

Jesus Prayed in the Garden

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the danger of depending on their own strength. We saw that only as we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment can we look forward to experiencing victory. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened as Jesus spent time praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus and the disciples left the upper room where they had eaten the Passover meal. Matthew 26:36-38 says, “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go and pray over there.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’” The Garden of Gethsemane was on the Mount of Olives which was across a small valley from the part of Jerusalem where the temple was located. Luke 22:39 says, “Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.” Here, we see that this was a place where Jesus often took the disciples when He was in Jerusalem. In fact, John 18:2 says, “And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.” In this verse, we see that Judas expected Jesus to go to that particular place.

Jesus had most of the disciples remain near the entrance to the Garden. However, He took Peter, James and John a little further with Him into the Garden. Once the four were alone, we see that Jesus began to be sorrowful and very distressed. The word translated “very distressed” is the strongest of the three Greek words used in the New Testament for “depression”. As a result, we see that Jesus was experiencing great depression. The reason for that depression is explained in Matthew 26:39, where we read, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” The phrase “this cup” is used in various places in the Bible to speak of the anger of God against sin. Habakkuk 2:16 says, “‘You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also—drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD’s right hand *will be* turned against you, and utter shame will be on your glory.’” Jesus was going to bear that cup of God’s anger for sin in just a few hours. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ, who had never sinned, became sin for us as all of our sins were placed on Him.

Then, we see that Jesus explained what He was feeling to these three disciples. He told the three, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.” Jesus freely shared with them the fact that He was experiencing great depression at the thought of bearing the sins of the whole world on Himself. In Luke 22:42-44, we read, “Saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Here, we see that the father sent an angel to

strengthen Jesus as He went through that period of great depression because of the fact that He would soon experience the full fury of God against sin. Jesus asked the three to give strict attention to or to be vigilant in prayer for Him as He prepared for this cup of God's wrath against sin.

Then, Matthew 26:39-41 says, "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.' Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.'" Jesus then left the three and went a little farther into the Garden to pray to the Father. In agony, He fell on His face to pray. Jesus told the Father that if there was any other possible way to pay for sin to let the cup pass from Him. However, at the same time, Jesus knew that there was no other possible way. That is why He then said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*."

Jesus made it clear to His disciples early in His ministry that He came to carry out the will of the Father. In John 4:34, we read, "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'" Then, in John 5:30 Jesus told the Jews, "'I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.'" In these and other verses, Jesus continued to say that He came to do the will of the Father. In fact, Hebrews 10:5-7 quotes from Psalm 40:6-8 when Hebrews says, "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.'" Jesus made it very clear that He came to do the will of the Father, including experiencing the full wrath of God against sin as He bore our sins on the cross.

In contrast, the three disciples could not even keep awake and pray with Jesus. Instead, when Jesus came to them, He found them sleeping. Peter had said earlier that He would never deny Jesus. As a result, Jesus spoke to Peter and said, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." Luke 22:45 says, "When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow." Then, Jesus explained a key lesson to Peter. Peter is told to do two things to have victory over temptation. The word translated "watch" means *to give strict attention to, to be cautious or to be vigilant*. This is a reminder that temptation often comes when we are not expecting it.

Jesus also told Peter to pray so that he would not enter into temptation. James 1:14-15 says, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The word translated "to enter" means *to come near or to come in*. That is why 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." When we think we can stand in our own strength, we are coming close to temptation

because we are not watching and praying. Then, Jesus made one other key statement. Jesus said that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We may have the desire to do what is right but, in our own strength, our flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:42-46 says, “Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, ‘Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.’” Here, we see that Jesus showed Peter, by His own example, the importance of watching and praying. He went away again to pray.

Jesus showed His submission to the Father by His prayer when He said, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” Jesus knew that the cup of wrath of the Father against sin would not go away by itself. He understood that He was the only One who could drink that cup because of the fact that He was without sin. As a result, Jesus said as He prayed, “Your will be done.” We saw earlier in this topic that Hebrews 10:5-7 said, “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’” Then, Hebrews 10:10 adds, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.” Jesus showed by His prayer that He was willing to pay for our sin once for all.

When Jesus came back to the disciples, He found them sleeping again. He again left them and went and prayed a third time telling the Father that His will be done. After the third prayer, Jesus came to the disciples a third time. They were still sleeping. Jesus said that the time of preparing for temptation was past. The hour had come when the Son of Man was going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Jesus had said, in Matthew 26:31, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”’” The disciples had not watched and prayed. As a result, Jesus said that they would all stumble that night. In contrast, Jesus had prayed that the will of the Father would be done that night and He was prepared to drink the cup of the fury of the wrath of God against sin. Jesus was ready to take the full fury of the Father in our place and for our sin so that we could be freely forgiven.

Then, Jesus said, “Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.” At that very moment, the disciples could see the torches of the men who were coming to arrest Jesus approaching them. They were being led by Judas as he came to betray Jesus to this large group of men. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to have victory over temptation so that they can have victory over sin moment-by-moment and not stumble as the disciples did that night. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example the importance of watching and praying.

