



Matthew 26:42–46

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 has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Reflection

Ben H. Price wrote these words about Gethsemane,

It was alone the Saviour prayed
In dark Gethsemane;
Alone he drained the bitter cup
And suffered there for me.
Alone, alone he bore it all alone;
He gave himself to save his own,
He suffered, bled, and died alone,
alone.

Alone. Only Christ wasn't alone. Sure, his

disciples may have let him down, falling asleep when he needed them the most. But Jesus wasn't alone. In this dark hour he turns to his Father in prayer.

In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul tells us to 'pray continually' (1 Thess 5:16). In Ephesians he says, 'pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (Eph 6:18). But we must especially pray in times of great sorrow and despair, which is exactly what Jesus does in Gethsemane. And it works. John Ryle said, 'prayer is the best practical remedy that we can use in time of trouble.' In Gethsemane Jesus shows these words to be true.

Look at the progression in his prayers. He prays three times, firstly in verse 39,

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

A despairing, vulnerable, pray from a ‘soul overwhelmed with sorry to the point of death.’

His disciples aren’t there for him, they’ve fallen asleep, but his Father is. He prays a second prayer, in verse 42,

‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’

There’s more confidence here, more trust, and resolve.

He returns to his disciples, they’re sleeping

again. Gentle Jesus doesn't wake them, he lets them rest, and returns to his Father a third time, to pray that same prayer again,

‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’

May your will be done. I'm ready to down this cup. He's resolved, focused and ready – the weight of the world is resting on shoulders that are now set to conquer the world. The king stares into the darkness, regally and resolutely; the battle lines are drawn, Satan shudders, bring it on.

By the power of prayer. An hour ago Jesus lay face down in the dirt, emotionally, psychologically and physically recoiling from

a horror infinitely beyond anything you or I could ever imagine. Crucifixion, wrath, separation. Now he's standing, his back straight, staring into the night, resolved, focused, ready to die for the sins of the world, about to conquer Satan, sin and death. Jesus is now ready to rid the world of its curse forever, and make everything new. Because of prayer. By the power of prayer.

He's ready, but his disciples most decidedly are not. Because they did not 'watch and pray'. They slept. They fell asleep when they should have been praying. Can you imagine what verses 45 and 46 must have been like for them?

45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleep-

ing and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Imagine them, startled awake by the urgency in Jesus’ voice and his words of command. They’re groggy, bleary eyed, disorientated, as the dark night gives way to a legion of Roman soldiers bearing down upon them with swords and clubs. As their vision clears, they see in the flicker of the torch light a familiar face walking out front of the armed men. Their fear momentarily gives way to confusion, and then they feel sick to their stomachs with the realisation that their brother Judas has betrayed them. Their own brother, what has he done?

Think & Pray

Don't be caught sleeping by a disaster through lack of prayer. Are you leading a watchful and prayerful life? Are you praying continually like Jesus taught us to pray? Not fancy prayers, just regularly speaking with your Dad, sharing your life with him, the ups and the downs? Are you asking his advice, thinking things over with him, making decisions together, and leaning on him, especially in the tough times? Are you getting to know him better and better by listening to what he has to say in his word and talking it over with him in prayer? Is he preparing you for the ministry he wants you to do in the future and for the tough times that lay ahead through your prayer life? Or is there just silence?

Fits and starts? Artificial and irregular moments fitted in between the fixed rhythms of your life?

If so, why not make a change today? The Puritans used to say, simply and profoundly, 'Pray until you pray.' Start praying and don't stop praying until you've prayed. Try it, you'll quickly see what they mean, and be very thankful to them for their advice. What do you need to pray about right now? What do you need to be prepared for that's just around the corner? I'll leave you with those words again from Ben Price,

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In dark Gethsemane;
Alone he drained the bitter cup
And suffered there for me.
Alone, alone he bore it all alone;

He gave himself to save his own,
He suffered, bled, and died alone,
alone.

Because of Jesus we've been adopted
as sons and daughters into the family of
God. And by the power of prayer we nev-
er need to be alone again.