

“...BUT WHAT YOU WILL”

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.’”

Today’s passage covers the darkest time of Jesus’ life on earth. Jesus was betrayed by his beloved disciple Judas. His other disciples could not understand him and fell asleep during his greatest agony. No one was with him. The cup he drank was too bitter and painful to endure. If you were in such a situation, what would you do? I might become like Jonah and find a one-way ticket out of there. When we study this passage we may feel burdened. Why? It is because we try to follow Jesus’ example before accepting his grace. We need to understand this passage, first of all, from a gospel perspective. This passage is uniquely about Jesus, who alone could take the cup to save us from our sins. No one else could do this. Jesus’ obedience was not natural; it came through an intense struggle in his full humanity. Through Jesus’ obedience we can be saved. We should humbly accept what Jesus has done for us and give him thanks and praise.

At the same time, we should learn from Jesus’ example how to win the victory in our life struggles. As this new school year begins, many face the daunting task of hard study. Though we begin with optimism, the sad fact is that 40% of undergraduates do not graduate.¹ Professionals face constant pressure to grow and produce results. Raising a family is one challenge after another, and so is raising disciples. How can we overcome challenges and hardships and live victoriously? We can learn from Jesus. Today, let’s accept what Jesus has done for us, and learn how to live victoriously.

First, Jesus shepherds his disciples (27-31). At the Last Supper Jesus entered into a new covenant in his blood with his disciples. They had sung a hymn in one voice and felt the strong bond of united love. Then, all of a sudden, Jesus

¹ <https://admissionslv.com/college-dropout-rates/>; <https://educationdata.org/college-dropout-rates>; <https://www.thinkimpact.com/college-dropout-rates/>.

said, “You will all fall away” (27a). “Fall away” means to abandon him. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples was so strong that no one could imagine they would abandon him. But Jesus was sure that it would happen. To any human being, knowing that beloved ones would abandon them is hard to bear and painful. Our natural tendency is to blame and criticize them. But Jesus understood his disciples’ weaknesses; he loved them and kept hope for them to the end. How could he? It was because he understood them through God’s word as their shepherd. He quoted Zechariah 13:7: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (27b). It meant God was about to strike Jesus, and the disciples would be scattered. Jesus saw his disciples as sheep. They were harassed and helpless before enemies, like children without parents. They could not but scatter. In this hard situation, Jesus was not shaken at all. Why? Jesus trusted God based on his word. Jesus knew that God rules over everything according to his will.

When we look at the dark situation, it is easy to think that powerful evil people are in control. But Jesus did not think this way. Jesus firmly believed that God rules over everything. Jesus trusted God, even in the time of betrayal. When we trust in God, we are not shaken in dark times. Jesus believed that after his suffering and death, God would give him final victory. So he said, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee” (28). Jesus planted resurrection faith and hope in his disciples’ hearts and gave them clear direction to meet him in Galilee. Indeed, this happened. Initially, after Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples lost direction and did not know what to do. So they returned to their former lives as fishermen in Galilee. There, the Risen Jesus visited them. Early in the morning, Jesus stood along the Galilean seashore and saw that they had worked hard all night and caught nothing. Jesus helped them to catch a whole boatload of fish and prepared a delicious meal with his holy hands. He invited them, “Come and have breakfast.” After eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter three times, “Do you love me more than these?” Then he entrusted his flock to his disciples, saying, “Feed my lambs” (Jn 21:15-17). In this way, the Risen Jesus restored their love relationship. The Risen Jesus was still their Shepherd. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). Jesus gives us hope no matter our condition or situation. Though we may fail or fall away, Jesus’ hope never fails. Jesus’ hope draws us by his power to remain in him.

How did Jesus' disciples respond? They should have acknowledged their weaknesses and appreciated Jesus' understanding, love and hope for them. Instead, Peter's pride was hurt. He was sorry that Jesus did not trust him. So he declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not" (29). He thought he was much better than the other disciples. He was sure that he would be loyal to Jesus to the end. He did not acknowledge his weakness. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. So Jesus predicted that Peter's passionate feeling would not last long. Jesus knew exactly when and how many times Peter would disown him. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, today—yes tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times" (30). Still, Peter did not acknowledge his weaknesses. He insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same (31). It seems that they had a contest in confessing their loyalty. Jesus did not rebuke Peter, but just bore with him silently. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and patiently bears their weaknesses. Thanks be to Jesus, our Good Shepherd!

