



Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1

Jesus Prayer "Thy Will Be Done"

The death of Jesus Christ was at the center of the perfect will of God, and clearly nothing has been done to Jesus outside of God's eternal purpose.

Charles H. Spurgeon said, "Here we come to the Holy of Holies of our Lord's life on earth. This is a mystery like that which Moses saw when the bush burned with fire, and was not consumed." We come to this section with hushed worship on our knees.

THE SUFFERING OF JESUS (Matt. 26:36-44)

It is evident from the Gospels that Jesus often went to the garden called Gethsemane on the slopes of Mount Olives when He was in Jerusalem. It was private property and the owner was probably a friend or follower of Jesus. Since Jesus and the disciples frequented the location it was easy therefore for Judas to lead the enemy to the location to capture Jesus. Luke tells us Jesus "proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him" (Luke 22:39). Probably during the past three years Gethsemane had provided a quiet place for Jesus to pray, teach, rest and sleep. He also told them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (v. 40).

Jesus and His disciples left the upper room and entered the eastern gate, located north of the Temple, and then proceeded along the road that cross the winter-torrent or "ravine of the Kedron" (John 18:1). The stream of water flows only during the heavy winter rainy season.

The importance of this prayer to the Father is given in an hour of intense suffering. Matthew writes, "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray'" (Matthew 26:36).

Jesus was in deep anguish (vv. 37-38).

At or near the entrance to the olive grove Jesus left the eight disciples and took with Him Peter, James and John and went further into the garden. Hendriksen observes, "Is it not remarkable that on two occasions Jesus bestowed this honor not only on James and John but also on Peter when this very disciple had just sinned grievously against the Master by sharply contradicting him? See 16:22; cf. 17:1; and 26:33, 35; cf. 26:37. This is one more indication of the tenderness and forgiving love of the Savior" (*Matthew*, p. 916).

"And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me'" (Matthew 26:37-38). Mark says, Jesus "began to be very distressed and troubled. . . My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death . . ." (Mark 14:33-34).

All of a sudden the cold flood of grief broke over Him. "Increasingly, with every step forward, he became 'sorrowful,' full of sorrow, 'sore amazed,' and 'desolate'" (Eldersheim). Jesus was "grieved" and in "great distress." Phillips paraphrases it "to be in terrible distress and misery." Williams translates Jesus "began to give way to his grief and distress of heart."

Cranfield notes the Jesus is in a state of "being in the grip of a shuddering horror in the face of the dreadful prospect before Him." He was "sorely troubled, to be in anguish" (Taylor). Hendriksen translates "sorrow and anguish." He was surrounded with sorrow. Cassirer translates, "a feeling of great distress and desolation began to fill his mind."

Jesus was very sorrowful to the point of death. The pain is something that goes very deeply into the soul. *Lupeo* according to J. B. Lightfoot "describes the confused, restless, half-distracted state, which is produced by physical derangement, or by mental distress, as grief, shame, disappointment, etc." It signifies great distress of spirit. Here we see the humanity of Jesus. "My heart is heavy to the point of death." "It is anguish that threatens life itself," says Hill.

"Feelings of great distress and desolation began to fill His mind." The word *ademoneo* means to be in anxiety, distressed, troubled. Jesus was "pressed down and overwhelmed with great anguish," says Albert Barnes. Lenski says, He was "filled with uneasiness and dread." It implies "bewilderment" (Plummer).

Lightfoot says, the word "distressed" "describes the confused, restless, half-distracted state produced by physical derangement, or by mental distress, as grief, shame, disappointment, etc." Jesus was filled with anxiety, distress, troubled. The word in the papyri meant "excessively concerned, bewilderment."

Jesus had raw, open feelings just like any human being going through incredible emotional pain. "My soul" is the center of the inner life of a person in the various aspects of feelings, emotions, volitions, thoughts. In modern English we call it the "heart." "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death . . ." (v. 38). Albert Barnes expressed it this way: "My sorrows are so great that I am ready to die." Or you could say, "I am almost at the point of dying from sorrow" (Interpreters' Bible). It denotes extreme sorrow and agony.

What was this "sorrow and anguish" of heart?

Many suggestions have been made by Bible scholars.

- Was it the knowledge that Judas would betray Him in a short time?
- Was it the fact that Peter and the disciples would flee His presence when He needed them most?
- Was it the Jewish religious leaders would condemn Him to death?
- Was it the coming appearance before the Roman governor Pilate?
- Was it the coming ridicule of the Roman soldiers at His trial?

