

Mark 14:32-42¹
Thy Will Be Done

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

36 "Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing.

40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Introduction

In 1886, Karl Benz drove his first automobile through the streets of Munich, Germany. He named his car the Mercedes Benz, after his daughter, Mercedes.

The machine angered the citizens because it was noisy and scared the children and horses. Pressured by the citizens, the local officials

¹ 1984 NIV

immediately established a speed limit for “horseless carriages” of 3.5 miles an hour in the city limits and 7 miles an hour outside.

Benz knew he could never develop a market for his car and compete against horses if he had to creep along at those speeds. So he invited the mayor of the town for a ride. The mayor accepted.

Benz then arranged for a milkman to park his horse wagon on a certain street and, as Benz and the mayor drove by, to whip up his horse and overtake them with a cheeky cheer. The plan worked. The mayor was furious and demanded that Benz overtake the milk wagon. Benz apologized and said that because of the speed law he was not permitted to go any faster.

Very soon after that the law was changed. Why? It is because the mayor had felt what Benz had felt in his heart when his Mercedes Benz was made to run much slower than he would like it.

(Bits & Pieces, April 1990, p. 2)

We too may have felt the same way in our times of pain. We ask: “Jesus is high up there in His heavenly glory. Does He really feel the pain in my heart?”

To answer that, we look at Jesus and His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The occasion was the evening before His crucifixion. Jesus and His disciples had finished the Passover meal. Judas had left to betray Him. Jesus now took the 11 disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane so that He could pray as He awaited His arrest and crucifixion. He had left 8 disciples at the entrance and taken 3 with him (Peter, James and John). He then instructed them and left them so that He could pray alone.

I. What did Jesus experience in Gethsemane?

First, He experienced pain (v. 33)—“he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.”

To be deeply distressed is:

- to become visibly unsettled or bothered
- to become emotionally distraught and in pain

Listen to His own words about His pain in v. 34: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”

Lk 22:44 adds: “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

There's a rare condition (though not yet scientifically proven) called "hematidrosis" in which under great emotional distress, tiny blood vessels rupture in the sweat glands, producing a mixture of sweat and blood.

If indeed Jesus was sweating blood here because of His intense emotional pain and sorrow, what was the cause?

Well, it was:

- not fear of dying
- not fear of failing
- not the betrayal of Judas although that hurt Him deeply
- not that He knew the other 11 would run away
- not the injustices, humiliation and beatings He would endure

The cause of His intense emotional pain and sorrow as He sweat drops of blood was this—He the sinless One was about to become sin for a sinful world.

I remember an occasion when I was in National Service in the army. We were on an exercise and one soldier slipped and his left foot slid into a sewage pond. As he pulled out that leg from the stinking pond, what did the rest of us do? Running towards him to ask if he's okay and helping to clean him up? No! The rest of us stayed miles away from him for the rest of the exercise.

When Jesus became sin for a sinful world, it was much, much worse than having one foot submerged in a sewage pond. It was as if Jesus became submerged in a stinking filth of sin from head to toe. It was that nauseating, that repulsive, that disgusting. No wonder He sweat drops of blood.

At that moment when He would become sin for the first and only time in all eternity, He would feel the utter forsakenness of the Father. He could envision the Father turning away from Him and let the cup of divine wrath be poured out upon Him as He became the sacrifice for our sins.

Gethsemane was where Jesus experienced pain and sorrow beyond what you and I could ever imagine.

Second, Jesus experienced agony as He prayed in Gethsemane (vv. 35-39)—“Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ‘*Abba*, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.’ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing.”

In anticipation of His agony on the Cross, Jesus turned to His Heavenly Father in prayer. The NASB describes it this way in Heb 5:7—“He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death.”

How did Jesus pray at His most distressed and troubled hour?

- *He prayed as a child calling to his loving father.* He called God as *Abba* (an endearing term equivalent to *Papa* or *Daddy* in our time). He called God as one whose tenderness, love, goodness and closeness He could trust. In His prayer, He revealed a close, loving and trusting relationship with God.
- *He prayed as a child calling to a powerful father.* Jesus prayed to the Father, “Everything is possible for you.” The cup of Jesus was the cup of divine wrath and judgement on sin. The Heavenly Father can do all things but He cannot do certain things if they are contrary to His divine nature. So the Father cannot remove the cup because He is the all Holy God who must judge sin. And the Son cannot refuse the cup because He was sent to die for the atonement of sin. The Father can do all things, but He cannot do certain things if they violate proper order. He can change a square into a circle but He cannot call the new shape a square again because that will not be proper. The cup of divine wrath and judgement on sin cannot be removed and refused if we are to be saved from Hell and damnation. So Jesus prayed: “*Abba*, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (v. 36).
- *He prayed as an obedient son to an all-wise father.* Jesus said to the Father, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (v. 36). He struggled in the garden. He agonized in the garden. He was tempted in the garden. Yet He yielded to the Father’s will. Jesus “surrendered” to the Father but in so doing, He was not defeated. In fact, by surrendering to the Father’s will, He conquered over temptation, sin and death. If there’s one battle we should lose and yet still be sure of victory it is this—stop fighting God, surrender to His will, and you will then be on the winning side.