Second, Jesus prays to obey God's will (32-52). They went to a place called Gethsemane, which means "olive press." There Jesus prayed, with such intensity that his sweat was like drops of blood--somewhat like oil being pressed out of olives. Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray" (32). Jesus' life was characterized by prayer. From the beginning Jesus relied on God in prayer to do his work (1:35). Through prayer, Jesus was empowered and received wisdom from above. Through prayer, Jesus could know God's will and follow his direction. Through prayer, Jesus could overcome Satan's temptations and attacks. Gethsemane prayer is the climax of Jesus' prayer life. Jesus knew that our real enemy is Satan (Eph 6:12). Gethsemane prayer was Jesus' final battle against Satan to fully obey God's will.

Jesus took Peter, James and John along with him to participate in his suffering and to witness his prayer. He began to be deeply distressed and troubled, and shared his agony with them: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch" (33-34). Jesus had never expressed his sorrow like this. What caused him to do so now? Usually, people become sorrowful over their own disappointments and

losses. But Jesus' sorrow was quite different. Jesus' sorrow was rooted in the agonizing consequences of taking upon himself the sins of all mankind. He would die on the cross to take away our sins. The full impact of his death struck Jesus and he staggered under its weight. Most of all, the prospect of alienation from his Father due to our sins horrified him. Jesus would experience God's wrath against the sin of murderers, adulterers, robbers, liars, idolaters, and more. Jesus took God's wrath for all of our sins in our places. This burden was unimaginable. Only Jesus could take this burden.

Going a little farther, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him (35). "The hour" denoted God's appointed time when Jesus would suffer and die for our sins. Jesus said, "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (36). "Abba" was commonly spoken by young Jewish children to address their fathers. It conveyed a sense of familial intimacy like "Daddy." The Jews would not use this word in a personal prayer to God. They thought it inappropriate. But Jesus called God "Abba." Jesus affirmed his intimacy with his Father God. Jesus changes our concept of God from a distant object of fear to an intimate loving Father. In a crisis, we easily doubt God's love, thinking, "If God loves me, why is this happening?" But when we think, "God loves me, that is why this is happening," we can have conviction that God is working for our good.

As Jesus trusted God's love, he also trusted God's power. He said, "...everything is possible for you." God is the Creator and Almighty God. Nothing is impossible for God. The question is never "Can God do this?" but rather, "Is this God's will?" If it is God's will, anything is possible. So Jesus prayed, "Take this cup from me." Here "the cup" refers to God's wrath for the sin of all mankind. It meant the most shameful, painful death on a cross as a ransom for sinners. No one wants to die in great shame and pain. Jesus honestly confessed he did not want to take this cup. In this way, Jesus revealed his full humanity. His resurrection reveals Jesus' full divinity (Ro 1:4). Jesus is fully human and fully God. So he can be the unique mediator between God and man (1Ti 2:5).

Jesus did not stop with revealing his humanity. He said, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (36b). This was the turning point in his prayer. He turned from his will to God’s will. Jesus did not please himself; he pleased God. Jesus did not pray to avoid God’s will; he prayed to submit to God’s will. This submission did not come naturally for Jesus. Jesus came to this world to do God’s will (Heb 10:7). Jesus went up to Jerusalem in order to die for our sins. But when the moment came, it was not easy. Jesus had to decide to die to obey God’s will. His struggle in prayer was so intense that “his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Lk 22:44). The author of Hebrews says that Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death (Heb 5:7). In this way, Jesus surrendered himself to God’s will to die on the cross. By his death, Jesus destroyed the one who holds the power of death--that is the devil--and frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). Through Jesus’ painful obedience, we are saved and become God’s children. Thanks be to Jesus! Let’s always remember what Jesus has done for us and be thankful.

