

JESUS PRAYS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

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.”

In the last passage we learned from Jesus how to live as new covenant people. New covenant people depend on the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus transforms our inner persons by washing away our sins, purifying us from sinsickness, and recreating us in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. By the power of Jesus’ blood, new covenant people can love God, and love others, and serve others with the humbleness of Christ. New covenant people can be faithful to God. New covenant people can overcome the world by faith and inherit the kingdom of God. May God help us to live as new covenant people.

In today’s passage Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives right before his arrest and trial. Though Jesus is the Son of God, he was also fully human. In his humanness, he needed to pray. Through prayer, Jesus triumphed over his suffering and the devil. But his disciples did not pray. So they depended on their transitory human feelings and willpower. As a result, they failed miserably, especially Peter. Today let’s learn from Jesus how to pray so that we may be victors in the spiritual battle.

First, “Father...not my will, but yours be done” (39-46).

Look at verse 39. “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.” It was Jesus’ practice during the passion week to spend his nights on the Mount of Olives. This was a place of prayer for Jesus. Then Jesus rose early in the morning and went into the temple courts to teach the word of God to the people (21:37-38). Jesus’ crucifixion and death were imminent. His enemies were plotting diligently against him. His disciples had revealed their immaturity and lack of spiritual quality. Nevertheless, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives as usual to pray. Obviously, prayer was most important for Jesus. Through prayer, Jesus received God’s strength to do his work. Through prayer, Jesus received God’s love in his heart. Through prayer, Jesus found God’s wisdom and direction.

Look at verse 40. “On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’” Not only did Jesus pray, but he also encouraged his disciples to pray. Their prayer topic was simple—that they would not fall into temptation. They were about to confront a time of trial. The devil would do his best to exploit their weaknesses. They could not fight against their own weaknesses and the devil with their puny human effort. They needed God’s help. So Jesus encouraged them to pray that they might not fall into temptation.

Look at verse 41. “He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed....” Jesus’ disciples were present physically with Jesus. But in spirit, they were far from Jesus. They could not be a help to him at this time. Jesus had to go through a lonely struggle before the Father in prayer. So he withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them. Then Jesus knelt down. It is forever beautiful that Jesus knelt down before the Father. Even at the moment of his passion, he maintained humble reverence for the Father God.

Then Jesus began to pray, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me....” Jesus called God “Father.” Jesus, as an obedient son, honored God. Jesus loved God. And Jesus trusted the love of God for him. Jesus shows us how to come to God with humble reverence and absolute trust in the love of God. We can come to God by kneeling down and calling God “Father.” Then Jesus made his request, “...if you are willing, take this cup from me....” “This cup,” refers to his suffering and death at the hands of sinful men. Jesus had been predicting his suffering, death and resurrection to his disciples for a long time, and repeatedly (9:22; 9:44; 18:31-33). Jesus was resolute and steadfast throughout his journey to Jerusalem to face these events (9:51). Yet, when the moment came, Jesus had resistance in his heart. Jesus did not want to suffer and die. So Jesus prayed that his Father might take the cup from him.

Here we see the human side of Jesus. Jesus was just 33 years old. He wanted to live. To all human beings, the desire to live is really strong. But it was God’s will for Jesus to die in the prime of life. We human beings want honor. But it was God’s will for Jesus to suffer shame at the hands of sinful men. We human beings want to be with our loved ones forever. But it was God’s will for Jesus to be separated from God and everyone else on the cross. When Jesus had to face this, his humanity recoiled. He wanted God to take the cup away. So he prayed honestly, “Father, if you

are willing, take this cup from me....” Sometimes we don’t want to take the cross of mission anymore. We learn from Jesus that we must not complain to others. And we should not rebuke ourselves too much. Instead, we must come to God in prayer with an honest heart.

However, Jesus did not stop with asking God to take the cup from him. Look at verse 42 again. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Jesus’ supreme prayer topic was for God’s will to be done. Jesus enclosed his request to live between the words “if you are willing,” and “your will be done.” To Jesus, it was most important to submit his own will to the will of God. Jesus submitted his human desire to live to the will of God. This was not done out of a slavish mind, but out of Jesus’ deep trust in God that God’s will was best. Even if God’s will for him was to die, this was the best. Immature people think that prayer is to ask God for what they want according to their human desires. Then if God does not give them what they want, they complain that God did not answer. But we learn from Jesus that when we pray, we should submit our requests to the sovereign rule of God freely and willingly. We must trust that God’s will is best, even when it involves suffering and death. As Christians, we live for the glory of God. We should also die for the glory of God. Revelation 12:11b describes heroes of faith who died for the glory of God. It says, “...they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” As his third missionary journey was concluding, St. Paul said to the Ephesian elders: “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Ac 20:22-24). St. Paul was ready to die for the glory of God. He learned this from Jesus.

Jesus humbly expressed his willingness to obey God, even regarding his death. God answered him (Heb 5:7). Look at verse 43. “An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.” The angel must have given Jesus extra spiritual energy. But more than that, the angel must have confirmed that it was God’s good and pleasing will for Jesus to die on the cross for the sin of the world. Jesus knew how to listen to God. Jesus did not pray again for God to take the cup from him. Look at verse 44. “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Jesus embraced the coming ordeal with no deviation. This was the cause of great anguish in Jesus’ soul. Event by event, he digested Judas’ betrayal, his arrest, Peter’s denial, the trials, the mocking and torture, the condemnation, the pain and shame of crucifixion, the extreme anguish of separation from God, and finally death itself. With God’s help in prayer, Jesus subdued his human desire completely. Jesus decided to obey the will of God absolutely. His struggle to do so was so intense that his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Thank you, Jesus!

