

Righto:

We're going to be studying this Bible reading over the next 2 weeks...

Today, we're going to be looking at it from the perspective of Jesus, and we're going to be learning about Prayer, and what "Praying in Faith" really is...

And then **next** week, we're going to look at it from the perspective of the disciples, and (I guess), we're going to see how they failed to stand by Jesus – I mean, they **deserted** Him at the time of His arrest and trial and crucifixion. But we're also going to talk about how later on, something changed in them – Something changed, and they began to stand strong – even unto death.... And so next week, we're going to talk about what enabled them to do that, and what enables us to be able to stand strong for Jesus....

So, that's next week. **This** week: prayer; and praying in faith.

Many of us know, that we're not very good at praying. And if we want to learn how to pray better, the best way to do that, is to learn from someone who **is** really good at praying. And there's no one who's better at praying, than Jesus is...

So, let's set the scene:

They've just finished the Jewish Passover meal; And Jesus has longed to share this meal with His disciplesⁱ; And there's a real feeling of anticipation here – Jesus is doing something new and amazing, but the atmosphere is also filled with a fair bit of tension and foreboding... Jesus is going to be betrayed... His body is going to be broken...

And He demonstrated that to His disciples during the meal, when He took the bread, and broke it, and said “This is my body”. And then He took the cup and said “This is my Blood of the covenant”...

Jesus was very aware, that the time of His suffering was imminent – It was right there upon Him... And He goes to the Mt of Olives and to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray...

And **I** believe, in all of the Scriptures, **this** prayer (for me), is the greatest example of what a prayer of faith, **really** looks like...

I wonder, “What prayer would you choose?”...

“What prayer (from all of the Scriptures), would you identify as the greatest prayer of faith???” Some people might think of when:

- Elisha prayed for the Shunammite Woman's son who had died, and he came back to life againⁱⁱ; some others might think of when

- Peter prayed for a woman named “Tabitha”, who had died, and she rose again;
- Prophet Elijah built an altar for God, and dowsed the wood and the offering with water, and then prayed for God to light it up; or maybe
- You might think of numerous examples of praying for healing....

But I reckon, the best example of a prayer of faith, is right here:

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There at Gethsemane, Jesus told most of His disciples to stay where they were, and He just took with Him, Peter, James and John ... Now, I don't know why these 3 disciples seemed to be so special. They were like the inner circle (if you like), and they seemed to be extra close to Jesus – His closest friends (perhaps).... And there had been special times, that Jesus had shared with only those 3 ... And this was going to be another one of those times....

Now, at that point, what was Jesus' state of mind??? What was His emotions??? Mark tells us that He began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, **“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.**

Jesus was in a state of deep turmoil... And He said, “Look, you 3 stay here” ... **“Remain here and watch.”**

Jesus was so torn – He needed to just be alone with His Heavenly Father, in prayer. But He **also** needed the support of having some Godly friends, nearby... And that's often what we need...

You know, some people like to think that they should be able to go through life, and navigate all their tough times, all on their own,,, and that if they share their burden, they're being weak... Not so!

Jesus needed His Godly friends to be near Him, and so do we... In times of despair and turmoil: Yeah, we need times of being alone in prayer with God, but we **also** need to have the nearby support of our Godly friends...

And that's why Jesus said: "Stay here, but I want you to watch"...

It's like saying, "I need to be alone with God right now, but I need your support."..

And He fell on the ground... What's the correct posture for praying???

- Sometimes it's to clasp your hands and close your eyes;
- to stand, with arms lifted high;
- to kneel;
- to fall, flat on your face...

And that's what Jesus did this time: He fell on the ground and he prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

"Abba, Father, [Dad, Father – a personal connection] all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Alright, Jesus knows what God's plan entails. Jesus knows, that God's will, was going to be very costly for Him, indeed...

"Dad, Nothing's impossible for You"... Alright, Jesus' faith is strong. He is acknowledging the power and the might of God... Our Heavenly Father is so strong. He is so powerful. **Nothing** is impossible for Him... He can do **anything** He likes....

So, if God is able to do anything,,,,, what does Jesus ask for??? **Remove this cup from me.**

Jesus didn't want to die... Jesus didn't want to go through the torturous death of crucifixion... "Dad please,, **Remove this cup from me."**

Now, if Jesus had the 'Name-it-&-claim-it' theology that a lot of people preach today, that's where His prayer would've ended... Or maybe He might've gone on to say, "*Remove this cup from me, and I believe that this bitter cup of death has been taken from me; I believe it's gone; Hallelujah; praise the Lord.....*"

Alright, but Jesus didn't pray anything like that, did He... His prayer didn't end there – He went on: **Yet not what I will, but what you will."**

Now, I don't know about you, but this is a hard thing for me to grasp –...: Jesus is God; Jesus is a part of the God-Head-He's part of the trinity; God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.... Human, and yet divine... When Jesus came to this earth, He took on human flesh... And to become fully human, in a way, He left some of His divinity behind...

In Philippians 2, Paul talks about it in terms of Jesus emptying Himself and becoming a servant.

Alright, Jesus became Human,,, and as such, He was subject to Human weakness and torment...

As a human:

- Jesus would feel pain; and as a human
- He would feel the torturous agony of the scourge and crucifixion;

And as a human, the weakness of His humanity, is what made Him cry out, "Dad,,, Father,,, **Remove this cup from me."**

But the **strength** of His Holy Spirit – (the strength of His divinity) is what made Him continue in prayer, **Yet not what I will, but what you will."** And so, we see the Son of God, willingly submitting Himself, to the Father's purpose.

