

Jesus Prays At Gethsemane
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.’”

Everyone wants to live a victorious life. And yet, when we look around, we see few victors, and many who have been utterly defeated. Why does this happen? How can we obtain victory? In today’s passage Jesus demonstrates the way to lasting victory. It is through the power of prayer. Let’s go to Gethsemane and learn Jesus’ prayer and victory.

I. Jesus planted hope in his disciples (27-31)

After Jesus made a new covenant in his blood with his disciples, they went out from the Last Supper singing joyfully. Shortly, however, Jesus predicted that they would all run away. How did Jesus know this? It was based on the Scriptures. Jesus quoted Zechariah 13:7, saying, “For it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” That very night Jesus, the good Shepherd, would be struck for the sins of the world, and the disciples would scatter. Suppose you knew in advance your Bible student would run away, right after having dinner with you. What would you do? At such times it is not easy to love them, and we lose hope in them. However, what did Jesus do? Jesus did not falter in loving his disciples. And Jesus planted hope in them, saying, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” Though his disciples would be unfaithful, Jesus would be faithful to them. This is the love of God. We must learn to love unfaithful disciples with this love of God. We must plant hope in them, especially in their time of failure.

What wonderful love Jesus showed his disciples. They should have said, “Amen. Thank you, Jesus.” However, Peter suddenly blurted out, “Even if all fall away, I will not.” Peter’s pride was offended when Jesus said he would fall away. Peter was confident in his human loyalty to Jesus. Peter did not realize how weak he was. Peter did not realize how powerful his enemy Satan was. Peter needed to learn to depend only on Jesus’ grace, not on his human strength. Jesus foretold that Peter would disown him three times before the rooster crowed twice. Still, Peter did not accept Jesus’ words. Then his yeast of pride and self-reliance infested all the other disciples and they said in unison, “We will die with you, Jesus!”

Here we must acknowledge that Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. Jesus knows all of our weaknesses, which even we do not know. Knowing all this, Jesus does not agitate our weaknesses, but extends his grace to help us. We can trust in Jesus’ grace. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

II. Jesus prays in Gethsemane (32-42)

Jesus seemed to be all alone. Jesus’ betrayal was imminent. What could he do? He could have escaped the painful event. He could have despaired and given up in resignation. He could have organized his followers into an army force. However, Jesus did not fight with flesh and blood. Jesus went to Gethsemane for spiritual warfare through prayer. It is interesting to know that “Gethsemane,” means “oil press,” where olives were pressed until oil was extracted. Likewise, Jesus was pressed until his sweat became like drops of blood. When they came to Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples, “Sit here while I pray” (32). It was not for their comfort, but to encourage them to pray. Luke 22:40 says, “On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’” Though they were young spiritually, Jesus wanted them to participate as prayer partners. Then Jesus took Peter, James and John along with him and began to be deeply distressed and troubled (33). Jesus revealed his inner anguish to them. Jesus demonstrated that suffering comes before glory. To participate in his glory, they needed to participate in his suffering. Many leaders do not reveal weak moments to their followers. But Jesus showed his passion to his disciples. It was rare for them to see Jesus like this. When they confronted the storm at sea, Jesus slept peacefully. When religious leaders tried to trap him, Jesus defeated them with the words of truth. Jesus had never seemed troubled. Yet now Jesus said, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (34).

Why was Jesus so sorrowful? Was it because he would die? As we know, Socrates drank a cup of poison as capital punishment. Witnesses say that he died courageously without showing any emotion. But Jesus said he was

overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Was Jesus less courageous? No. It was because the cup Jesus had to take was more painful than anyone could imagine. All other people died for their own sins. But Jesus was sinless. Jesus died for the sin of the world, bearing the full measure of God's wrath, a wrath so terrible that even Jesus trembled in anguish. Jesus would be betrayed, mocked, condemned, tortured, and crucified. Jesus would be forsaken by God, and treated like a vile sinner. Jesus would suffer greatly in body, mind and spirit because of our sins.

