**YET NOT WHAT I WILL, BUT WHAT YOU WILL**

***Mark 14:27-52***

***“‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will’” (v. 36).***

All of us want to be like Jesus. To be like Jesus is and should be the highest goal of any believer on earth. So we sing a hymn, “O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer. This is my constant longing and prayer…” (hymn #490) Sadly, however, many believers remain in spiritual infancy characterized by self-centeredness. Why do we fail in our spiritual growth? Someone said, “To be like Jesus, pray like Jesus!” We fail because we don’t pray. And even if we do pray, we fail because we don’t pray as Jesus prayed. During his earthly life, Jesus showed the Apostles his personal prayer life. He prayed regularly very early in the morning and late in the evening in a solitary place. He prayed for various prayer topics. In today’s passage, a few hours before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. His prayer at Gethsemane is the culmination of all his prayers, which all of us must also go through if we really want to be like Jesus and live a truly free and victorious life. May God help us to learn from this prayer and give us an earnest spiritual desire to participate in this prayer!

1. **Jesus predicts his disciples’ failure (vs. 27-31)**

During the Passover meal, Jesus predicted a shocking event that one of his disciples would betray him. He also declared that he is the Passover Lamb, who would pour out his blood for many, and that his blood is the blood of the new covenant. After the meal, Jesus and his disciples had sung a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives (26). On the way, Jesus gave another surprising prediction. Look at verses 27-28. ***“‘You will all fall away,’ Jesus told them, ‘for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.’”*** Jesus forewarned that all of his disciples would turn away from him and be scattered like sheep without a shpehred. But he saw this as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah (Zec 13:7). He also gave them a hope of his resurrection and promised to meet them again in Galilee.

Jesus’ word, ***“You will all fall away”*** greatly hurt Peter’s pride. So he declared, ***“Even if all fall away, I will not” (29).*** Indeed, he loved Jesus, and he wanted to be loyal to Jesus to the end. He also thought that he was much better than the other disciples. But his human loyalty was limited. Despite Peter’s confidence, Jesus added another startling prediction. Look at verse 30. ***“‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.’”*** Here Jesus meant that Peter would formally deny his personal relationship with Jesus three times! Peter’s failure would be catastrophic, worse than all the others. ***But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same (31).***

Peter was ignorant of himself and of how strong Satan is. So he did not know how to prepare himself to fight the spiritual battle. This was the beginning of his failure. But Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He understood his weaknesses and loved him to the end. Jesus predicted Peter’s failure so that he might remember Jesus’ words and repent and be restored. Like Peter and the other disciples, we human beings are weak and vulnerable. The Bible says that there is no one righteous, not even one (Ro 3:10), and we all, like sheep, have gone astray (Isa 53:6a). Nobody is exempt from Jesus’ warning, ***“You will all fall away”*** or ***“you will disown me.”*** Jesus knows our weaknesses. In our failures, Jesus wants us to remember that he understands our limitations. Rather than remaining in our guilt and despair, we must come back to him as we are in our repentance and faith even seventy-seven times per day (Mt 18:22).

But Jesus doesn’t want his disciples to take every failure for granted and just remain in spiritual infancy again and again. His hope for us is far beyond that. Jesus wants us to know about our weaknesses and the spiritual reality. Based on such understanding, Jesus helps us learn how to fight the spiritual battle and continue to grow as spiritual warriors. He wants us to live victorious lives for God’s glory. How is this possible? Jesus teaches us a life-changing prayer through his own example.

1. **Jesus prays at Gethsemane (vs. 32-52)**

Jesus and his disciples went to a place called Gethsemane, which means “olive press” since people pressed olives to extract oil there. It was a garden located on the west side of the Mount Olives. Jesus said to his disciples, ***“Sit here while I pray” (32).*** He took Peter, James and John along with him. He began to be deeply distressed and troubled and shared his agony with them: ***“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death…Stay here and keep watch” (33-34).*** The New Living Translation says, ***“My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.”*** Why was Jesus so overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death? In the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, John the Baptist explained the reason for Jesus’ agony, pointing to Jesus’ mission: *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29).*

