

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

Luke 22:39-62

Key Verse: 22:42

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Today’s passage is about Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives in the garden of Gethsemane. When we hear the word “prayer,” especially “Gethsemane prayer,” we may feel burdened and shrink back. We may fall into self-condemnation, thinking, “My prayer life is too shallow. How can I think about Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer?” We may close our hearts before the message even begins. Yet Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer has deep meaning for us in various ways. We can learn of God’s love and his blessing on Jesus’ obedience, which brought our salvation. We can also learn the secret to victory in spiritual life. Many of us struggle hard with temptations, or to study well, to help Bible students grow spiritually, to have fruitful family lives, to succeed in our careers, and more. Sometimes we feel defeated, and don’t know what to do. But Jesus shows us the way to victory. Let’s learn the deep meaning of Jesus’ prayer and the secret of victory.

First, God’s love and Jesus’ obedience for our salvation (39-44). Jesus had just finished a dramatic Passover meal with his disciples. In a very short time, he would face arrest, trial, and the cross. In that moment, Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives (39). A few years ago, I visited the Mount of Olives. It has an air of mystery—an atmosphere of stillness and peace. Jesus went there to pray to his heavenly Father. Jesus’ prayer has been a theme of Luke’s gospel. Jesus prayed at his baptism (3:21), while withdrawn to lonely places (5:16), before calling his disciples (6:12), at Peter’s confession (9:18), at his transfiguration (9:28-29), before teaching the Lord’s Prayer (11:1a), for Simon (22:32), and here at the Mount of Olives (22:41,44,45,46). Jesus withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond his disciples, knelt down and prayed (41). Jesus was in humble surrender. Verse 42 tells the contents of his prayer: **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”** We learn two things here.

In the first place, Jesus called God “Father.” This is an expression of intimacy and full trust. **“...this cup”** refers to Jesus’ sufferings and death on the cross. Jesus knew this was God’s will for him. He had repeatedly

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

explained this to his disciples (9:22,44; 17:25; 18:31-33). It meant a most painful and shameful death. But Jesus did not doubt God’s love; he trusted God and shared his intimate feelings with God. We learn from Jesus here. As our Father, God wills for us to go through pains and trials. He disciplines us for our good (Heb 12:7-8), and calls us to share in the sufferings of Christ. Our natural reaction may be to doubt God’s love and withdraw. But it is the very time we should come closer to God and call him, “**Father.**” As we accept God’s love in faith, we discover that he is working for good. We can find the meaning of our trials. Then we can accept them with thanksgiving. On the other hand, if we withdraw from God, we get stuck in miserable feelings.

In the second place, Jesus prayed, “not my will, but yours be done.” When Jesus referred to his own will, it meant his human desire that was in conflict with God’s will. Since Jesus was without sin, he did not have rebellious or sinful desires. Yet as a man, he had a desire to live and to avoid suffering. However, it was God’s will for him to die the most shameful and painful death. So when the moment actually came, it was extremely difficult. Jesus needed to struggle. We can understand this. Generally, human beings do not want to die; and we naturally recoil from pain and shame. So when God’s will requires going through this, even death, we can learn to struggle as Jesus did. Fatima al-Mutairi was a devout Muslim in Saudi Arabia. She discovered the truth about Jesus online as she heard testimonies from other Muslim converts. She accepted Jesus and found his love, peace and joy. She began to share the gospel online. One day her brother discovered it and pronounced her death sentence. She had 30 minutes to live. She spent the time in prayer, which she shared online. It ends like this: “*As to my last words, I pray to the Lord of the worlds. Jesus is the Messiah, the Light of clear Guidance. That he changes notions and sets the scales of justice aright. And that he spread Love among you, O Muslims.*”¹ Just after she pressed the send button, she was taken outside and burned to death. She accepted God’s will even to death at the age of 26 through prayer. It is indeed admirable.

However, there is an element to Jesus’ struggle that we cannot understand. Jesus would take the full measure of God’s wrath upon himself. Jesus’ death was not just a personal issue; it was for the sins of all mankind. 2

¹ Doyle, Tom, “Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?” 2012, Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

Corinthians 5:21 says, **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** When Jesus carried our sins on the cross, God would treat him as a liar, a thief, an adulterer, a murderer—as the worst sinner. God would pour his wrath upon Jesus without holding back to punish the sins of mankind in him. In that awful moment, Jesus would experience abandonment by God. This was the most unbearable suffering for Jesus. This is why he prayed **“take this cup from me.”** It was Jesus’ humble and heart-felt plea. But Jesus did not stop there. He went on, **“yet not my will, but yours be done.”** Jesus prayed for the Father’s will to triumph over his own desires. In essence, Jesus surrendered himself to God’s will even though it was more awful than we can imagine.