Through his passion, Jesus experienced the suffering of sinners in every way so he could understand us very well. Many people say, "No one understands me. Even my shepherd does not understand me." Many people are looking for someone who can understand them. A wife wants her husband to understand her. A husband wants his wife to understand him. When they feel misunderstood they become very sorry and fight with each other. Actually, no one can fully understand another person. But Jesus can understand us. Jesus understands our sorrow, our weakness, our failure and our despair. So let's come to Jesus, our high priest who understands us.

In verses 35-36, we find the attitude and contents of Jesus' prayer. Look at verse 35. "Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him." Usually when people have a problem, they first worry about it and then try to do something about it without prayer. Then they become frustrated and angry; they eat something and go to sleep to forget about it. Or they watch television all night. Then they despair. But Jesus went to God. Jesus humbled himself before God in prayer. Jesus wanted to solve the problem with prayer. What did Jesus pray?

Let's read verse 36. "'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'" In the first place, Jesus called God, "Abba, Father." This means "Daddy." Jesus was like a little boy running into his father's arms, saying "Daddy." Jesus had full assurance that his Father God loved him, and could help him. Of course, Jesus knew that God had willed for him to die on the cross. But Jesus did not fall into doubt about God's love. Jesus did not become bitter and complain. Jesus loved God and trusted God completely, even in this time of crisis. The love relationship between Father and Son was so strong that nothing could separate them. God loves his children with an absolute and unconditional love. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. No matter what the problem or situation, God loves us and welcomes us to his bosom. No matter how big the problem seems to us, it is not too big to God. God can do anything. Jesus never doubted God's love and power. Faith in God's love and power are the doorway to a prayer encounter with God.

In the second place, Jesus said, "Take this cup from me." Jesus was not really asking God to change his world salvation plan, or being rebellious toward God. Jesus was expressing his heart honestly before God. Jesus did not want to go through the agony that awaited him. Jesus needed his Father's help. To receive God's help, we must admit our need honestly. We should express our sorrow, failure, despair and everything to God in prayer. But we must not stop there. We must go forward.

In the third place, Jesus said, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." Often people pray, in essence, "Not what you will, but what I will." However, Jesus prayed, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." "Yet" marks a turning point in Jesus' prayer from himself to God. Jesus prayed to do what God wanted him to do, not what he wanted to do. Jesus prayer was to obey the will of God, through suffering and death. God was pleased with this prayer and gave Jesus the strength and wisdom to obey. This is Gethsemane prayer.

There are many kinds of prayer in the Bible: Jesus' early morning prayer (Mk 1:35), the united prayer of believers after Jesus' ascension (Ac 1:14), Moses' intercessory prayer (Ex 32:31-32), and many others, including Jacob's prayer, "God, save me" (Gen 32:11). What is distinctive about Gethsemane prayer? It is prayer to obey the will of God through suffering and death: "Yet not what I will, but what you will." Many Americans pray. According to a survey by Baylor University in 2006, 75% of Americans pray at least once a week. They pray for the health of relatives, world affairs, and financial security, and they say grace before meals. Many pray passionately, making vows in order to get what they want. However, some people's prayers stop at solving their own problems. And if they don't receive what they want, they become bitter and complain. This is childish. We always have many problems. Where in this world is a place with no problems? Well, in the graveyard there are no problems. But as long as we live in this world we have problems. However, the problem is not really the problem. Failing to pray is the problem. Praying only for one's selfish desires is also the problem.

James 4:2b,3 say, "You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." Though we can ask God for many things, our prayer must always include, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." We must pray to do what God wants us to do. Then God hears and answers our prayer. 1 John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

Jesus' Gethsemane prayer should be one of our model prayers. Jesus is the Son of God. It seems that he can do whatever he wants without prayer. But Jesus was also a human being. So Jesus had to pray until he could accept God's will to die for our sins. Hebrews 5:7 says, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." How much more must we pray. Through Gethsemane prayer we can grow spiritually and live victorious lives.

