

107. Not my will, but Your will

January 14, 2018

If you had the opportunity to know your entire future from today on, what would you do? I mean literally every little detail of your future. The idea might be intriguing or exciting for a short time, but the more you think about it, the more you may not care to know what will happen to you. Just because you know the future, it doesn't mean that you can change it.

For me, if I had the opportunity to know my entire future from today on, I think I would pass. I would rather not know. But Jesus, being God, knew everything about His future down to even the smallest detail. As He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, He knew that in just a few short hours, He would be nailed to a Roman cross and crucified. He knew that He would be humiliated. He would be beaten. He would go through a horrendous excruciating whipping. He knew the great anguish that was ahead. But He also knew that through His atoning sacrifice, He would be able to save all those who choose to accept Him as their Savior and Lord.

Following someone else's will is not something we'd like to do by nature. But it should make all the difference in the world when that someone else is our God. The Lord Jesus is going to set an example for us to follow God the Father's will, not our will.

A. TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.

En route to the Garden of Gethsemane lays the Brook Kidron. This Kidron Valley is located east of Jerusalem, between the city wall and the Mount of Olives; and the Garden of Gethsemane is on the western slope of the Mount. Jesus often went to this Garden with His disciples, no doubt to rest, meditate, and pray.

Jesus chose the Garden of Gethsemane – a.k.a. the Olive Garden, just kidding – as the place to be arrested by the Jewish religious leaders and the temple soldiers, because if He was arrested within the wall of Jerusalem during this Passover season, He knew that there would be a massive riot of the people to protect Him, because He was still popular at this point. All of that would be changed within 7 to 8 hours from now. Besides, the betrayer Judas knew that Jesus would be there.

Jesus didn't want any of the people in Jerusalem to be hurt or get killed. They were the reason why He came to die that they may believe in Him and live.

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that in Jesus' day, 250,000 lambs would be slaughtered in the temple in preparation for Passover. Blood would have flowed freely from the temple into the Kidron Valley below the temple mount, causing the Kidron Brook to actually turn bloody red. As Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Kidron Valley, the unmistakable blood smell of the sacrificed animals from the brook was a vivid reminder of Jesus of His own soon-coming sacrificial death as the Perfect Lamb of God.

The Brook Kidron had a special historical significance that portrayed what had happened almost 1,000 years earlier. King David crossed the Kidron when he was rejected by his people and betrayed by his own son Absalom and counselor

Ahithophel in 2 Samuel chapter 15; Jesus, the Son of David, also was rejected by His people and betrayed by His own disciple Judas. At the end of Absalom's revolt, when Ahithophel realized that David was going to win against them, he hanged himself; at the end of his betrayal, Judas realized that he betrayed the innocent blood, he, too, hanged himself.

B. STAY AND WATCH WITH ME

Mark 14:32-34 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."

When most people are about to experience great suffering, they want to have someone with them, to help share the burden. Like many of you, I have sat with people at the hospital, waiting for the surgeon to come with a report to their family members or friends. Being perfectly human, Jesus wanted companionship as He faced the cross, He selected Peter, James, and John, the same men who had accompanied Him to the home of Jairus and to the Mount of Transfiguration.

The word "gethsemane" means "oil press." In an oil press, olives were crushed, broken, and ground up so that oil might be produced. Scripturally, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. It is not coincidental that it was in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus felt the crushing heavy burden of what was about to happen.

I see 2 reasons for His troubled and deeply distressed emotion:

Reason 1) Jesus knew what He was facing at the cross. He would face the utter isolation from His own loving Father in heaven. It is no wonder why he cried out on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" The reason why His Father forsook Him was that all the sins of mankind from the past, present, and future fell upon Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Reason 2) As a human, He knew what kind of torture and humiliating execution He had to face.

I also find 4 interesting comparisons between this Garden of Gethsemane and the Garden of Eden:

- In the Garden of Eden, man's relationship with the Father was broken because of the disobedience of Adam.
In the Garden of Gethsemane, man's relationship with the Father was restored through the perfect obedience of Jesus.
- In the Garden of Eden, the first Adam tried to hide from God.
In the Garden of Gethsemane, the last Adam, Jesus bared His soul to God.
- In the Garden of Eden, a sword of an angel was pulled out and man was driven out.
In the Garden of Gethsemane, a sword of a man was put away and a man's ear was healed.
- In the Garden of Eden, a decision was made that resulted in the damnation of the rest of mankind.
In the Garden of Gethsemane, a decision was made that resulted in the salvation of the rest of mankind.

