared, **“Even if all fall away, I will not”** (29). He loved Jesus and he wanted to be loyal to Jesus to the end. He also thought he was much better than the other disciples. But his human loyalty was limited. Jesus prophesied that it would not last long, saying, **“Truly I tell you, today—yes tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times”** (30). Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. Peter did not know his own weaknesses, or how strong Satan was. He believed in himself rather than in Jesus’ words and insisted emphatically, **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”** And all the other disciples said the same. It seems that they had a contest in confessing their loyalty.

Second, Jesus prays at Gethsemane (32-52). They went to a place called Gethsemane, which means “olive press.” There Jesus prayed, with such intensity that his sweat was like drops of blood, somewhat like oil that is squeezed out of olives through a press. Jesus said to his disciples, **“Sit here while I pray”** (32). Jesus knew that this was a spiritual battle against Satan, who tried to destroy God’s salvation work (8:32-33). When everything

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seemed to be against him, Jesus did not fight with flesh and blood; he fought against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12). When we are aware of Satan’s work, we can pray because we know that Satan is stronger than we are and we need God’s help. But when we are not aware of Satan’s work, we can easily struggle with other people instead.

Jesus took Peter, James and John along with him to participate in his suffering and to witness his prayer. He began to be deeply distressed and troubled, and shared his agony with them: **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch”** (33-34). The New Living Translation says, **“My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.”** Jesus had never expressed his sorrow like this. Jesus was always courageous and strong; he slept in the midst of a storm at sea. Why did Jesus reveal his crushing grief? In contrast, when Socrates took the cup of poison, he did not show any weakness at all; he just drank it and died. However, Jesus’ death was totally different from any other person’s death. All other people have to die due to their sins. But Jesus had no sin. He would die as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of all people. The guilt of just one man’s sin is really heavy. After committing the sin of adultery and murder, David said, **“...my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer”** (Ps 32:3-4). How much heavier is the guilt of all people’s sins. Jesus would take the sin of murderers, adulterers, robbers, cheaters, liars, idolaters, and more upon himself. Jesus would be judged and punished by God in the place of sinners. The burden of all human sin was unimaginable.

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him (35). Jews usually prayed in a standing position with their hands uplifted. Falling to the ground was the expression of extreme urgency and total dependence. In times of crisis, this is the attitude we should have when praying to God. Jesus said, **“Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will”** (36). “Abba” is an Aramaic word for “Father” used by both children and adults toward their fathers. It conveys deep respect together with intimacy. In calling “Abba,” Jesus affirmed his intimate relationship with his Father God. In a crisis, we easily doubt God’s love. We tend to become distant and to lose intimacy. We wonder, “If God loves me, why is this

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happening?” But we learn from Jesus to think, “God loves me. So this is happening.” Apostle Paul never doubted God’s love. Rather, he said, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”** (Ro 8:35, 37). God loves us in any and every situation. When we know this, we can be more than conquerors.

As Jesus did not doubt God’s love, so he did not doubt God’s power. He said, **“...everything is possible for you.”** God is the Creator and Almighty God. Nothing is impossible for God. The question is, “Is it God’s will?” If it is God’s will, anything is possible. So Jesus asked that if it was God’s will, God would take the cup from him. Here “the cup” refers to God’s wrath for the sin of all mankind. Simply speaking, it was his death on the cross as a ransom for sinners. No one wants to die in shame and great pain. Jesus honestly confessed that he did not want to take this cross. In this way, Jesus revealed his full humanity. In chapters 11-13 Jesus revealed his Lordship. Now he reveals his humanity. Jesus is fully God and fully human. So he can be the perfect mediator between God and man (1Ti 2:5). Yet Jesus did not stop with revealing his humanity. He said, **“Yet not what I will, but what you will”** (36b). The word “Yet” is important. It was the turning point from “my will” to “God’s will,” from me-centered to God-centered, from flesh to spirit. Jesus did not please himself, but pleased God. Jesus did not pray to avoid God’s will, but to submit to God’s will. This submission did not come naturally, even for Jesus. Jesus’ struggle in prayer was so intense that Luke says **“his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground”** (Lk 22:44). In what’s called “the Lord’s prayer,” the first prayer topic Jesus gave us is: God’s kingdom come, and God’s will be done. However, some people pray for their will to be done, and for God to approve it. But prayer is mainly to deny oneself and submit to God’s will. In order to do that, we need to empty ourselves of our own dreams, plans and ideas and really listen to what God wants us to do. This is possible when we realize that God’s will is better than our own ideas. We cling to our own will and ideas because we think they are best. But our plans and ideas are very limited. We cannot see far into the future. We do not see the whole picture, but only in part, and that imperfectly. Proverbs 14:12 says, **“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.”** But God’s will is perfect. God’s will prevails in the end. Proverbs 19:21 says, **“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is**