As Jesus’ disciples, we also learn from him how to pray. Prayer is to deny our will and submit to God’s will. However, we are quite different from Jesus. Jesus was a perfect man with a perfect will. On the other hand, as Martin Luther taught, our wills are corrupted by sin. So we naturally seek our own selfish gain and self-glory. When we follow our own dreams and desires, we displease God and burden others. How can we be changed? Only Jesus can do this. When Jesus reigns in our hearts as Savior and Lord, a miracle happens. God works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose (Php 2:13). As we are renewed by God’s word, we understand that God’s will is good, pleasing and perfect (Ro 12:2). We begin to want God’s will to be done in and through us. God wills his kingdom to come. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven... your kingdom come, your will be done...” (Mt 6:10). As we pray like this, we surrender to God’s will. This transforms our purpose of life. We can study and work for the glory of God, and serve our families and ministry with Christ’s heart. God blesses us to become dynamic, powerful and effective. Someday our wills are going to be fully sanctified. We will always be aligned to God’s will with no capacity to sin. But in the meantime, we need to deny the vestiges of our self-will and to pray for God’s will to be done. At times we feel that we are dying. That is good. It

means we are growing. As Jesus' disciples, sanctified by grace, let's learn to pray, "Yet not what I will, but what you will."

After prayer, Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (37-38). Once more Jesus went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping. The author comments that their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him (39-40). Why did they fail to watch and pray at this time of crisis? Mainly it was because they did not take Jesus seriously when he shared God's word with them. In spiritual ignorance, they relied on themselves, not God. They had no inner strength to watch and pray. Amazingly, at that very time, Jesus taught why we have to keep watch and pray in any situation.

First of all, we need to pray not to fall into temptation. Satan is so powerful and crafty that no one can resist him by their own strength and wisdom. Satan never takes a vacation. He constantly prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1Pe 5:8). If we do not pray, we are vulnerable. We lose discernment. Our thinking becomes futile and our hearts darken. Then we become proud and judgmental; we blame others and complain. In fact, we come under the devil's influence. But if we pray, God gives us the Spirit of wisdom and strength to overcome temptation.

Second of all, we need to pray to overcome our weaknesses. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Since we are weak, we need to keep watch and pray. If we think we are strong, we will not pray. But those who recognize their weakness humbly pray to God moment by moment. They depend on God who is full of power and wisdom. Such people will live a victorious life by God's help. We cannot overemphasize the importance of prayer; it is like breathing spiritually. We know this well. But it is not easy to practice. Yet without practicing prayer, we cannot live a victorious life. As we pray we can overcome laziness and bad habits, and be empowered to study hard for God's glory. As we pray, we can overcome discouragement due to rejection and persevere in preaching the gospel on

campus. As we pray we can overcome loneliness, frustration and depression, and be a blessing. As we pray we can overcome all kinds of hardships to serve God's mission victoriously. Later in his life, Apostle Peter learned prayer that overcame his weaknesses. He encouraged early Christians, scattered due to persecution: "The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray" (1Pe 4:7).

Jesus prayed with the same prayer topic three times. Jesus prayed until he surrendered to God's will. Jesus prayed until he received strength from above to be tried, condemned and crucified. Before prayer, Jesus was in sorrow, deep distress and anguish--to the point of death. After prayer, Jesus was full of conviction and courage. So he said to his disciples, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (41-42)

In verses 43-50 we see how Jesus confronted betrayal and arrest. Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared with a band of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the Sanhedrin (43). Judas kissed Jesus to identify him (44). A kiss is the expression of affection and trust. But Judas' kiss was the kiss of betrayal (45). Then the men with him seized Jesus and arrested him (46). One of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (47). John informs us that it was Peter who did this. Jesus said, "Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (Jn 18:10-11) According to Matthew, Jesus said, "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:52). Then Jesus rebuked those who came to arrest him: "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?" (48) Jesus' ministry was open to the public. Every day Jesus was with them teaching in the temple courts and they did not arrest him (49a). Now Jesus was arrested. It was according to God's will. Jesus said, "the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (49b). Jesus thought, acted and lived according to the Scriptures. Jesus loved the Scriptures, obeyed the Scriptures and fulfilled the Scriptures. As everyone deserted him and fled, a young man also fled naked, leaving his garment in the hands of Jesus' enemies (51-52). Tradition tells us that this Mark. He testified that he was there as a witness of Jesus' arrest.

Though Jesus is the Son of God, he knelt down and came to God in prayer. It was to take the burden of our sins upon himself and obey God to the point of death on a cross as our Savior. Let's give thanks to Jesus for his anguished prayer. Let's watch and pray so that we may live a victorious life.