

Title: The Gethsemane Prayer  
Date: 09/15/24  
Subject: Jesus Christ's agony in Gethsemane  
Scripture: Mark 14:32 - 42

The last night of Jesus' life on earth was spent with his disciples. They celebrated the Jewish Passover. He instituted a new memorial meal for his followers - the Lord's Supper. He taught a new commandment that would identify them - love one another as he had loved. He demonstrated love by serving them through washing their feet. He informed them it was necessary for him to go away. He meant he'd die, but he'd also rise from the dead, ascend to heaven and return to get them so they could be with him forever. In the meantime, he'd send the Holy Spirit who'd teach and guide them into truth. He prayed for the 11 men in the room and for all his followers.

Then they left the upper room, crossed the Kidron Valley to an olive grove on the Mount of Olives...a place called Gethsemane. Normally, it would have been peaceful in the middle of the night with nobody else around. They could gaze at the stars and enjoy relief from the heat of the day.

Jesus had something else in mind - pray. He was focused on what was going to happen in the next few hours. Gethsemane means olive press. . . and Jesus would be pressed among the olives and throughout the day.

READ Mark 14:32-42

Jesus provides the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for how to pray. We're going to match it up with Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.

Grasping the magnitude of Gethsemane is made more complex by Jesus' nature of being fully God and fully human, perfect God and perfect human. It's a profound mystery of God to combine two essences in one being. We don't fully understand how they integrate. However, both are evident throughout the Gospels.

We wonder, at least I wonder, how the divine and human natures play out. How could Jesus be in profound agony - deeply distressed, troubled, with a soul overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death - when as God he knows what's going to happen? Yes, he'll die but also rise. Obviously, the human part of Jesus expresses these feelings. Someone who was snarky might have the deity part of Jesus tell the humanity part: "No worries."

And how could God die? Because that's what needed to happen to be a perfect and sufficient sacrifice. It wasn't just a perfect human, but it was Jesus as perfect God who could reconcile people with Almighty God.

The song sang prior to the message "Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, should die for me?" A verse we didn't sing begins: "'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies! Who can explore his strange design?"  
Our Father in heaven

Jesus speaks with the Father (v. 36). He acknowledges the hierarchy in the Godhead in making his petition to the Father. This isn't saying the Father is better than Jesus, more supreme, more anything. It's one

of the mysteries of the Godhead as how they've divided the work. The Father is the architect of the plan of redemption and orchestrates it. The Son carries out and accomplishes the plan. The Spirit applies the plan to people enabling them to receive it.

Jesus calls the Father "abba." Many Bibles have a footnote stating it's the Aramaic word for father and expresses a close relationship. It's more like dad or daddy. Jesus knew God was not some vague, distant entity. In the Upper Room teaching, he spoke about how he and the Father are one – he's in the Father and the Father is in him. The Son of God wasn't trying to cover a great distance when he prayed. He spoke to the Father who was present with him, right there with him.

For us. Listen closely. When we pray to the Father in heaven, we need to understand he's billions and billions and billions and billions of miles away. He is "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). "The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power" (Job 37:23).

And yet, this being who fills the universe, is the abba, daddy, Father who lives within us. Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

That's a reality that's good to know and count on... all the time. More specifically when we're deeply distressed. . . troubled. . . when our soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

We don't have to wait for a signal to travel through the vastness of space, or even for the amount of time for the phone to ring on the other end – "C'mon. Pick up already," or wait while put on hold. The Father in heaven is in us and is instantaneously reachable. God is here.

Hallowed be your name.

The only time "hallowed" is used in the New Testament is in the Lord's Prayer. It means to set apart, revere, honor, consecrate, hold something or someone as sacred. When it comes to God, it means we recognize he is the one and only God, there are no other gods and we worship nothing other than him.

In the Gethsemane prayer, V. 36, Jesus acknowledges that everything is possible for the Father. He can do anything and everything that is in keeping with his character. This is a recognition that the Father is the one orchestrating the plan.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

This is the heart of Jesus' prayer. V. 35: He prayed that if it was possible that the hour might pass from him. He struggled with whose will is better. Whose will should be followed? Matthew's account adds "if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matthew 26:39).

"This cup" is a symbol for the divine punishment and wrath that would be inflicted on him as a completely innocent being. He would take upon himself all of humanity's sins. He would bear the unspeakable agony of becoming sin and having the Father turn his face away. This action represented a break in the

relationship. Nothing like that had ever happened as he and the Father had existed in perfect union and fellowship. There had been no barrier, no distance, no separation... and no prospect of dying.

Jesus prayed for the Father to take the cup - if there was another way possible, if there was another plan morally consistent with God's will. There wasn't any. The only way was the cross. Christ willingly submitted his will to the Father.

Leave it to Luke the doctor to provide medical information: "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly. And his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Some people feel he's merely using colorful language to describe the sweat that fell from Jesus. That undertaking could be accomplished by simply saying, "Sweat fell like drops or drops of water."

Luke is probably referring to hematidrosis. When a person is under extreme emotional anguish or strain, the blood vessels can expand to the extent that they break where they contact sweat glands. The result is sweating blood.

As noted earlier, Jesus was deeply distressed, troubled and overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. It'd be like feeling your skin is crawling and hair standing on end. Emotionally? Don't feel like can take any more.

Jesus prayed more earnestly, with great intensity, fervently, with passion and emotion. This was a give it all you got, grit your teeth, white knuckle kind of praying. He didn't beat around the bush. He got right to the point and kept hammering on it. He poured out his heart like a child who wants something with every fiber of his being and pleads for it: "Please, please, please."