- Was it the crucifixion by the Roman soldiers tomorrow?
- Was it the overwhelming sense of being forsaken by God the Father?
- Was it the fact that Jesus was the innocent sufferer bearing the punishment of guilt and shame of every sinner down through history?
- Was it the fact that Jesus is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice God provided to turn away the wrath of God from the believing sinner?

The issue at hand is the kind of death Jesus would die. We are ushered into a substitutionary death—One dying for another. It is the sinless dying for the guilty sinner. "It was the kind of death that He would die that brought the anguish," declares Morris.

Jesus is our propitiation in the full sense of the word. What Jesus was dreading was the full fury of the wrath of a holy and righteous God against Him! Jesus would bear the full wrath of God against the sinner and in doing so turn away the wrath of God from the believer. Jesus bore the consequences of our sins. He stood under the wrath of God in our stead on our behalf. God turned the wrath of God that was intended for us because we are guilty sinners and placed it all against Jesus.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah foretold of this coming event. "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:10-11).

No one can understand the enormity of the weight that Jesus bore in His soul. Matthew's emphasis is more than just coming to grips with death. This grief and distress, being troubled to the point of death, along with Jesus' desire for His disciples to be with Him, must be connected with the fact that He will die the death of a sinner. It was the kind of death Jesus would die that made this experience so horrible. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a) and Jesus was dying that death for the sinner. "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezek.18:4), and Jesus was dying in the place of the guilty sinner.

Alfred Eldersheim writes, "It was the Unfallen man dying; it was He, Who had no experience of it, tasting Death, and that not for Himself but for every man, emptying the cup to its bitter dregs. It was the Christ undergoing Death by man and for man; the Incarnate God, the God-Man, submitting Himself vicariously to the deepest humiliation, and paying the utmost penalty: Death—all Death. . . . His going into Death was His final conflict with Satan for man, and on his behalf. By submitting to it He took away the power of Death; He disarmed Death by burying his shaft in His own heart. And beyond this lies the deep, unutterable mystery of Christ bearing the penalty due to our sin, bearing our death, bearing the penalty of the broken Law, the accumulate guilt of humanity, and the holy wrath of the Righteous Judge upon them" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, p. 539).

Jesus would be forsaken of God

The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin He [God the Father] made sin for us." Jesus would experience the death that is due sinners. Matthew tells us, "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Matthew 27:46).

The Father's Presence (v. 39).

The overwhelming agony of sorrow until death intensifies continually moment by moment. He cast Himself face down to the ground. He has an intimate, warm relationship with "My Father." Jesus "went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.' And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.' Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more." (Matthew 26:39-44).

Mark 14:36 uses, "Abba Father" with the emphasis on intimacy of a child and his father. It is like the way your child speaks when he calls you daddy. Trust is a childlike trust in God the Father. No one in Jewish history dared speak to God the Father with these words. However, Jesus spoke to His Father in a childlike, trustful, intimate loving way as a child to his father.

THE PETITION OF JESUS (Matt. 26:39)

"If possible" does not mean Jesus is pressing for anything outside of the Father's will. The eternal truth is it was impossible because our eternal redemption depended upon Christ going to the cross and dying the death of the sinner. It was for this very hour that Jesus was born. Jesus was born to die so we might be born to live eternally.

This is the worst temptation Jesus had ever faced. Will He do what the Father wants Him to do the Father's way, and not His own way? His way of bringing redemption must be the Father's way.

This is also our dilemma. We must do God's will the way God would have us to do it.

"Let this cup pass from Me"

The "cup" (*poterion*) is Old Testament symbolism of the wrath of God (Psa. 11:6; Isa. 51:17; Eze. 23:33). It is figurative of undergoing a violent death. Sacrifices in the Old Testament were violent deaths. The wages of sin is death. It is a violent death.

Luke gives more information as Jesus prayed, "Father, if You art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Your be done." "Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:42-44). In Jesus' extreme agony of soul almost unto death an angel appeared as in the temptation in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry to strengthen and support Him (Matt. 4:11).

Sweat mingled with blood fell in great drops on the ground. The great drops of blood (thrombos) were thick clots. The word is used in medical language for a clot of coagulated blood. Such was the sorrow, grief and agony of Jesus.

Christ was made sin and a curse for us. The weight of the sin of the world is in that cup. Our guilt imputed to Jesus. Like the hands of the priest being laid on the scrape goat.