We often experience how burdensome each of our sins are. The guilt of just my own sin is really heavy enough to crush my soul. On top of this, when we try to bear another person’s small weaknesses and pain, we become easily burdened. But Jesus would bear all the heavy sins of millions and billions of people who have ever lived and would live on earth. The unfathomable weight of human beings’ transgressions, weaknesses, pain, sorrow and suffering would be laid upon Jesus’ shoulders. In particular, Jesus knew in detail the events to follow soon after he was betrayed by one of his disciples. He would undergo several unlawful trials and be handed over to a Gentile ruler. He would be flogged nearly to the point of death. After that, they would pound metal spikes into his hands and feet. Blood would burst forth, and his bones would be crushed. He would be hung on the cross and numbered among the transgressors and mocked publicly. Yet there was more. He would be totally abandoned by even his beloved Father, who had loved him before the creation of the world. The spiritual pain of this abandonment no doubt greatly exceeded the intense physical pain our Lord endured on our behalf.

When any trial approaches, we want to avoid it by any means and run away from it. But what did Jesus do? He came to the Father in prayer and fought the spiritual battle. Going a little farther from the three disciples, he fell to the ground and prayed (35). To the Jewish people, falling to the ground was an expression of extreme urgency, humility and total dependence. The disciples vividly saw every move and heard every word in Jesus’ struggle. He fully revealed his humanity so that they might witness this and learn how Jesus, as a full human being like us, overcame the trial through his prayer. What was the content of his prayer? Look at verse 36. ***“‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’”***

“Abba” is an Aramaic word for “Father” used by both children and adults toward their fathers. It conveys deep respect together with intimacy. In calling God “Abba,” Jesus affirmed his intimate relationship with his Father. He did not doubt the Father’s love in his trial. In our hardships, we may easily doubt God’s love. We tend to become distant and to lose intimacy. We wonder, “If God loves me, why is this happening?” But we learn from Jesus to trust in the Father’s absolute and personal love for each of us in any situation.

As Jesus did not doubt the Father’s love, so he did not doubt his power. He confessed, ***“…everything is possible for you.”*** Jesus teaches that the object of our prayer is God. Our God is the Creator and Almighty God. Nothing is impossible for him. Jesus believed that God could change even the way of salvation for human beings if there was another way to fulfill his world salvation plan. So he prayed, ***“Take this cup from me.”*** Here “cup” refers to his suffering and death on the cross to pay for the penalty of sinners. No one wants to die in great pain and shame. Neither did Jesus. Jesus again revealed his full humanity like us. He is fully God and fully human. So he alone can be the perfect mediator between God and man. Hebrews 4:15 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.”*

Although Jesus prayed, ***“Take this cup from me.”*** he did not stop there. Immediately he said, ***“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*** The word “Yet” is important. It was the turning point from “my will” to “God’s will” and from “me-centered” to “God-centered.” Jesus did not please himself, but pleased God. Jesus did not pray to avoid God’s will, but to submit to God’s will. This submission did not come naturally, even for Jesus. Jesus’ struggle in prayer was so intense that Luke says, *“…his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Lk 22:44).* In medical terms, this is called “hematidrosis,” which means “blood sweat”. It is a rare, but very real medical condition that under great emotional stress, tiny blood vessels rupture and produce a mixture of blood and sweat. Have you ever experienced such “blood sweat” in your spiritual struggle and prayer? We can only imagine how severe Jesus’ struggle was.

Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer was the culmination of his lifetime struggle to obey God’s will. Jesus came into the world to obey God’s will, renouncing his power and glory in heaven. While on earth, he did what God wanted him to do every day through prayer and served all kinds of sinners according to God’s will. Finally, he submitted to God’s will to take up his cross through his prayer, ***“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”***

Jesus teaches us that the highest aspect of prayer is to deny oneself and submit to God’s will. We live a life of choice to deny myself or deny God’s will. Every day we face such a choice. So Jesus says in Mark 8:34, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”* To deny ourselves means to “renounce ourselves.” It is to empty ourselves of our own dreams, plans and ideas and really listen to what God wants us to do, and surrender to God’s purpose. Through his example, Jesus teaches us that we need to go through intense spiritual struggle before God in our personal prayer. We must kneel down and ask the help of the Holy Spirit when we need to forgive and love someone. We need to pray for God’s strength when lust and greed try to occupy our minds. We need to pray for God’s discernment to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. When we are burdened with fear and doubt, we need to pray for God’s power to strengthen us to have faith in God and give thanks to him in all circumstances. These struggles are usually invisible, but God knows them and he grants us victory.

