

“YET NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL”

Matthew 26:31-75

Key Verse 39

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Have you ever been really sleepy but you stayed up for something? Maybe it was to work, or to study for an exam. Maybe it was to watch TV or surf the internet, or play video games, or to talk with someone. Maybe you were sick, or better yet, you were taking care of a sick child. There could be many reasons to stay up when your mind and body want to sleep. How about to pray? When was the last time you prayed for one hour? How about 30 minutes? 10 minutes? Some of us find it hard to pray for more than 10 minutes, unless we count praying with someone. We can thank God that about 20 church members gather here at 5:30 a.m. to pray for themselves and this church. All of us should pray individually or with your spouse or family every morning. My few minutes of prayer with my wife every morning are when I drive her to the train. I need to increase my prayer life. Here’s another question: what do you pray for you? What is prayer? Today, we’ll think about the highest form of prayer, which Jesus shows us. We’ll learn from Jesus about prayer and his clear confession before the Sanhedrin, and we will stand in awe of Jesus. We’ll also learn some important lessons from two disciples: Peter and Judas. May God speak to us through his Word and Spirit as we go through the 5 sections of this passage.

First, “you will all fall away” (31-35). At his last supper, Jesus predicted that one of his own disciples would betray him. Then he offered broken bread and drink to his disciples saying, “This is my body...this is my blood.” After they sang a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus had some more painful news for his disciples. He told them, **“This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”** It is incredible that Jesus knew Zechariah 13:7 would be fulfilled in himself and his disciples on that very night. Jesus knew God’s plan and will in great detail. He

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knew that as the shepherd he would be struck and that his disciples as the sheep would be scattered.

Jesus also gave them a wonderful promise: **“But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”** Actually, there were two wonderful promises here. First of all, Jesus would rise. We already know this. And Jesus had already told his disciples this several times as well. Even so, Jesus said it again. Though Jesus would be struck and killed, he would rise again. And not only that, he would go ahead of his disciples into Galilee. Though his disciples would all be scattered like scared sheep, Jesus would not abandon them. He would go ahead of them again to Galilee.

One of the disciples spoke up, as usual. You guessed it: Peter. Peter replied, **“Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”** Jesus had just said, **“You will all fall away.”** But Peter said, “No I won’t. Everyone else, maybe. But not me. No way.” We can say that Peter really loved Jesus. But, as we shall see, he didn’t know his own weakness. And he didn’t know how to depend on God, yet.

Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself. **“Truly I tell you,”** Jesus answered Peter, **“this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”** Now it was getting personal. Not only would they all fall away, Peter would even disown Jesus before dawn.

It was not what Peter wanted to hear. Peter couldn’t accept it. So he declared of himself, **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”** And all the other disciples said the same. Peter was confident that he could take a sword for Jesus. Or at least Peter was ready to fight for Jesus. And all the disciples felt the same way and made the same promise.

Second, Jesus prays in Gethsemane (36-46). Jesus went with his disciples to a garden called Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to them, **“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”** Jesus took Peter, James and John with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. It was so unusual for them to see Jesus sorrowful and troubled. Jesus said to them, **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”** Why was Jesus sorrowful? Jesus knew in detail all that would happen to him. Judas was about to betray him. His disciples would scatter. Jesus would be arrested, tried and

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condemned. Jesus would be beaten, mocked and crucified. Jesus would be shamed and humiliated. Jesus would die on the cross for the sin of the world. So he said, **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”**

And he added, **“Stay here and keep watch with me.”** Peter, James and John were his closest friends. He asked their comfort and support in this critical hour.

Look at verse 39. **“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”** Fallen on the ground Jesus prayed to God his Father. He prayed that the cup of his suffering and death would be taken away from him, if it was possible. He prayed that if possible God would find another way to save sinners and redeem the world. But Jesus’ prayer did not stop there.

Jesus prayed, **“Yet not as I will, but as you will.”** It meant, “Not what I want, but what you want.” It means that as a human being Jesus had his own human will. Though he is the Son of God, Jesus was fully human. In his humanity, Jesus did not want to die in this way. No one wants to die a painful and shameful death.

Even so, Jesus prayed, **“Yet not as I will, but as you will.”** This is the highest form of prayer. We usually think of prayer as asking God for something that we want, something to make our lives happier, or better in some way.

In 1902, Adelaide Pollard was at a prayer meeting at age 40. She heard an elderly woman pray, “Have your way with us, Lord.” This inspired Adelaide to write the hymn, “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”: Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, yielded and still. How rarely do we pray like this! And yet Jesus showed us that this is the highest and most effective form of prayer.

Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. **“Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?”** he asked Peter. **“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

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Peter said he could die for Jesus. But he could not keep watch for one hour. Staying awake for one hour can sometimes feel like dying. Jesus said, **“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”** What temptation? Of course, there was the temptation to fall asleep. There was also the temptation to fight with swords and fists. There was also the temptation to fall away from the faith, that is, to quit following Jesus. Jesus also said, **“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** If we depend on our own strength, we will eventually fail. As Jesus showed, we all must learn to depend on God in prayer.

Jesus went away a second time and prayed, **“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”** Jesus was accepting the reality that there was no other way to save the world. He knew he had to drink the cup. Through prayer to his Father God, he surrendered his human desire to submit to God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.