Third, Jesus experienced supernatural strengthening in Gethsemane (vv. 41-42)—“Returning the third time, he said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!’”

What strength! What courage! What resolve! But a moment ago he was collapsed in emotional distress and agonizing in prayer. From where did this strength come?

Lk 22:43 adds this to the scene: “An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.” The other time when angels came to attend to Jesus was when He was first tempted by Satan in the wilderness after His baptism (Matt

4:11). The Father did not take away the cup, but sent what was needed for Jesus to drink of it.

Why an angel? Angels are supernatural but created beings. Perhaps it was because His closest friends slept when He needed them most. Perhaps it was because there was nothing more His disciples were willing to or could do for him. So the Father sent an angel.

I do not know how the angel strengthened Jesus. And I do not know what your Gethsemane (your time of great distress and struggle with God's will) might be like. But I know that for your Gethsemane there is a provision of God just for you. He may not take away your cup but He will provide what you need to drink of it.

You and I are not supernatural beings like angels. But the word "angel" (*angelos*) literally means "messenger". Sometimes you and I may be called upon and privileged to strengthen another person who is in his own Gethsemane as God's human messenger to him. Even today you can encourage, pray, care, bring hope to strengthen someone because you are God's messenger to him, especially if you have been through a similar situation and experienced the strengthening of God.

To the question I asked at the outset—"Jesus is high up there in His heavenly glory. Does He really feel the pain in my heart?" The answer is a loud "yes!" This is because of what He had experienced in Gethsemane—extreme pain, agonizing prayer, and restoration of strength. He had gone through what you and I are going through in our own Gethsemane from time to time.

One time, I went for a neuro scan of the brain as part of a comprehensive medical screening. I was asked to lie down and given ear plugs. The radiographer said, "Put these into your ears. It could be quite noisy when the scanning starts."

Then my body was pushed into a tube up to almost my waist. Suddenly, I became claustrophobic. I found it difficult to breathe and began to move my head, manifesting some anxiety reactions.

After a while, I was moved out of the tube and the staff said to me, "Are you okay? You have been moving a lot and we are not able to capture clear images. You must try to keep still."

I replied, "I found it difficult to breathe."

The staff asked me to breathe through my mouth if need be and keep my head still, reminding me to try and relax.

And as I was moved into the tube a second time, I prayed to the Lord to help me keep calm. Indeed, I felt the calming presence of the Lord. I

closed my eyes, half praying and half resting. This time, I could breathe better and the noise in the tube didn't seem to be too unbearable.

After about 20 minutes, I was moved out of the tube and the scanning was successfully done.

I think the Lord taught me one thing out of that experience—the only way to get out is to go all the way through.

The only way for Jesus to get out of His struggle in Gethsemane was to go all the way through the whole experience of great distress, agonizing prayer, and God-sent strengthening.

Are you in your Gethsemane today? If so, the Lord has a word for you—"The only way out is not to avoid or quit prematurely, but to go all the way through ... and know that I who had been in Gethsemane before is with you all the way."

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father, "Your will be done." This is a difficult prayer to pray sincerely.

II. There are at least three reasons why it is difficult to pray "Your will be done."

First reason, it means letting God have the last say.

Either God calls the shots or you call the shots. Either He is in control or you are in control. It's not easy to pray like that because it means giving up control of your own life, letting God have the last say.

A boy was sent to bed by his father. Five minutes later, the boy cried out, "Dad ..."

"What?"

"I'm thirsty. Can you bring me a drink of water?"

"No. You had your chance. Go to sleep."

Another five minutes later, the boy cried out again, "Dad ..."

"What?"

"I'm thirsty. Can I have a drink of water?"

"I told you no! If you ask again, I'll have to spank you!"

Yet another five minutes later, the boy called out a third time, "Dad ..."

“What??”

“When you come to spank me, can you bring me a drink of water?”

Now, Jesus did not pray like this boy when he prayed to the Father in Gethsemane. But we can be like this boy—so bent on getting what we want that our prayers to the Father are really different ways of telling Him that we will not surrender ourselves to His will. We still want the last say.

Second reason, we often doubt God has our best interests at heart.

Oftentimes we’re scared that if we give God control of our lives, He’ll mess it up somehow. Perhaps you asked God to open the door for you to go to a certain place of study. Or perhaps it was prayer for a wayward child; prayer for a failing marriage. When God doesn’t answer our prayers—or when He doesn’t answer in the way we want Him to—we are often tempted to wonder if God really cares for us.

Our biggest problem is not “is there a God?” All Christians agree that the answer is “yes”. Even people who never come to church and people who consider themselves irreligious would answer “yes”.

But the bigger question is this—“Is there a God in heaven who really cares for me?” Many people—including loyal churchgoers—secretly wonder if the answer to that question might be “No”. A God who is there? “Yes”. A God who really cares for me? “Not sure” or “Maybe, no”.