Jesus prays, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." Jesus prayed the same thing three times. Matthew elaborates on Jesus' prayer the second time: "My father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Luke adds "If you are willing" (Luke 22:42).

When the Son of God finished praying, he submitted to the Father. He subjected himself to the Father's will. He served, was subservient to the Father. He acknowledged that the Father's will was best.

The book of Hebrews (5:7) makes this observation about Jesus' prayer: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

Jesus was heard and God answered his prayer. The Father didn't provide another way to pay for the sin of the world. He didn't say Jesus wouldn't have to die. The Father answered by raising Jesus from the dead, allowing him to become the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9). The Father glorified the Son.

Someone has said, "Jesus did not die serenely as many martyrs have. He was no mere martyr. He was the Lamb of God bearing the penalty of the sins of the entire human race. The wrath of God was turned loose on him. Only this can adequately explain what took place at Gethsemane" (NIV Study Bible note Matthew 26:38-39).

Give us today our daily bread.

Jesus was humbly dependent on the Father to give what was needed. Therefore, He prayed about his needs, and he had big needs. He needed wisdom to see things the way the Father did. He needed strength to endure and be faithful. The Father provided help by sending an angel from heaven who appeared to him and strengthened him (Luke 22:43). The same thing happened when Jesus was tempted in the desert.

We are humbly dependent on God to sustain us. We probably won't receive help from angels, but we might. It has happened. More likely the Lord will meet our needs through providing the staples for our existence - strength for the day, the ability to endure, the ability see him as the good Father who provides for our salvation and life.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Debts doesn't seem like the right word. It sounds so money-ish. Most versions use the word "debts." I looked up the original. According to Strong's concordance: the word for debt means...debt...offense, sin, something owed; morally, a fault. Debtor is: an owner, person indebted; figuratively, a delinquent; morally, a transgressor. I guess "debt" is a pretty good word. It can be viewed as sins, trespasses, transgressions, moral crimes.

Whatever your preference of terms, Jesus didn't have any of those things. As the Son of God, he had never sinned against the Father. It would have been impossible because he is by definition and practice perfect and without sin. As one who was wholly human, he didn't sin against God. He remained perfect and sinless. Therefore, he didn't need to pray to have his sins forgiven.

He most certainly was concerned about the sins of people. A paralytic on a mat was brought to him by four friends (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus told him "Your sins are forgiven." As you can imagine, this caused an uproar among the religious leaders because nobody could forgive sins but God alone. They were absolutely correct. Only the person sinned against can forgive a sin done to him. In the same way, only God can forgive sins directed towards him. Since Jesus forgives sins done toward God, he therefore claims he is God.

His actions on the cross would be a prayer for God to forgive those who sinned against him.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Temptation is an invitation to sin. Jesus knew what it was to be tempted. He spent 40 days in the wilderness bombarded by Satan. Scripture tells us he was tempted in every way, just as you and I are (Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:15). The difference is he didn't sin which leads to the promise we can "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."

Did Jesus face temptation in the garden and if so, what kind? Temptation to find another way salvation? Temptation to not go through with God's plan? Temptation to walk away?

There were three guys near Jesus who needed to pray to not be led into temptation. Jesus had gone to Gethsemane with 11 disciples. He left eight at an initial spot, took Peter, James and John with him to another, then went about a stone's throw farther to pray by himself (Luke 22:40). Before doing so, he told them "Pray that you will not fall into temptation" (Luke 22:40). Matthew and Mark record Jesus instructing the disciples to

“stay here and keep watch with me” (Matt 26:38, Mark 14:34). All three of the Gospels tell us that after Jesus came back from praying by himself the first time, he found the disciples asleep and told them: READ v. 38.

The reason Jesus implored the disciples to pray was because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. We can have lots of good ideas, plans, hopes and aspirations, but the implementation is where it gets hard. We begin to face obstacles and struggles and the body wants to revolt against the mind and spirit.

What was the nature of their temptation? It was to be unfaithful in the situations confronting them. The first temptation was to get a little shut eye rather than pray. They didn't do a very good job of praying as they fell asleep. Luke is the most sympathetic as he says the disciples were exhausted from sorrow (Luke 22:45). It's not an excuse. Mark has Jesus directly speak to Peter while in Matthew and Luke he addresses the whole group. He asked about them being unable to keep watch with him for one hour. The second time Jesus returned to find them asleep they didn't know what to say. The third time he returned they were still sleeping.

Other temptations included reaction to the mob who came to arrest Jesus, the actual arrest, questions about knowing Jesus, the various trials, the crucifixion and what they would do afterwards.

The disciples gave in to temptation. Peter gave in to the temptation to seek revenge by taking out his sword and cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. All the disciples failed as they ran away. Peter denied Jesus three times.

The good news is the failures to beat temptation weren't the end. All 11 disciples returned to Jesus and served faithfully till their deaths. I'm sure Jesus had conversations with all of them after he rose from the dead but only the one with Peter is given in the Bible, likely because of denying Christ three times.

Temptations come to us to test whether we'll be unfaithful to God or not, choose to obey or not. Prayer to fight against temptation can be strenuous work. We need to be fully awake, alert, because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We can take encouragement from the disciples, that though we may fall, though we may lose a battle, it doesn't mean the war is over and the other side has won.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

In the high priestly prayer Jesus spoke of glorifying the Father. He had brought glory to him already by completing the work given to him (John 17:4) and his desire was to continue to glorify him (John 17:1).

We are to bring glory to God. It's been called the chief end of man. It's the reason we exist.

Hebrews 2:14-18: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”