

Matthew 26:36-46 The Purpose for Prayer

This morning we are in Matthew chapter 26, verses 36 to 46. It starts at the bottom of page 6 in your study guide. In this chapter we have seen that the Sanhedrin, the Council of the Jews, was looking to capture Jesus privately lest He should cause an uproar among the people. Remember the city is filled with a couple million people for Passover. Judas Iscariot contracted with this Council for thirty pieces of silver in order to deliver Jesus to them. But during the Passover meal we saw that Judas was revealed as the betrayer amongst the disciples, and to the disciples. So when Judas leaves he tells the chief priests where to find Jesus and that brings us to verse 36, again, at the bottom of page 6 in your study guide.

Verses 36 to 38, the circumstances surrounding the Prayers of Jesus. **Then Jesus comes with them into a place called Gethsemane. And He said to the disciples, Sit here, until which time having gone away, I should pray there. And after taking along Peter and the sons of Zebedee, He began to be grieved and to be distressed. Then He says to them, My soul is deeply grieved until death remain here with Me, and watch.** So they come to a place called Gethsemane after eating the Passover meal. *Gethsemane* means *olive press*. And it is at the foot of Mount of Olives. And people would bring the olives there and put it through the press and squeeze out all the oil out of it and get the olive oil out of it there at Gethsemane, the foot of Mount of Olives.

But after having taken along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, that would be James and John, **He began to be grieved and to be distressed.** These are very important words that we just read over. But it is shocking as to the implication of these words. **He began to be grieved and to be distressed. Then He says to them, My soul is deeply grieved until death remain here with Me, and watch.** I find it interesting that in the garden scene when Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit led Matthew to emphasize the difficulty that Jesus went through. It surprises me that Jesus who is without sin, yet He struggled in His soul. The text tells us that Jesus was grieved and distressed over His upcoming crucifixion. So we learn a few things about this information. Just being in a human body made of flesh, yet without sin, can cause grief and distress. It teaches us that difficulties will accompany every situation Satan brings against us. It does not have to deal with sin. The difficulties will be there because Satan is bringing things against us.

This text serves as the prime reason for Hebrews chapter 4 verses 15 and 16 where it says, **For we do not have a high priest not being able to sympathize with our weaknesses; but having been tempted according to all things, according to our likeness, yet apart from sin. Therefore we should come with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace for opportune help.** So He is tempted in all things like we. He has come against every difficult situation in the human, yet without sin. Not because of His sin did He suffer the difficulties, but because He might sympathize with us. As we go through our difficulties, and as we go through our struggles, He sympathizes. He says, "I know what you are going through," and He is there for us to come to find grace in time of help.

Then in verses 39 through 41, The Contents of Jesus's Prayer. **And after having gone forward a little, He fell upon His face praying and saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I myself will, but as You will.** The cup is the cup of suffering of the cross. Jesus is saying *if it is possible*. Jesus is asking if there is another way. If there is a possibility the wages of sin could be paid for another way than the cross, then let it be. Nevertheless, if this is the way Your will is, then this is My will. So He is praying for the Father in the midst of distress and grief. It is very stressful situation for Jesus and for the disciples. The three that are with Him - Peter, James, and John - are listening to Him while He is praying.

But what it does is it points out to us the purpose for prayer, which is very important. The purpose for prayer as taught by the Bible, not by some of the teachings today. The purpose for prayer is that prayer is the means by which we express our submission to God's will. Prayer is the means by which we submit ourselves to the will of God. God has a will for every situation. The purpose for prayer is to align ourselves with His will since He has a will for every situation. Prayer is to align ourselves with God not to get God to align Himself with us.

This is brought out even more so in I John chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 - and that literal translation is in page nine in your study guide, you might want to turn over there. In I John chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 John says, **And this is the confidence which we have toward Him, that if we should ask anything according to His will, He is hearing us.** *He is hearing us*, notice the present tense. He is currently hearing us. **And if we know that He is hearing us, because I am asking for His will to be done, whatever we should ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked from Him.** We know that the answer is already there. If I ask for His will to be done and I know that He hears me when I pray for His will to be done, then whatever is, is His will. That is the answer to my prayer. It is a very important two verses to couple with Matthew chapter 26.

But what about praying in His name? There are people that isolate those verses in the Gospel of John. John chapter 14 verses 13 and 14 says, **And whatever you should ask in My name, this I will do, in order that the Father might be glorified in the Son.** So you just ask in My name and I will do it, Jesus said. **If you should ask anything in My name, I myself will do it.** John 15 verse 16, **You yourselves did not choose Me, but I myself chose you, and appointed you in order that you should go and should bear fruit, and your fruit should remain in order that whatever you should ask the Father in My name He may give it to you.** There are no conditional clauses there. It does not say, "If you have the faith." It does not say that you could stop these requests except if you ask in the wrong way.

James in James chapter 4 verses 2 and 3 he says, **You desire, and you do not have: you kill, and are jealous, and unable to obtain; you fight and you war, and you do not have, because you do not ask. But you ask, and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order that you might spend it on your pleasures.** So James says you are spending it on yourself when you pray. Therefore, it will not be answered. It is lining up with the Lord's will.