From Jesus, we learn how to pray. Prayer begins with coming to God and presenting our requests to him. Prayer progresses with listening to God’s answer with willing submission. The essence of prayer is to deny our human desires by God’s help. Prayer results in a decision to obey God’s will. We pray for America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In addition, we must each struggle in prayer to obey the will of God personally. Some pray to obey God’s calling as foreign missionaries. Some pray to pioneer one campus. Some pray to study hard and feed five sheep. May God help each of us listen to his voice and obey his will through earnest prayer, like Jesus did.

When Jesus rose from prayer and went back to his disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. After the Last Supper, they began to sense the reality that was fast approaching. Their dreams of an earthly messianic kingdom would not be fulfilled. Instead, hardship and suffering awaited them. Most of all, Jesus was leaving them. It was too much for them to bear. They became very sorrowful. Jesus had told them to pray, but they were not used to struggling in prayer. They could only wrestle with sorrow until they were exhausted. Then they closed their eyes and slept. Many of us are like this. When we must struggle in prayer, we escape by sleeping, watching television or going shopping without money. How did Jesus help his disciples? Look at verse 46. “‘Why are you sleeping?’ he asked them. ‘Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.’” Let’s listen to Jesus’ words and pray.

Second, Jesus was arrested (47-53).

While Jesus was still speaking to his disciples, a crowd came up to them. The man leading the crowd was Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Judas approached Jesus to kiss him. Judas had made a secret deal with the Jewish religious leaders. He did not betray Jesus openly. He tried to disguise his betrayal with a kiss, the symbol of affection. But Jesus exposed Judas’ action for what it was. Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of

Man with a kiss?” Jesus was not emotionally upset. Jesus saw this from God’s point of view. Judas was not merely betraying his master, his teacher, or his friend; he was betraying the Son of Man, the promised Messiah.

Then Jesus’ followers realized what was happening. They said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear (49-50). When the disciples were not spiritually prepared, all they could do was react to the situation. They made things worse, not better. Suppose their act of passion ignited a violent sword battle and all the disciples were killed. Who would preach the gospel to the ends of the earth after Jesus’ resurrection? Without prayer, the disciples were nothing but reactionaries.

Look at verse 51. “But Jesus answered, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.” Jesus took charge of the situation, primarily to protect his disciples. He stopped their act of passion. He also healed the man whose ear had been cut off. Jesus was different than his disciples. Jesus had the spiritual power and authority to rule over the situation, even while being arrested. It came from prayer.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come 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). Jesus made it very clear to everyone that he was not leading a rebellion. Jesus did not allow his messianic ministry to be misunderstood in such a way. Jesus was a Bible teacher and a shepherd for his people. He taught the word of God publicly and openly. He had no hidden agenda. The religious leaders could find no fault with Jesus. They were driven by the power of darkness, the devil. And for an hour, darkness reigned—with God’s permission.

When Jesus prepared himself with prayer, he could face the ordeal of his arrest with wisdom and strength. He was not a victim; he ruled over the situation. Although Jesus was arrested by the religious leaders, Jesus was the true victor in the sight of God and men.

Third, Peter denies Jesus three times (54-62).

The religious leaders seized Jesus and led him away to the house of the high priest (54a). Jesus, the holy Son of God, was arrested like a criminal and led away to captivity. Yet it was God’s will. Isaiah 53:7-8 say, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.” Jesus was arrested and led away in our place, for our sins.

Peter followed at a distance (54b). His human attachment to Jesus was strong. At the same time, fear was growing in his heart. He could not just let Jesus go. At the same time, he could not follow too closely. Following Jesus at a distance was the exact expression of his human dilemma. He was not spiritually prepared for the events that were taking place. When the high priest’s people had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them (55). Peter lacked spiritual discernment. He became like a sitting duck while many hunters with rifles surrounded him.

A servant girl saw Peter seated there, his face revealed by the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.” But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” “Man, I am not!” Peter replied. About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter (56-61a). Though Jesus did not say a word to Peter, his eyes spoke to Peter’s soul. They said, “I knew you were going to do this. It is because you did not pray. You did not listen carefully to my words. Now you must shed many tears over your failure. But you will turn back. You will become a spiritual man. You will become a shepherd for my people.” Then Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times” (61b). Peter realized that Jesus is God. Peter realized that Jesus’ word was the truth. Peter realized that he was arrogant before the word of Jesus. So he had failed miserably. He went outside and wept bitterly (62). It was most painful for Peter. But it was used by God to help him grow as a useful man in God’s history.

In this passage we learn how to pray from Jesus. Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." Jesus prayed that God's will be done. Jesus believed that God's will was best. Some of us face the time of setting our future life direction after graduation. Some of us must decide who to marry. Whatever our situation may be, let's learn from Jesus that God's will is best. Let's listen to God in prayer until we can obey his will from our hearts with simple faith. Then God will make us victors in our personal lives. God will make us victors in the spiritual battle to raise North America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.