How did the Father answer? God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Jesus (43). It meant that God would not change his will. Instead God strengthened Jesus to continue to pray. Here we see God’s love for us. Surely, it was not easy for the Father to listen to the anguished prayer of his Son. However, the Father was resolute in his will for Jesus. God so loved the world that he bore the pain of his Son’s anguished prayer. When the Father confirmed his will, Jesus became resolute in his prayer. With the strength God provided he prayed so intensely that his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (44). It may be that Jesus’ capillaries began to burst in the extreme intensity of his struggle. Actual blood mixed with his sweat. In this way Jesus subdued his human desires and decided to obey God’s will. Jesus would take the full measure of suffering and death for our sins.

The author of Hebrews explains the result of Jesus’ prayer. Hebrews 5:7-10 says, **“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. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”** First of all, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation. Anyone who accepts Jesus with faith and follows him as Lord receives the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and living hope in the kingdom of God. In addition, Jesus was designated by God to be high priest. Hebrews 7:25b says, **“...he always lives to intercede for us.”** When Jesus died in obedience to God’s will, God raised him from the dead and seated

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

Jesus at his right hand. Jesus became our everlasting high priest. Since Jesus is fully human and struggled as we do, he really understands us. But he does not just sympathize with us; he has the power to help us. He can strengthen us in our weaknesses, and he intercedes for us. Wow! Jesus intercedes for us; Jesus enables us to have intimate fellowship with God. Through this Jesus, we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence to find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need (Heb 4:16). Let's remember that to save us and become our great high priest, Jesus prayed in anguish on the Mount of Olives. Let's appreciate what Jesus has done for us and give thanks to him.

Second, Jesus shows us an example of prayer. Jesus' prayer not only brought our salvation, it set an example of victorious prayer for us. This is why Jesus showed his disciples his prayer. He wanted them to follow in his footsteps. Of course, we cannot pray exactly as Jesus did, but we can learn his principle: The purpose of prayer is to obey God's will. In order to obey God's will, we need to die to our own desires which oppose it. Practically, there are certain times when we especially need this kind of prayer. It may be when God calls us to follow Jesus as his disciples, or to marry the person he has in mind for us, or to engage in a specific ministry, or to go as a missionary, or to co-work with certain persons. At such times, we need serious prayer.

Among UBF members, many have practiced Gethsemane prayer at crucial moments. As a result, they were able to obey God's will and be a blessing. Each one can write their own spiritual biography. I will share my humble struggle. Back in the early 1980's, after I had accepted Jesus as my Savior and begun to grow, I found that living a common life with other Christian brothers would be good. But at that moment, my desire to live freely and in privacy became very strong. I needed serious prayer in order to overcome that desire and follow God's leading. It meant living in a really rundown apartment with mushrooms growing under a cheap carpet and water flowing down the hallway during heavy rains. But when I did so, God blessed me abundantly. Sometime later, when I sensed that God was calling me to live as a full-time shepherd, my hidden desire to be president of the United States came to the surface. Through earnest prayer, the Lord led me to see the life of Moses and his humble obedience to God. When I compared Moses' blessed life to that of the president, my desire changed to be like Moses. In this way, I could follow God's will for me confidently. During the 18 years that I served under Dr. Samuel Lee, receiving various kinds of training, there

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

were three times that I reached my limits. But when I prayed earnestly to God, he helped me to persevere. By God’s grace I could obey God’s will for me until now. This gives me deep joy and peace. Gethsemane prayer is indeed the way of blessing. I earnestly pray to obey God’s will to the end of my life. Whenever we face important decisions, it is easy to turn to family, friends or professionals. But it is most important to seek God in prayer and persevere until we obey his will. Then he will surely lead us according to his good, pleasing, perfect will (Ro 12:2).

