

JESUS' GETHSEMANE PRAYER

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 deals with three events which happened in Jerusalem: First, Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives (39-46); second, Jesus was arrested (47-53); third, Peter's denial of Jesus (54-62). May God help us learn Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives. May God use us as prayer servants in this generation.

First, Jesus prays before the cup of suffering (39-46)

Look at verse 39. "Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him." This verse manifests that Jesus prayed while he was in Jerusalem, where his crucifixion awaited. The phrase, "went out as usual," tells us that he prayed regularly. When ordinary people are confronted by some hardships, they immediately begin to complain to others or blame others. Otherwise, they fall into great fear. Jesus is different. Jesus is the Son of God, yet he prayed, not one or two times in emergency situations, but regularly. From the beginning to the end, the life of Jesus was a life of prayer. At the beginning of the earthly Messianic work, Jesus prayed every early morning (Mk 1:35). Jesus prayed while he was hanging on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). Jesus was in Jerusalem. His day of crucifixion was approaching. But Jesus did what he should do. During the daytime Jesus taught the word of God to the lost souls. Luke does not mention that Jesus ate dinner. But during the nighttime he went to the Mount of Olives and prayed for himself, especially for his disciples. What a beautiful life Jesus led before his upcoming crucifixion. Luke 21:37 says, "Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives," which was also called the Garden of Gethsemane in the other Gospels (Mt 26:36; Mk 14:32). May God bless us that we can also be servants of prayer. Prayer is total dependence on God. Prayer is asking God's saving grace. Prayer is the expression of total obedience to God. Prayer is renewing God's holy mission. Jesus was supposed to be nailed down on the cross for the sin of the world. It was not easy for Jesus to be crucified as the Lamb of God. Jesus was in great anguish; still he prayed. Look at verse 42. "Father, if you are willing, take

this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Jesus also urged his disciples to pray so that they would not fall into temptation, because it was an opportune time for Satan to cause the disciples to stumble (40). Jesus also needed their prayer support. After this Jesus withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed (41). Let's read 42. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Jesus' prayer was very short. But he prayed until God gave him victory.

Jesus prayed to overcome his human desires. In verse 42, "cup" did not mean a championship cup; it was the cup of suffering and death. We know that Socrates was sentenced to drink a cup of poison. God laid the cup of suffering and death before Jesus. So Jesus had to decide whether to drink the cup of suffering and death or not. His humanness compelled him not to take the cup. So Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me." As we know well, human beings are clumps of desires. Of all the desires, the desire for long life might be the strongest. The people of old times blessed their king, saying, "Long live the king!" "Long live the king!" No one wants to die in his thirties. Though Jesus was God, in his manhood he must have hoped to live, as others do. Jesus also knew that death on the cross was capital punishment and it was the symbol of shame. Even drug dealers hide their faces before TV cameras so as not to expose their shameful faces. But Jesus had to take the cup of suffering on the cross in order to bear all our shame.

The cross was also the most painful punishment. Surely the impending sufferings were pictured before his mind's eye. The keen anticipation or apprehension of pain, which makes up so large a part of many human sorrows, overwhelmed him. In his manhood, he was afraid and did not want to take the cup. But Jesus prayed. He prayed so that he could overcome his desires, and obey his Father's will for world salvation. When we pray like Jesus to obey God's will for world salvation, surely God will bless this nation as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (1Pe 2:9).

Look at verse 42 again. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Jesus knew, in his prayer, who he was before God. This realization made it possible for him to pray. Jesus knew that he was the Chosen One (Lk 9:35), the Suffering Servant as was prophesied in Isaiah (Isa

53:5). Jesus knew that he had to be the Paschal Lamb for the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). This is the reason Jesus frequently told his disciples about his rejection, suffering and death. In Luke 9:22 he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Still, it was not easy for Jesus to die.

We can see the beautiful example of Jesus in making a decision to obey the will of God. Jesus said, "...yet not my will, but yours be done." Jesus was not willing to use his freedom of choice to please himself, but to please God. However, decision-making is not easy at all. So there is a line in Shakespeare's work, "To be or not to be, that is the question." There are so many people who did not marry because they were not able to make a decision about marriage. They have no decision power. But Jesus decided to die on the cross. It was prayer that empowered Jesus to make a decision of faith to take the cup of suffering and death.