C. NOT WHAT I WILL, BUT WHAT YOU WILL

Mark 14:35-36 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

Was Jesus chickening out because He was scared about what was going to happen to Him? No, it was not death He dreaded, rather the hour of the cross – that moment when sin was to be put upon Him. He was made a sinner for us. Because of that He had to be isolated from His Holy Father.

Hebrews 5:7-9 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

The struggle of the cross was won at the Garden of Gethsemane. This struggle at Gethsemane – the place of crushing – has an important place in fulfilling God's plan of redemption. If Jesus failed here, He would have failed at the cross.

In the Old Testament, the cup is a powerful picture of the wrath and judgment of God. In v36, Jesus asked the Father, "*all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me.*" In other words, Jesus was asking Him, "If there is any other possible way to save humanity other than the agony which awaits Me at the cross – let it be." This prayer of Jesus eliminates any other way of salvation. If there is another way, His death was not necessary.

"The Word of Faith" teachers criticize such a prayer in the mouth of a Christian, saying it is a prayer that lacks faith. They even have an audacity say that if we ask the Lord for His will, it is wrong. If that is the case, Jesus was wrong. But Jesus is never wrong, I can confidently say that they are the ones who have a wrong theology. God is not a Respector of person that He should obey us.

To pray, "*not what I will, but what You will*" is a prayer of complete faith and trust in God. Three times He prayed about the matter, and each time He yielded to the Father's will in loving surrender. Jesus displayed a complete obedience to His Father in heaven.

We need to remember that God's will is always good. It may not seem like it at times, but it is. His plan for us is good. However, He usually doesn't give us a detailed blueprint. Usually, God reveals His will to us in bits and pieces. He sees the big picture, while we just see what is in front of us only.

1Peter 3:17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

If you had been Jacob, father of Joseph in the Book of Genesis, surely like all parents, you would have prayed for the welfare of your child. But when Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers, you could have easily said, "God, what are You doing? Why did You allow this?" Yet if God had not allowed this to happen, Joseph never would have been put into that position of influence that enabled him to save the country and his own family.

If you had been the mother of Moses in the Book of Exodus, how your heart would have broken when you saw your own child being taken into the Pharaoh's court! Yet it was all part of God's plan to mold Moses into that leader who would lead Israel out of Egypt and its bondage.

If you had been the mother of Jesus and watched your own son hanging on that cross, how easily you could have said, "Lord, why did you let this happen?" But if Jesus had not died on that cross and taken our sins upon Himself, we could not know Him as our Savior today.

So when you look at the will of God in progress, it may not always make sense. But you must believe that God knows what He is doing. His will is good. Just wait until He finishes what He has begun.

Billy Graham once said, "The will of God will not take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us." Whatever situation you are in by His will, He is with you and will guide you with His grace. Just to put your mind at ease, let me say this: the Lord is more willing to guide you than you want to be guided by Him.

D. FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SANDMAN

Mark 14:37-42 Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

It is easy for us to think that the disciples of Jesus were a bunch of lofty spiritual saints who have glowing halos around their heads and talked about deep spiritual theologies all the times. While I study for each sermon, I spend many hours in reading Bibles, commentaries, and other related materials. Reading tiny letters from the same sitting position for hours makes me sleepy. I get comfort to know that these guys were just like me. When they were supposed to watch and pray for Jesus, they were having a cozy fellowship with the sandman.

At this moment of great agony, Jesus was all alone. His disciples gave Him no support at all. When we fail our God due to our ignorance or sins, God doesn't get irritated by us or condemns us. Rather, He wants us to learn from it and stay close to Him, so that we wouldn't commit another sin like that again.

Three times Jesus prayed. Three times Jesus checked to see if His disciples would stand by Him in prayer, and pray for their own strength in the coming trial. They were asleep each time. How often does Jesus "check on us" and find us asleep spiritually? Through prayer and companionship, we must stand beside each other in time of need.

Jesus prayed for the same thing three times. This shows us that it is not unspiritual to make the same request to God several times. Some hyper-spiritual people believe that if we ask for something more than once, it shows we don't have faith. But Jesus shows us that repeated prayer is completely consistent with steadfast faith.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Let's not hesitate to ask for God's will in our lives and decisions we have to make.

After all, God knows better than anyone of us. He will not give anything bad that will destroy us.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

2) Whatever situation you are in by His will, He is with you and will guide you with His grace. Just to put your mind at ease, let me say this: the Lord is more willing to guide you than you want to be guided by Him.