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the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” In order to grow to be a spiritual person whom God can use, we need to learn Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer: **“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”** As most of you know, I worked closely with our ministry founder, Dr. Samuel Lee for the last 18 years of his ministry in the United States. He required full devotion and hardworking spirit. Every day I had to pray, **“...not my will, but yours be done,”** empty myself of my own dreams and ideas, and submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was really great training. Yet, there were three times when I reached a limitation and could not continue, either out frustration or concern for my own family. Each time I went to the Lord earnestly in prayer. And each time I could grow deeper in commitment to serving the Lord’s will together with his servant. In truth, it was only by the strength of God through prayer that I could take my personal cup of assisting Dr. Lee to the end. Each person has their own struggle. But we all need to learn, **“yet not my will, but yours be done.”**

Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer was the culmination of his lifetime struggle to obey God’s will. Jesus came into the world to obey God’s will, renouncing his power and glory in heaven. While on earth, he did what God wanted him to do every day through prayer and served all kinds of people according to God’s will. Finally, he died on the cross according to God’s will. His last words were, “It is finished.” The author of Hebrews summarized Jesus’ prayer life very well: “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Though he was the Son of God, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9).

After prayer, Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. **“Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping. The author comments that their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him (37-40). Why did the disciples fail to watch and pray at this time of crisis? Did they eat too much and drink too much wine at the Passover meal? Did they experience a food coma? Was the burden of watching Jesus suffer weighing heavy on their hearts? Did they feel crushed by the prophecy that

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they would all fall away? Did Peter use all his energy emphasizing his loyalty to Jesus? Whatever the reason, they had no inner strength to keep watch and pray. Jesus teaches us why we have to keep watch and pray in any situation. First of all, we need to pray not to fall into temptation. Satan is so powerful and crafty that no one can resist him by their own strength and wisdom. Satan never takes a vacation. He is always going around like a prowling lion, seeking someone to devour (1Pe 5:8). When we do not pray, we lose discernment. Our thinking becomes futile and our hearts are darkened. Then we become proud and judgmental, and we blame others and complain. In fact, we become the devil's prey. But when we pray, God gives us the Spirit of wisdom and courage to overcome temptation. Second of all, we are weak. Jesus' words, **“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,”** is not an excuse not to pray. It means that because we are weak, we need to keep watch and pray. If we are strong, we don't need to pray. That is why many people do not pray. But those who recognize their weakness humbly come to God in prayer moment by moment. Such people will live a victorious life by God's help. We can never overemphasize the importance of prayer; it is like spiritual breathing. We know this well. But it is not easy to practice. Yet without practicing it, we cannot live a victorious life. When we pray we can overcome all kinds of human thinking and sinful desires. When we pray we can overcome a rebellious spirit and disobedient mindset. When we pray, we are empowered to humble ourselves and submit to God's will and carry out God's mission victoriously. Later, Apostle Peter learned prayer that overcame his weaknesses. He encouraged early Christians, who were scattered due to persecution: **“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray”** (1Pe 4:7).

Jesus prayed with the same prayer topic three times. Jesus prayed until he had decided to obey God's will deeply from his heart. Jesus prayed until he received strength from above to be tried, condemned and crucified. Before prayer, Jesus was in sorrow and deep distress and anguish to the point of death. After prayer, Jesus was full of conviction and courage. So he said to his disciples, **“Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”** (41-42)

In verses 43-50 we see how Jesus confronted his betrayal and arrest. Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared with a band of

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men armed with swords and clubs, who had been sent from the Sanhedrin (43). Judas identified Jesus with a kiss (44). A kiss is the expression of affection and trust. But Judas' kiss was the kiss of betrayal (45). Then the men with him seized Jesus and arrested him (46). Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (47). John informs us that it was Peter who did this. Jesus said, **“Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”** (Jn 18:10-11) According to Matthew, Jesus said, **“For all who draw the sword will die by the sword”** (Mt 26:52). In verse 48, Jesus rebuked those who came to arrest him: **“Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?”** Jesus' ministry was open to the public. Every day Jesus was with them teaching in the temple courts. But they did not arrest him (49a). Now Jesus was arrested according to God's will, and he said, **“the Scriptures must be fulfilled”** (49b). Jesus thought and acted and lived according to the Scriptures. Jesus loved the Scriptures, obeyed the Scriptures and fulfilled the Scriptures. When everyone deserted him and fled, a young man wearing a linen garment also fled naked, leaving his garment in the hands of Jesus' enemies. Tradition tells us that this was the author Mark. In this way he testified that he was there as a witness of Jesus' arrest.

Though Jesus was the Son of God, he knelt down and came to God in prayer. It was to take the burden of our sins upon himself as our Savior. Let's give thanks to Jesus for his prayer. We need not despair in a time of crisis and fall into human thinking; let's learn to pray. Let's come to God in prayer, fight the good fight, and live a victorious life.