Jesus fought a spiritual battle in prayer. Jesus prayed intensely, so intensely that he was completely exhausted. Jesus had no more strength left to fight in prayer. Then what happened to Jesus? God sent an angel from heaven to help restore him from exhaustion (43). When Jesus was restored from his exhaustion, what did Jesus do? Again Jesus kept on praying. Jesus' prayer was literally a spiritual battle. Jesus fought the battle in prayer to submit himself to the will of God. Jesus fought a spiritual battle in prayer to overcome the sting of death. Luke, a medical doctor only, describes how Jesus fought the spiritual battle in prayer. Verse 44 says, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." Thank you, Jesus, who prayed until his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground!

When Jesus rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. They were apprehensive of Jesus' suffering and cried until they were exhausted and fell asleep. They were still very immature in spiritual power. They did not know how to overcome sorrow and hardships through prayer. What did Jesus do for them? Look at verse 46. "'Why are you sleeping?' he asked them. 'Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.'" Here Jesus taught them that prayer is the way to overcome the temptation of Satan. We must believe that prayer is the most potent weapon for God's children.

Second, Jesus was arrested (47-53)

Jesus had already won the battle before fighting. After prayer, Jesus looked like a triumphant general. While he was still speaking, a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, was a guide for the temple police in arresting Jesus. He approached Jesus to kiss him as a signal to those he brought.

What did Jesus say to him? Look at verse 48. "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" Jesus knew what Judas was doing. So Jesus exposed Judas' secret attempt to kiss Jesus as a signal to the enemies of God. It is totally unbelievable that one of the twelve disciples betrayed Jesus to get some money. There was a problem; Judas did not know who the Son of Man really was. So he was selling Jesus for a certain amount of money. In verse 69 Jesus explains who he really is: "But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." This verse implies that Judas is accountable for his evil-doing at the time of judgment. Luke 9:26 says, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Son of God. Judas betrayed the Son of Man for 30 pieces of silver. But in fact, he betrayed himself.

Out of anger, one of the disciples struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear (49,50). According to John 18:10, it was Peter who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, whose name was Malchus. Jesus said, "No more of this!" Jesus told Peter to resist no more. Jesus told Peter to persevere even in this. And he touched the man's ear and healed him. Those who came to arrest Jesus were the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders. They were supposed to be the faces and consciences of the nation, and the prayer servants and Bible teachers for God's flock. But they were not. Jesus rebuked their evil-doing, saying, "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." Jesus taught the Bible to the people in the light, openly, before the eyes of all people (21:37,38). But the religious leaders did not lay their hands on Jesus then. When the time of darkness came, they came to arrest Jesus. Jesus was arrested by evil men. How stunning it is that the religious leaders came to arrest Jesus!

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

Let's see how Peter denies Jesus three times (54-60). Judas' betrayal was a heart-breaking event. Another scratch on the broken heart of Jesus was Peter's triple denial. Peter was the top disciple, and he was loyal to Jesus (22:33). He was overconfident; but he was not prayerful. So in his human limitation he denied his Master three times.

Look at verse 54. "Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance." Jesus was cross-examined, while hangers-on huddled around the fire. While Jesus was on trial, the darkness of night hung over the dawn, and the morning air was sharp. Peter, exhausted, sat near the firelight in great fear. He crept near the blaze of the fire. A servant girl saw him seated in the firelight. "This man was with him," she said. "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.'" He must have been Malchus, whose right ear Peter had cut off with his sword. Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. With his human loyalty he could not follow Jesus to the end. He denied Jesus three times.

Nevertheless, Jesus deeply cared for Peter. (61,62) Jesus was coming out of the courtroom and saw that Peter was there. Verse 61a says, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter." We owe the knowledge of this look of Christ to Luke only. Jesus was tired after enduring the all-night trial of the priests and false accusations. But when Jesus saw Peter, Jesus looked straight at him. Why did Jesus look straight at him? Jesus looked straight at him mainly to remind him of his promises to Peter. Luke 22:32 says, "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Matthew 16:18 says, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." When he denied Jesus, Peter was like sand on the seashore. When Jesus looked at him, he looked at him with the hope of God that someday he would become Peter, a foundation stone of his church. As Jesus hoped, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ Peter became the foundation of the Christian church.

At the moment Peter saw Jesus he remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." Peter went outside and wept bitterly. This cry was the moment that Peter opened his spiritual eyes to see the love of God. This cry made it possible for him to meet the Risen Jesus at the seashore where he had met him first.

Today we learn that Jesus prayed before the cup of suffering. We also learn that Jesus depended on God absolutely through prayer and decided to take the cup of suffering and death. May God help us not to be slaves of emotions, but warriors of prayer. May God use each of us as prayer servants in this generation.