The existence of God is primarily an intellectual or logical problem. The question concerning God’s personal care is entirely different. Very often it is asked by those who have known deep pain and suffering. For them the question is very personal:

- “If God cares for me, how could He let my son die?”
- “Where was God when my husband lost all his money?”
- “Why didn’t God stop that car from running over my father?”

How do you pray “Your will be done” when you aren’t sure that God really cares for you? If you really know that He has your best interests at heart, you might dare to pray that way. But as long as you doubt, that prayer will be difficult.

There are many answers to the question, “Does God really cares for me?” But there is only one that really matters. It’s the answer God gave 2,000 years ago on a hill outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

On a hot Friday afternoon the Romans crucified a man they thought to be a Jewish trouble maker. His name was Jesus. He started His ministry by preaching in the synagogues. As He went from village to village, His fame spread, until thousands came out to hear Him. Then the powers-that-be found

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Him to be a threat to them. They decided to eliminate Him. It took a long time to trap Him. But they finally arrested Him with the help of a traitor from His inner circle.

Once arrested, He was tried, beaten, mocked, insulted, cursed, abused, slapped, scourged, and crowned with thorns. Eventually He was condemned to die. For six hours He hung on a cross—almost naked, exposed to the elements, reviled by the crowd, jeered by His enemies. At the end, after suffering excruciating pain, He bowed his head and died.

After all that, God says to us today, “That Jesus was my only Son whom I sent to die for your sins so that you might be saved. Do you still wonder if I love you?”

For some people, even the death of God’s Son will not be enough. But if that is not enough, nothing God can do will make any difference.

The newspapers carried a report of a one-year-old boy who missed his father so much that he refused to eat, drink, and sleep for a week. He also cried for hours and hours during that week.

What happened was that his father who was his primary caregiver went missing. He had problems with the boy’s mother.

After a week of hopeless longing for his father, the boy became weak because of malnourishment and dehydration. His mother then rushed him to the hospital where he lapsed into coma while waiting to be attended.

The boy was put on a drip and regained consciousness 1 ½ days later.

On knowing the boy’s situation, his runaway father said, “I hope to come back to make things better. But it’ll take time, I know.”

The boy’s mother replied, “I’ll have to think about accepting him back after what he’s done. Can I trust him? I’m not really sure yet.”

So, his parents continued to profess that they had the boy’s best interests at heart. Meanwhile, the boy remained an emotional wreck.

(*The New Paper*, 6 April 2011, pp. 2-3)

Jesus prayed to God in Gethsemane and called Him *Abba*. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught His people then and teaches us today to pray to God as “*Abba* in Heaven”.

Will our Father in Heaven go missing when we need Him like the father of that one-year-old boy?

In the death of Jesus Christ, God is saying to us, "Picture my Son on the Cross. See the wounds in His hands, His feet, and His side. It is for you that I sent Him to die on the Cross. And my love for you will never allow me to leave you alone no matter what."

Third reason, you are praying against the status quo.

Too many things that go on are obviously not God's will—abortion, broken homes, exploitation of the weak, ethnic hatred, killings, corruption in high places.

Sometimes it seems as if Satan has taken over. But know this—God does not accept Satan's usurpation of His rightful place in the world. He does not accept that sin should reign forever on the earth. God does not remain idle while the world goes to hell. God does not accept the status quo!

So God intervened in human history in the most dramatic fashion possible. He sent His own Son into the world to change the status quo. God sent Jesus to give a message to the world: "Things are going to change."

To pray "Your will be done" is to follow God in opposing the status quo. This prayer goes against the grain. In a world where God's will is not done, we are to pray that God's will be done. These are fighting words, words that rebel against everything that is evil and wrong on Planet Earth. All too often when we pray, "Your will be done," we do it with an air of pious resignation: "O God, since I am helpless to stem the tide of events, may your will be done."

But to pray "Your will be done" is an act of God-ordained rebellion! This is not a prayer for the weak or the timid. This is a prayer against all that's not right around us. It is a prayer for believers who look at the wrong around them and who say, "I want to join God and let Him use me to right these wrongful things."

It is a prayer that leads necessarily to action. You cannot pray "Your will be done" and then do nothing. If you really mean "Your will be done," you've got to jump into the fray and help make a difference.

Look around. What do we see God working to make this world a little better, a little more like heaven? If we can see it, can we then hear God calling us? God is calling you and me to join Him in what He is doing around us and make a difference in this fallen world.

Conclusion

Gethsemane tells us that Jesus feels our pain in His heart. He had been there.

- Are you hurting? If so, then tell it to the Lord because He hears your cry and feels your pain.

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Gethsemane also tells us that when we stop fighting God and surrender to His will, we are standing on the winning side.

- Are you fighting God over something in your life? If so, then let go and let Him, for you will never lose if you let Him win over you.

We are to pray, "Your will be done." The answer may not be what we want or what we expect. And best of all, when we pray that way, we are doing our little part to make the world a little more like heaven to come.

Is there a status quo that's within your ability/influence to change? If so, pray and do something to let God's will come into that situation.

May the Lord help us pray, "Father, your will be done." Amen!