Now praying in His name, it sounds like - in fact it is used as a magical formula to make things happen for us the way we want things to turn out. But to pray something in someone's

name is to pray in representation of that person. In other words, the person's will. If there is an appliance in your home that breaks down and you call the service company out - the man comes out, he has a uniform on, he is coming in the company's name and he is coming out to fix that appliance. And that is what he is there for. When we pray in the Lord's name, we are praying for His will to be done. And we pray as representative of Him, not ourselves lest we spend it on ourselves, and we do not get answers to our prayer.

This is very important to see about prayer, that prayer is the means by which we express our submission to the Lord's will. Again the question comes up, how do we know what the Lord's will is? I John chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 answered that. If you know that He hears you, because you are praying according to the Lord's will, then whatever is, is your answer.

So verse 39 is a very important verse in the Bible in relation to praying. **As He fell upon His face and said, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I Myself will, but as You will.** We can pray for whatever we want, but the end result must be, "Not My will but Thine be done." And then we can have confidence that He hears our prayer.

See again, lining ourselves up. If I am praying for the Lord's will to be done, I am actually positioning myself in submission to and alignment with God, not trying to get God to get in alignment with me. That is where the frustration comes in. That is false teaching to teach that prayer is the means by which we get God to line up with us and to grant us what we want. Instead, it is lining up with His will and then being at peace with Him. Having the confidence, as John said in I John, having the confidence that He is hearing us because we have asked for His will to be done.

Our problem is we just cannot accept the end result as being His will. That is where we have the problem. We say, "Well, He is not doing anything." Or, "I prayed for His will be done and things got worse." We just cannot accept His will, that is our problem. That is why when false teachers come along with these teachings about prayer and use Jesus's name as a magic formula to make things happen in your favor - why they are so popular is because people cannot accept the fact that the Lord would allow His will to be something as devastating as some situations might be. But see, prayer is for us. Prayer is for us to align ourselves, submit ourselves to the will of God.

Even as Jesus, interesting, Jesus being the Son of God, perfect, no sin, yet He gets distressed and struggles. He had grief over this whole thing and His prayer was, "If it is possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not My will but Yours be done."

Back to Matthew chapter 26 verse 40. **And He comes to His disciples and finds them sleeping. And He says to Peter, In this way were you not able to watch one hour with Me?** So they fell asleep while He was praying. Very distressful situation. Very difficult. Jesus says, **Watch and pray, in order that you should not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak.** That is a very important verse there. The spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak. Jesus is presenting this as the reason for them sleeping, not an excuse. The flesh cannot stay awake for prayer. The spirit is always ready to pray, but the flesh is weak. It is always like that. That is why we cannot just pray - we have to watch and pray.

Sometimes when I pray, I have to pray walking, standing up, especially at the end of the day, if I have had a tiring day. Because if I sit down and open my Bible and close my eyes to pray, I know what is going to happen. I am going to fall sleep or not pray very long, because I cannot stay awake that long, once you are tired. Well the Spirit is always ready, it is the flesh that is weak. That is the reason, not an excuse. That is why we have to watch and pray. Not just pray, but be watching and praying because the flesh is going to pull us down.

Verse 42, **Again having gone away from them a second time, He prayed, saying, My Father if it is not possible for this cup to pass from me unless I should drink it, let Your will be done.** And so, the character of His prayer is that in finality - unless the cup pass through Me, if that is Your will, that is the only way that this cup is going to be fulfilled, then let Your will be done. Praying the same point only in finality, end result.

And having come, He finds them again sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. You can understand what these disciples had just gone through. They went through a big Passover meal, had four cups of wine, and now they are at the base of the Mount of Olives and in a very stressful situation. And Jesus says to them, "Watch and pray." Very difficult for them to do, because they are in the flesh.

The conclusion of His prayer, verses 44 through 46 on page 8. **And having left them, having gone away again, He prayed from a third time, having said the same thing.** Continued to pray. **Then He comes to His disciples, and said to them, Sleep on the remaining time and take your rest. Behold, the hour has drawn near, and the Son of Man is being delivered over into the hands of sinners. Rise up, we should go. Behold, the one delivering Me over has drawn near.** So Jesus said, "Time is up." Sleep on now. Do not bother to stay awake. Prayer is over. The one who is going to betray me is leading a pack of people here and they are almost here. So it is time, time has drawn near.

So we see a couple of things from our text from today. Number one, Jesus being a perfect man - perfectly God and perfectly human - found Himself in distress and grief over the difficulties that He is about to face. And this is not because of sin. It is because of the difficulty and stress of the situation that Satan brought upon Him.

And the purpose for prayer, in the midst of the difficulty He needed to line Himself up with the Father. Saying, "Not My will, but Thine be done." That is very important. Most people would have told Jesus on the spot that the Lord does not want You to suffer on the cross. It is too hurtful, too distressful, too much grief. But Jesus said, "Not My will but Thine be done." Jesus accepted the will of the Father, as difficult as it is.

Let's close with prayer.