

Not My Will or Power 4-9-06

Matthew 26:31-46 (NIV)

³¹ Then Jesus 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."³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."³³ Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."³⁴ "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."³⁵ But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."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."⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."⁴² He 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."⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴⁶ Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

The Last Supper had concluded and the disciples had crossed the Kidron Valley to stay the night on the Mount of Olives at Gethsemane. Jerusalem was packed with well over 2 million pilgrims preparing for the Passover. Satan had entered Judas, (Luke 22:3) and he was leading a group of soldiers and religious leaders to arrest Jesus. The Jews from the North were celebrating Passover that day, while those from the South would celebrate the next because of differing convictions about how they reckoned a day. The two days of Passover made it possible to sacrifice the 250,000 sacrificial lambs between 3PM and 5PM on those two days. That is why Jesus and His disciples could eat the Passover lamb (Matthew 26:17) and Jesus could still die at the time of the sacrifice. (John 19:14)

³¹ Then Jesus 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." I have told you before that it is my opinion that Jesus did not rely on His Divine knowledge but on the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for many of His predictions of what was about to happen. Matthew emphasizes the quotes of Jesus from the Old Testament because His target audience was Jewish. In this passage, Jesus was quoting Zechariah 13:7. He knew His hour had come. He had warned them repeatedly, but they thought He was speaking in some kind of code that actually meant something else. (Luke 18:34)

Commented [notes1]: 3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Luke 22:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" Matthew 26:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 14 It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. John 19:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. Zechariah 13:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 34 The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about. Luke 18:34 (NIV)

Then He gave them a word of hope. ³² *But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.* In Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus first mentioned this, Mark writes, ¹⁰ *They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.* Mark 9:10 (NIV) It seems the enemies of Jesus had heard this and took it more literally than the disciples had. (Matthew 27:63-64) That is why they asked Pilate to secure the tomb. When the women were on their way to the tomb on Sunday morning, they were not going to see if Jesus had risen. They were going to anoint His body with spices so they could visit it as it decomposed. (Mark 16:1) Mary believed His prediction of being handed over and crucified, but it appears that none of the disciples believed this prediction of rising from the dead.

Commented [notes6]: 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'
64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."
Matthew 27:63-64 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
Mark 16:1 (NIV)

In response to this warning about falling away, ³³ *Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."* He was blatantly disagreeing with Jesus' interpretation of Scripture. Peter may have been the oldest in the group, certainly he was the boldest. Perhaps he was the most self-confident as well. We commend his tenacity to follow his Rabbi wherever He led, whether walking on waves (Matthew 14:29) or to the courtyard of Caiaphas during the trial. (John 18:15-16) However, Peter had to learn something that Jesus taught earlier that day, *"Apart from me, you can do nothing."* John 15:5b (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.
Matthew 14:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, 16 but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.
John 18:15-16 (NIV)

³⁴ *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."* The foretelling of his failure was going to be instrumental in driving home the point. Imagine being told that you were going to fail a loved one in some way in a short time, and then actually doing it before you realized it had happened. We were caught up in the moment and before we know it, we have done something out of fear or self-preservation that we will forever regret.

³⁵ *But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.* Even after Jesus had been so specific, Peter was confident in himself and his own determination. Luke adds more detail to Jesus words to Peter. ³¹ *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."* Luke 22:31-32 (NIV) Satan was not only after Jesus, he wanted to waste the disciples as well. The first "you" in the passage is plural. He hates what God loves. However, Jesus had prayed that Peter would endure. It does not matter how determined you are. You will sin. You will fail God. Prayer and the Word are the only weapons you and I have. (Ephesians 6:17-18)

Commented [notes10]: 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.
Ephesians 6:17-18 (NIV)

Too often, we overestimate our ability to obey. When Moses first went to Mount Sinai, ^{8a} *The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said."* Exodus 19:8a (NIV) The rest of the story is how they never obeyed! We must come to the realization of how powerless we are to do what God has asked, We can not even do what we are determined to do. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. We need to learn the necessity of relying on His enabling power. (Philippians 4:13) I have seen people in all kinds of situations in life when they faced their own failures, in prison, in addictions and even in ministry, determined and convinced that this time they were going to get it right. Every time I had this sick feeling in the pit of my stomach because I knew they were headed right back into the hole they had

Commented [notes11]: 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

just climbed out of, only this time they were going deeper than before. Peter had to come to a realization that he could do nothing without Jesus. You and I must come to the same realization if we are to be useful to God. Then we quit giving orders and even complaining about the orders we receive, but desperately desire to hear His next instruction. (Psalm 130:6)

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. The word Gethsemane means an olive press. A very large rectangular stone would be stood on top of bags of olive pulp to squeeze the oil out. There was such a press in a cave that is now a church next to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus and the disciples had permission to use this olive grove as a place to sleep, out of the weather during Passover. The climate there is very similar to our area. Passover might be very cold or it could be moderately warm. The cave in which the press stood was a good place to get out of the weather and spend the night. That is probably where He left the disciples, while Peter, James, and John went with Him into the olive grove.

Jesus knew what was coming. The name of the place perfectly pictured what He was enduring. The crushing weight of what He was about to endure and His concern for His disciples was so heavy that He sweat drops of blood. (Luke 22:44) Hematadrosis is rare condition that occurs when someone is under such intense stress that the capillaries in the skin break and blood comes out the pours of the skin.

In the movie *The Passion*, this moment is depicted as a wrestling with Satan over whether or not Jesus would go through with being the sacrifice. That night Jesus could have simply kept going over the Mount of Olives and gone back into Perea and escaped the horror that was about to unfold. He did not, because He knew there was no other way to redeem you and me. We know so little of what that struggle was really all about because the witnesses slept through most of it.