What is our prayer topic? It is that God may make North America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This is not just a UBF catchphrase, but we believe it is God's will. When our Puritan fathers came to America they prayed to make the new nation a city on a hill, the light of the world, based on Matthew 5:14. Since then, God has been with America through people who pray. During the darkest time of the Revolutionary War, President Washington prayed for God's deliverance with loud cries. It seemed to be a turning point in the war. When the framers of the Constitution came to a deadlock, Ben Franklin suggested that they pray. After prayer, they could make the Constitution. During the Civil War, innumerable people, both north and south, prayed, "Let our side win. But most of all may your will be done." Especially President Abraham Lincoln prayed on his knees, crying out to God for help. In a miracle, God preserved the union.

Since then, God has raised men of God like D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday and Dr. Billy Graham. God has raised many missionaries and sent them all over the world with the gospel, including Mother Barry. As their ministries bore fruit, many Christian leaders were raised in other nations. Then some of these leaders began to come to America as missionaries, including Korean missionaries in UBF. Now we pray together that God may use this nation to raise many more missionaries for his world mission purpose.

However, there is strong opposition to this. Some private Christian universities have a genuine concern that in the next ten years they may be forced to hire practicing homosexual teachers or forfeit government subsidy. There is a real danger that America may go the way of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now, more than ever, we must pray, not only for our own concerns, but for God's will to be done in our nation. This year we have the great privilege to host the UBF International Summer Bible Conference at Purdue. Many UBF missionaries from among 89 nations will gather to hear the word of God and pray together. Most of these missionaries are from Korea originally. We don't really deserve to host this conference in America. It is only God's grace to us. It is God's opportunity for us. It is a chance to renew the missionary vision that once burned brightly. It is a chance to participate in what God wants us to do. Therefore we must pray for this conference with all our hearts.

After prayer, Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" Peter had probably eaten too much at the Last Supper and drank too much wine. He wanted to watch, but as soon as Jesus began to pray, Peter began to sleep, and now he was snoring loudly. After waking him up, Jesus said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." Jesus urges us to pray in any and every situation. It is because our enemy Satan is trying to tempt us to disobey God and fall into sin and failure. Satan is a very powerful enemy. According to Revelation 12:3, he has seven heads and ten horns. We human beings have only one head and no horns. Satan's power is too strong for us. Satan has many strategies and plans of attack from all sides and from many dimensions. We cannot defeat Satan's power by our own wisdom and strength. We must pray for God's help. Through prayer we can really discern good and evil. Through prayer we can have God's power and wisdom to overcome any difficulty. So we must pray.

Actually, many people know the importance of prayer. But knowing the importance does not always lead us to pray. It is not easy to pray because prayer is a spiritual struggle. We must remember that without prayer we cannot have victory. But when we pray we can find wisdom and power from God to help us. Later, Peter became a man of prayer. He wrote in 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." John Wesley prayed for two hours every morning. He said, "God works through prayer. And God works through a man of prayer." Martin Luther also prayed for two hours every morning. He confessed, "If I fail to

pray, Satan wins over me that day. But when I pray, God wins the victory through me. When I am busy, I must pray more—even three hours a day.” When we pray, miracles happen. A man of prayer, William Temple was once told that there are no real miracles, only coincidences. To this, he replied, “When I pray, coincidences happen. But when I don’t pray, coincidences do not happen.” So we need to pray.

In verses 39-41, we see that Jesus prayed three times with the same topic. Jesus’ prayer was persistent. Jesus struggled until he obtained God’s strength to obey the will of God. Through prayer, Jesus was ready to face his betrayer and to take up his cross. When the armed crowd came to arrest him, Jesus confronted them boldly, and even rebuked them for their deed of darkness. Jesus willingly accepted arrest to fulfill the Scriptures. On the other hand, the disciples all ran away.

In this passage we learn that victory comes through prayer struggle. Gethsemane prayer is the secret to true victory. Let’s go to the garden of Gethsemane and pray.