Hebrews 5:7 says, **“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”**

Jesus came back and again found his disciples sleeping. So he went back and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to his disciples and said, **“Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”**

Third, Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss (47-56). Just then Judas arrived, leading a large crowd with swords and clubs. Judas had arranged a signal: **“The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”** Judas went to Jesus and said, **“Greetings, Rabbi!”** and kissed him. It is amazing that Jesus didn’t punch Judas or at least push him away. Jesus loved Judas to the end. Jesus loved even his betrayer. Jesus replied, **“Do what you came for, friend.”**

Then Jesus was seized and arrested. Just then, one of Jesus’ companions drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear. Though Matthew didn’t include the detail, it was Peter who did this.

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“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, **“for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”**

Jesus also said to the crowd, **“Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.”** Then all the disciples deserted him and fled, just as Jesus had foretold.

Fourth, Jesus tried before the Sanhedrin (57-68). Jesus was taken to Caiaphas the high priest, with the Jewish teachers and elders assembled there. Peter followed secretly at a distance and sat down to see what would happen. The whole Jewish Sanhedrin was looking for false evidence, anything, against Jesus to put him to death. Many false witnesses came forward, surely from among those most hostile to Jesus or paid to lie. Finally, two declared, **“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”** Actually, that was a misquote of Jesus. He said, **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”** (Jn 2:19), and he meant his own body.

At this accusation, the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, **“Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?”** But Jesus remained silent. Jesus knew the charges were wrong and not worth debating over. He also did not want to try to save himself.

Finally, the high priest said to him, **“I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”** Jesus only needed to say, “No,” to save himself. Jesus only needed to say, “No,” if people had misunderstood who he was. This time Jesus did not remain silent. What did Jesus say?

“You have said so,” Jesus replied. **“But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** Combining prophecies from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 Jesus declared that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, and they would see him at the right hand of God.

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Jesus' words were too much for the high priest to handle. He tore his clothes and said, **“He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”** **“He is worthy of death,”** they answered.

Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, **“Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”** They were mocking his identity. They were blinded by their unbelief.

Fifth, Peter denies Jesus three times (69-75). During Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter sat out in the courtyard. A servant girl came to him. **“You also were with Jesus of Galilee,”** she said. But he denied it before them all. **“I don't know what you're talking about,”** he said. Then he went out to the gateway. There another servant girl saw him and said to the others there, **“This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”** He denied it again, with an oath: **“I don't know the man!”** After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, **“Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”** Then Peter began to call down curses, and he swore to them, **“I don't know the man!”** Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: **“Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”** And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter failed Jesus, even though he had boasted that he would die for Jesus. Actually, Peter did better in some respects than the other disciples. At least Peter tried to stay close to Jesus to see what would happen. But in the end, Peter caved in to fear and lied, saying he didn't even know Jesus, in order to save himself. In doing so, he only fulfilled what Jesus had already foretold, that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed.

The good thing is that Peter remembered Jesus' words. As long as we remember Jesus' words and take them to heart there is hope for us too. We will all fail from time to time. It's simply our human nature. But the key to pressing on is whether we will hold to Jesus' words or give up on ourselves and on Jesus.

So what can we learn from today's events in the Bible? We learn that Jesus prayed to complete God's will for our salvation. Jesus was the Son of God. But he was also fully human. It was not easy or automatic for Jesus to surrender his

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human desire and will to obey the will of his Father God. How much more do we need to surrender our own will to God’s will! How much more do we need to depend on Jesus praying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Not as I want, but as you want, Lord!”

Jesus was strengthened by God when he submitted to God the Father in prayer. We also need strength and wisdom and grace from God. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”**

Why don’t we pray earnestly like Jesus? Perhaps we would rather depend on our own effort or hard work. Perhaps we have our own desires and prayer topics that might not agree with God’s. This was Peter’s problem and that of all the disciples. Judas rejected Jesus and fell under Satan’s condemnation. Peter and the other disciples fell away in a moment of weakness, but by the grace of God, and Jesus’ prayer, they did not abandon Jesus permanently.

We are all like Peter. At church, we can all make great promises and bold decisions. But when we go out into the world, we are prone to cave in to our weaknesses. But Jesus continues to intercede for us. When we come to his throne by faith, we find mercy and grace to help us in our times of need.

The actor Kevin Sorbo was most famous for his role as Hercules. At the height of his career, he had several life-hindering strokes. He got mad at God, and he often argued with God, even though God always won. Until then, he had nominal faith in God, and he admits that until then he never really needed God. By the help of his godly wife, he found a deeper hope and faith in God. Since then he has starred in many Christian movies and he wants to instill faith and hope in others through his acting.

Usually we base our happiness on health, wealth and success for ourselves and our children. And these are indeed blessings. But people can have these things and still be unhappy. The pursuit of these things do not yield happiness. We learn

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from Judas and Peter that what we need is the truth worth living and dying for, which is the hope of the kingdom of God and the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

What good is it for a person to gain the world yet forfeit their soul? We want many things. But if what we want is not what God wants, then we are doomed to fail and fall, again and again. So the million dollar question is: what does God want, and do I trust what God wants is best? Am I willing to give up what I want for what God wants? This is the highest, most beautiful prayer and the highest, most beautiful life in Jesus Christ our Lord.