Hebrews 5:7-9 summarizes Jesus’ struggle and the victory he won: *“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. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”* By obeying the Father’s will, he won the final victory. Through his suffering, death and resurrection, he defeated the power of sin, death and Satan. He freed us from condemnation and gave us eternal life and the kingdom of God. He is now sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God, having all authority in heaven and on earth. Praise the Lord, who obeyed the Father’s will and became the source of eternal salvation for us!

Now Jesus is with us, intercedes for us and encourages us to follow in his footsteps. He proved that the cross is the only way of God’s salvation. He assures us that the way of the cross is the way for all Jesus’ disciples to follow. As we learn from Jesus’ example and submit our wills to God’s will, the result is not losing but victory. We don’t need to fear in obeying God’s will. Jesus promises in Mark 8:35, “*For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”* As we surrender to God’s will, we are also used as God’s glorious instruments to fulfill his purpose. We experience freedom from the bondage of selfishness. We have heavenly peace and joy from God. We grow in Jesus’ image. We bear fruit that will last. What a great victory it is!

I learned from P. Ron Ward, our Chicago UBF Pastor, about how he prayed at his own “Gethsemane” and why God is using him preciously. He worked closely with our ministry founder, the late Dr. Samuel Lee, for the last 18 years of Dr. Lee’s life. Dr. Lee required P. Ron’s full devotion and hardworking spirit. Every day P. Ron had to pray, “…not my will, but yours be done,” emptying himself of his own dreams and ideas, and submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was really great training. Yet, there were three times when he reached a limitation and could not continue, either out of frustration or concern for his own family. Each time, however, he went to the Lord earnestly in prayer. And each time he could grow deeper in commitment to serving the Lord’s will together with his servant. He confesses that in truth, it was only by the strength of God through prayer that he could take his personal cross of co-working with Dr. Lee to the end. His encouragement to others is that while each person has their own unique struggles, we all need to learn the principle, ***“yet not what I will, but what you will.”***

Look at verses 37 and 38. ***“Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”*** In the midst of his own spiritual battle, Jesus was concerned about his disciples and returned to them. He found them sleeping. Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. The author comments that their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him (40). Why did the disciples fail to watch and pray in this time of crisis? Did they eat too much food and drink too much wine at the Passover meal? Was the burden of Jesus’ agony weighing heavily on their hearts? Whatever the reason, they were letting down their guards fully and in a very vulnerable position in their spiritual battle.

Jesus teaches us why we have to keep watch and pray in any situation. First of all, we need to pray not to fall into temptation. Satan is so powerful and crafty that no one can resist him by their own strength or wisdom. Satan never takes vacations. He is always going around like a prowling lion, seeking someone to devour. When we do not pray, we lose discernment and in fact, we become the devil’s prey. Second of all, we are weak. Many excuse their failures in prayer by using Jesus’ words, ***“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*** But Jesus meant that because we are weak, we need to keep watch and pray. Those who recognize their weakness humbly come to God in prayer moment by moment. Such people will live a victorious life by God’s help.

While the disciples were sleeping, Jesus prayed with the same prayer topics three times. Jesus prayed until he had decided to obey God’s will deeply from his heart. Before prayer, Jesus was in sorrow and deep distress and anguish to the point of death. After prayer, Jesus was full of conviction and courage. So he said to his disciples like a Conqueror, ***“Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” (41-42)***

In verses 43-52, we see how Jesus actually confronted his betrayal and arrest. But the disciples were not ready to meet the crisis. One of his disciples drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (47). John informs us that it was none other than Peter who did this (Jn 18:10). Then all the disciples deserted Jesus and fled, just as he predicted (50). Everything seemed chaotic, but Jesus said, ***“But the Scriptures must be fulfilled” (49b).*** Jesus saw the situation from God’s point of view.

Though Jesus is the Son of God, he knelt down and came to God in prayer. It was to submit to God’s will and take the burden of our sins upon himself as the Lamb of God. Praise and thank the Lord Jesus for his love and perfect example for us! We need not despair in times of trial, but can come to God in our prayers seeking his will. When we follow Jesus’ example at Gethsemane, God blesses us to grow in his image and guarantees us a victorious life. May God’s will be done in each of our lives!