Anyway, Jesus prayed for a while (about an hour), and then He goes back to the 3 disciples (Simon/Peter, James and John),,, And they were asleep...

Are you lot asleep??? **Could you not watch one hour?**

38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Now, we're going to talk more about this verse next week, but Jesus is telling them, "**You need to pray too.**" **38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.**

What were they going to be tempted with???

Well, Jesus had warned them that they would fall away...

They were very confident that they **wouldn't** fall away, but Jesus knew better – they couldn't even stay awake and pray for an hour...

And Jesus says something here (V38), that usually, we assume only applies to the disciples,,, "**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

And we think, "Oh, it's just because they were tired... They wanted to stay awake, but they just couldn't keep their eyes open any more... - Afterall, it's been a big week..."

And yes, Jesus **is** talking about the disciples: **Yes**, they have every intention of following Jesus, but He knows they're going to fail... The spirit **is** willing, but the flesh is weak"

But I wonder, “Have we ever really considered, that this was the exact same internal battle, that **Jesus** was praying His way through?”... We can see it, right there in His prayer::: The flesh was saying: “I don’t want to die”; “I don’t want to suffer”. “If there’s another way, Dad, let’s do it that way”...

The flesh was weak... But the Spirit, rose above the flesh...

Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

That’s a Spiritual prayer. That’s a prayer of faith.

So, He left His disciples again, and went **back** to His prayer... And He prayed the same words...

And then He went to check on His disciples again, and they were asleep again, and then He must’ve gone back and prayed some more, because He came back to His disciples a third time, and they were sound asleep again...

It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

Jesus didn’t flee... The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak... And that’s what Jesus dealt with in prayer...

Our human nature, wants to do things the easy way; the comfortable way; the safe way; the popular way... Whereas the Spirit, aspires to something much Higher – the will of God...

In the book of The Revelation, there's a lot of imagery, and one of the images, is of golden bowls (full of incense), which are the prayers of the saints".... Alright, our prayers are being received into the very throne-room of God... What sorts of prayers are we sending up there??? Are we sending prayers that might satisfy our weak flesh??? Or are we filling those bowls with Spiritual prayers – with the sorts of prayers that **belong** in the throne-room of God???

What sorts of prayers do **we** pray??? And what truly is, “Praying in Faith”?

You see, way too often, our prayers could be boiled down to something like: “*Lord, please do what my weak flesh wants*”. Whereas a **Godly** prayer could be summarised as “Lord, please do what Your Powerful Spirit wants – no matter what the cost is to me and my weak flesh.”

You see, prayer, shouldn't be about us changing God's mind... Prayer should be about us seeking the Will of God, and aligning ourselves **with** the will of God...

Now, sometimes we don't know what the will of God is. Sometimes we do... But despite this, many people today think that “Praying in faith”, is “*us deciding what we want*”, or “*us thinking that we know what's best for us, or somebody else, and somehow, for us to believe it into existence*”... – if I

believe, and believe hard enough, and I don't doubt, then God will do exactly what I ask...

And then, if it doesn't happen, well what went wrong???

Well, maybe there was some sin; Maybe there was some lack of faith... ..

Do you know what I reckon is one of the biggest causes of unanswered prayer??? – It's assuming, that the will of the weakness of my humanity, is the best that the Spirit of God can do...

You see, usually, when we follow the will of God, it's very costly. Being a disciple of Jesus (and following Jesus), is difficult (hard, narrow road)... **But** if God's will for us, is costly; and difficult ; and painful,, How can we pray through it???

The weakness of Humanity prays "Father, take this cup away from me"... And the strong, spiritual prayer – a prayer of faith, prays, "Yet not my will, but Your will be done"...

You know, some people believe that a prayer of faith, is to have **zero** doubts – to believe that "*I'm asking for this, and God's going to do it*"...

But the **greatest** prayer of faith, is to cry out to God, "Lord, if there's another way, please, can we do it that way,, but even so, I'm willing – Your will be done..."

The Spirit's willing, but the flesh is weak,, Lord, align me to Your will...

Many people have the view, that for them, God's way is going to be easy; prosperous; and peaceful... What a nonsense...

Often, people have said to me, "If I have a peace about something, then I know that it's God's will." Really???? Jesus obviously didn't get that memo...

That's the exact opposite to the prayer of faith that Jesus demonstrated... Somehow Jesus knew God's will... How peaceful was He about it?...

- "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.
- He was greatly distressed and troubled.

He didn't have peace... He didn't have peace, until He aligned Himself with the will of God...

And that's where we so often get it wrong... We try to work out what God's will is, and when we come to an option that makes us feel peaceful, "Yeah, that must be it." That's the opposite to what Jesus did...

The will of God was before Him... And the finding of peace, was a prayer of faith...

- Recognising the amazing power of The Almighty God, our Heavenly Father; and
- Knowing that God can do whatever He wills;
- Recognising that our human *weakness*, is what points us towards:

- the easy option;
- the comfortable option;
- the painless option;
- And wrestling though this, until we come to the point that:
 - God is sovereign;
 - He is King;
 - He is Lord;
 - His way is Best; and
- So we yield our will, and pray, “Your will be done”...

Praying in faith, is about trusting God with our future. And that’s when we find peace. The finding of peace, comes with a prayer of faith, that trusts God with our future....

ⁱ Luke 22:15–16 (ESV)

¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

ⁱⁱ 2 Kings 4:33