Jesus death was a horrible death because the wrath of God was upon Him. It is not human fate, but God's holy judgment upon sin. Jesus was going to the cross to pay the penalty of our sin debt. Multiply that times every human being who has ever lived upon the earth.

C. E. B. Cranfield notes, "The metaphorical use of cup refers predominantly to God's punishment of human sin. The cup Jesus shrinks from is the cup of God's wrath against sin." It is the horror of one who lives by God as being cast from Him at the judgment which delivers the Holy One to the power of sin.

Jesus came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . . But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Not only was Jesus dying a physical death, but He was also dying a spiritual death which is separation of the soul from God. The very One who had enjoyed perfect intimacy through eternity past was in a few hours enduring the agony of a broken intimate fellowship in the Trinity. The physical death that Christ endured was the result of spiritual death.

J. Dwight Pentecost writes: "When Adam transgressed the command of God, he instantly died spiritually. He was separated from God. Adam began to die physically even though a long period of time passed before death actually took him away. Adam's penalty for sin was death. This included both physical and spiritual death. Men are born into the world spiritually dead and therefore are subject to physical death. If Christ was to provide salvation for sinners, He had to partake of death on their behalf (Heb. 2:9). When He went to the cross, He vicariously bore both aspects of death for sinners. He endured spiritual death on the cross, that is, the separation of His soul from the Father. The evidence that He bore spiritual death is seen in His cry, 'My God, My god, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:45). Christ also experienced physical death (Matt. 27:50; John 19:33). Thus we see that Christ died both spiritually and physically because He died as the sinner's substitute. The penalty that God had intended for sinners fell on God's own Son. The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God. This eternal

separation is called 'the second death' (Rev. 20:14). God would have been just if He had demanded that Christ, who tasted death for every man, be eternally separated from Himself. Christ prayed that God might accept His death as a full payment of the sin of sinners and bring Him out of death and restore Him to life again. Thus the prayer should be understood to be a prayer for restoration to physical life by resurrection, and a restoration to full fellowship with His Father out of the spiritual death into which he would enter. The evidence that God answered Christ's prayer is seen, first, in the fact that Christ was raised from the dead on the third day and given a glorified body. Second, it is seen in the fact that on the fortieth day He ascended to the Father to be seated at His right hand in glory" (*The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981, pp. 455-56).

The will of the Father is Jesus' chief concern.

The will of the Father was always Jesus' chief concern throughout His life. The "cup" was not taken away, but Jesus was given strength to take it and drink it until it was empty.

"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (v. 39).
"Not as I will, but as You will."

Finding His disciples sleeping he warns them "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (v. 41). And then He goes back and prays a second time "Thy will be done" (v. 42). "Thy will be done."

Matthew tells us Jesus finds them sleeping again and leaves them alone and prayed a third time, "You will be done" (v. 44).

Now in His death He wants the Father's perfect will. Jesus chose total submission to the Father's will. "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). "No one has taken it [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:18).

Is this the motto of your life as a believer? "Not my will, but as You will." Not my will, but Your will be done in every aspect of my life.

Look at the reproach in the contrast in verse 44. Jesus is pleading in prayer that the Father's will be done, and Jesus finds them sleeping. The question "Are you still sleeping" is haunting.

THE PERSONAL PAIN OF JESUS

"This night seems to have been 'the power of darkness,' when left to God, Christ had to meet by Himself the whole assault of hell, and to conquer in His own strength as Man's substitute and Representative. . . . In the night the fierce wind of hell was allowed to sweep unbroken over the Savior, and even to expend it's fury upon those that stood behind in

His Shelter. . . . In that night of Christ's Agony and loneliness, of the utmost conflict between Christ and Satan, this seems almost a necessary element" (vol. 2, p. 535).

Jesus suffered for our sin debt.

The highest intelligence of man is incapable of understanding what Jesus meant by the "cup." We are incapable of understanding the meaning of His suffering. Jesus said the Son of Man came "to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He paid the price for a slave who is then set free by the one who bought him. Jesus gave His own life as the price of freedom for the slaves of sin. The holy demands of a righteous God have been fully met in the suffering of Christ, and based upon that sacrifice He sets the believing sinner free. All of God's righteous demands are satisfied by His suffering. God can now be both just and the justifier of the sinner.

"Jesus submitted Himself entirely to the will of His Father. . . . To the intense suffering, experienced in Christ's human nature, was given infinite value by means of the union of this human to the divine nature, within the second person of the Trinity. Therefore His suffering, from first to last, was all-sufficient, that is, sufficient for the sin of the whole world" (Hendriksen, *Matthew*, p. 918).