Third, why we have to pray (40,45-62). In addition to showing the example, Jesus taught us specifically why we have to pray. When Jesus reached the Mount of Olives he told his disciples, **“Pray that you will not fall into temptation”** (40). Jesus was very aware of Satan’s work among his disciples (31). The only way they could overcome it was to pray. So Jesus had asked them to pray. Then, after finishing his own prayer, Jesus returned to them. He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow (45). All the talk of betrayal and denial, suffering and death, had made them very sorrowful. They were not used to overcoming their feelings. It had been a long day and they were very tired. When they closed their eyes to pray, they fell asleep. Soon they were snoring. Jesus did not sympathize with them. He said, **“Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation”** (46).

In verses 47-62, there is a great contrast between Jesus and Peter. In verses 47-54a we see how Jesus responded after Gethsemane prayer. While he was still speaking to his disciples, a crowd came up. Judas was leading them (47). Judas approached Jesus to kiss him, as a secret sign of betrayal. Jesus saw through the deception and exposed it (48). When Jesus’ followers reacted by taking up swords, with one of them striking the servant of the high priest and cutting off his right ear (49-50), it could have lead to a violent battle and the deaths of his disciples. Jesus said, **“No more of this!”** Then he touched the man’s ear and healed him (51). Jesus quieted the scene and protected his disciples. Then Jesus took the initiative to address the chief priests, officers of the temple guard and elders, saying, **“Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns”** (52-53). After exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus surrendered himself to God’s will. Jesus was seized and led away to the house of the high priest (54a). Throughout this event, Jesus was

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

not taken by surprise. Jesus was not emotionally upset, or frightened by anything. Rather, Jesus was full of courage and wisdom. Jesus had initiative and controlled the situation to obey God’s will.

Let’s see what happened to Peter. He assumed that he had courage enough to follow Jesus to prison and to death (33). After Jesus’ arrest, he followed at a distance and sat down by a fire at the high priest’s house among the enemies of Jesus (54b). He wanted to be loyal. But then Satan began to attack him. First, a servant girl approached and said, **“This man was with him.” Peter responded spontaneously, “Woman, I don’t know him”** (57). He didn’t mean to deny Jesus; it just came out. A little later, someone saw him and said, **“You also are one of them.” This time, Peter’s reaction was stronger: “Man, I am not!”** (58) About an hour later, someone asserted, **“Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean”** (59). This time Peter said emphatically, **“Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!”** Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed (60). Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. Jesus’ look was not one of righteous anger, but of compassion.

Jesus wanted Peter to remember what he had said and not fall into self-condemnation. Rather, he wanted Peter to turn back to him and to strengthen his brothers (32). Peter’s eyes met Jesus’ eyes. Then he remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: **“Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times”** (61). He had to acknowledge that he had failed, just as Jesus said he would. But even in that moment, Jesus did not stop loving him. Jesus knew everything about him, including his weakness and betrayal. Yet Jesus loved him anyway. When he recognized Jesus’ unfailing love, he could not but weep bitterly (62). They were tears of sincere repentance. It was a painful experience but an important one to him. He learned how weak he was, how loving and truthful Jesus is, and that he needed to pray. This was a very important event in his spiritual growth. Probably, from that time on, when he heard a rooster crow in the early morning, he knelt down and prayed for God’s mercy. Church tradition tells us that he never ate chicken again. Later, Peter exhorted the scattered, suffering Christians: **“The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray”** (1Pe 4:7). And again, **“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”** (1Pe 5:8).

“YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

Two times Jesus told his disciples, **“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”** This tells us why we have to pray. Temptation comes from Satan, and it is very strong and sweet. We are vulnerable because of our sinful desires. James 1:13-14 says, **“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”** No one wants to fall into the devil’s power and betray Jesus, like Judas. Nor does anyone want to deny Jesus, like Peter. But we are vulnerable. When we do not pray, we lose spiritual discernment and easily succumb to easygoing mentality, laziness, selfishness, greed and other sinful desires. But when we pray, God gives us spiritual discernment and strength to fight against the devil. This is why we have to pray every day. Only then can we find the freedom and strength to serve God as Bible teachers and shepherds. Only by God’s help through prayer can we live a victorious life.

Today we have learned of God’s love and Jesus’ prayerful obedience that brought about our salvation. Let’s accept Jesus’ grace by faith. Now we can come to God in prayer at any time for his mercy and grace. Let’s bring all of our agonies and burdens to the Lord and ask his mercy. Surely he will help us obey his will and live victorious children of God.