However, here is what we do know about that hour. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."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. What is the sorrow that overwhelmed Him? I can only guess. He had just said that they were all about to desert Him. That would certainly be a painful thing. He knew He was the sacrificial Lamb of God that would be crucified, bearing the sins of the world. That had to be a sorrowful thing. He knew sin is what separates us from God. I imagine that that was the most sorrowful thing of all. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Last week I spent some time with a man who shared his testimony and his hunger for God, but during the course of our conversation, I noticed him speaking of sexual temptation in a light and joking manner. Sin is no laughing matter. It is so devastating. Its end is your destruction. Jesus knew the horror of sin. For Him to think of the sins of the world being placed upon His shoulders was a crushing weight. (Habakkuk 1:13)

Commented [notes12]: My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Psalms 130:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:44 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? Habakkuk 1:13 (NIV)

Certainly, the physical suffering was a concern, but I do not think that was all that was on His mind when He referred to the cup. Earlier, James and John had tried to get top positions in the coming Kingdom. Jesus asked if they were willing to drink the cup He was going to drink. (Matthew 20:22)

Commented [notes16]: 22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Matthew 20:22 (NIV)

I have heard of various explanations of the cup, such as the cup of redemption, but that could not be drunk by James and John. It could be the cup of suffering, but I do not think that is all there is to it. In my humble opinion, it is the cup of surrendering our will to the Father regardless of where that takes us. For Jesus, it meant the cross, separation from the Father because of the sins of the world on Jesus' shoulders, the unleashing of hell upon Him in those three hours of darkness. (Mark 15:33) For John the Beloved it was going to be a long life of service, boiled in oil, exiled to a labor colony island of Patmos. What does it mean for you? Are you willing to drink that cup, surrendering to the will of the Father regardless of where it takes you?

Commented [notes17]: 33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. Mark 15:33 (NIV)

In the next sentence, Jesus accepted that cup. ^{39b} *Yet not as I will, but as you will.* There is so much to learn from this one phrase. Jesus never sinned. Yet, He willed something other than what God willed. You have a will too. It is often to do something other than what God has planned for you. It may not be a sin at all. You want one occupation. He wants you to be something else. You want to live here. He wants you to live there. You want to worship in this church, when His plan was for you to worship in that church. Those choices are not sins. They are not evil. It is a choice of a good thing but not the best. I believe that to drink the cup is to say, *"Not as I will, but as you will."* Can you say that with Jesus this morning?

⁴⁰ *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.* ⁴¹ *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."* Jesus desired for these three men to pray with Him through the temptation. The temptation was to do our own will, to run when things got dangerous. The only way to face that was the way Jesus faced it, on His knees before God. This is what Peter so desperately needed to learn. It is what we all need to learn. No matter how determined we are, we will fall victim to our human weakness if we do not rely upon God. (Colossians 4:2)

Commented [notes18]: 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2 (NIV)

Can we watch with one another through times of testing? Are we willing to set aside our plans and comforts and share our brother or sister's trial? (James 5:16) Our spirit is often willing to stand and fight, but our body is weak.

Commented [notes19]: 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16 (NIV)

⁴² *He 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."* We can see the struggle with what lay before Him. As a child, He may well have seen zealots crucified along the road near Nazareth. Certainly, He knew of the horror of that kind of a death. Again, it is my conviction that more horror lay in taking on the sins of the world. Jesus again reiterated His willingness to do the Father's will. There was no other way to save mankind. No one else could drink that particular cup. It had to be drunk by a sinless One. (Hebrews 9:12)

Commented [notes20]: 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12 (NIV)

⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. While teaching in India, I did not want any of the students to miss what the Holy Spirit was saying to them. So after a meal, when their stomachs were full, and the weather was warm, I asked them to do something I used to do. If I could not keep my eyes open, I would stand in the side aisle. It is hard to fall asleep standing. You can resist the weaknesses of the body, but when we really need to face temptation, we must do so in the strength of the Holy Spirit. (James 4:7-8)

Commented [notes21]: 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
James 4:7-8 (NIV)

⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. The battle raged on, but Jesus endured because He looked to His Father and put the Father's will above His own. What a very different and hopeless world it would be if at anytime He leaned on His own strength and fled the scene!

⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" It is the point of no return. There was no running now. He could have performed the miraculous, but there was no natural means of escape left. He endured until they came to take Him, then He had to endure the suffering that followed. In some ways, that temptation in the Garden was a greater test than enduring the eighteen hours that lay before Him. It was there He decided to yield to the Father's will above His own. That is the hardest test we face. Will we yield our will to His?

Do you realize how weak you are? Do you know how much you need the LORD to strengthen your resolve and help you to stand? It is worth noting how many times the Apostle Paul asked for prayers, prayers for doors to open (Colossians 4:3), to be given the right words (Colossians 4:4), to be bold enough. (Ephesians 6:19) After doing his very best as diligently as he could and finding out that he was fighting against God instead of for Him, He must have learned some humility and discovered how great his need was. (1 Timothy 1:13)

Commented [notes22]: 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.
Colossians 4:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
Colossians 4:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,
Ephesians 6:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.
1 Timothy 1:13 (NIV)

Of Jesus it was sung, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death..." Philippians 2:8 There is only one way to live as a human, not with the cocky self-assurance that Peter once had, but with the humility and surrender of one's own will that Jesus demonstrated. That results in desperate prayer. We do not pray more, because we do not recognize how great our need is. It is in prayer that we surrender our will. It is through prayer that we are empowered to endure the temptations that we face. It is through prayer that we become instruments of righteousness in a fallen world. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.* (Zechariah 4:6)

Commented [notes26]: 6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.
Zechariah 4:6 (NIV)