The betrayal of Judas

"Then He came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!'" (Matthew 26:45-46). John Broadus suggests that Judas probably had gone to the house where the supper was eaten, and did not find Jesus there, but knew that Jesus frequented the Garden. While Jesus was yet speaking Judas, one of the twelve, came up and betrayed Him with a kiss. A. T. Robertson says, "The kiss was a common mode of greeting and Judas chose that sign and actually kissed him fervently" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 215). It is a strong word meaning "to kiss fervently." The normal word for a kiss is *philein*. However, the word used here is *kataphilein* which means to kiss repeatedly and fervently (William Barclay, *Matthew*, vol. 2, p. 335). The use of the stronger word can hardly be missed without the significance. W. E. Vine says this kiss was "more demonstrative than the simple kiss of salutation." "The compound indicates a prolonged kissing designed to give the crowd a chance to see the one to be seized," notes Cranfield.

Therefore, they laid hands on Him in a hostile sense. "The chief priests and Pharisees had furnished Judas a band of soldiers from the garrison in Antonia (John 18:3) and the temple police (Luke 22:52) with swords (knives) and staves (clubs) with a hired rabble who had lanterns also (John 18:3) in spite of the full moon. Judas was taking no chances of failure for he well knew the strange power of Jesus" (Robertson, pp. 214-15). They seized Jesus and led Him away. The elaborate kiss emphasizes the hypocrisy of Judas. As Barclay observes this is the "the most terrible kiss in history."

Barclay also notes another curious thing in that "from the moment of the kiss Judas vanishes from the scene in the garden, not to reappear until he is bent on suicide. He does not even appear as a witness at the trial of Jesus."

The weakness of the disciples

The true humanity of Jesus comes out in this passage. Jesus was left alone. He was not suicidal. He wanted and needed their encouragement and support. But He did not receive any help from men, even the three He selected to be in the inner group. Jesus wanted human sympathy and support from those He loved. Jesus had invested three years in their lives teaching them. Jesus fought the battle all alone only because the Body did not fully function. After praying the first time Jesus "found them sleeping" (v. 40), and then in verse 43 "He came back and found them sleeping" and finally v. 45, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?" Let's be watchful that He does not find us sleeping as well. "Arise, let us be going" (v. 46) is an imperative (*egeiro*). "Get up! Let us be going."

Jesus "learned obedience from the things He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). It was submission to the Father's will. Salvation of the world was at risk in the garden. Neither do we understand the human nor the divine temptations. God's eternal purpose was fulfilled in Jesus' obedience to the will of God.

"So they all forsook Him and fled," writes Eldersheim. "But there was one there who joined not in the flight, but remained, a deeply interested onlooker. When the soldiers had come to seek Jesus in the Upper Chamber of his home, Mark, roused from sleep, had hastily cast about him the loose linen garment or wrapper that lay by his bedside, and followed the armed band to see what would come of it. He now lingered in the rear, and followed as they led away Jesus, never imagining that they would attempt to lay hold on him, since he had not been with the disciples nor yet in the Garden. But they, perhaps the Jewish servants of the High Priest, had noticed him. They attempted to lay hold on him, when, disengaging himself from their grasp, he left his upper garment in their hands, and fled" (vol. 2, pp. 544-545).

ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. Even for true disciples there is great weakness and they must watch and pray. They were sleeping when they should have been praying. Martin Luther was, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'repent,' He meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance." In our daily life how many times in our attitudes, actions, and thoughts do we deny Him? "A willing spirit is not enough; it must be supplemented by prevailing prayer" (Morris).
2. Every person has his private Gethsemane where he learns to say, "Thy will be done." "Not my will, Your will be done." You have to keep coming back to the desire of the heart and willingly say, "Your will only, Lord Jesus."
3. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. He bore the wrath of God to set us free to live His life. Jesus drank the "cup" until it was empty so we would never have to drink it. The atoning sacrifice of

Jesus Christ turned the wrath of God away from us and upon Himself. He died in our place on the cross. Now He lives His life in and through us to His glory.

4. Like the disciples we reveal human weaknesses under stress in contrast with Christ's divine strength. The self-sufficient disciples fled. The all-sufficient Savior remained steadfast because He abided in His Father. If we are to be faithful to Him we must receive from Him strength that comes from abiding in Him.

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