

He chose to drink the cup

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[0 : 0 0] I'll be reading from Matthew chapter 26, verses 30 to 56.! Jesus said to them, You will all fall away because of me this night.

For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

Peter answered him, Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. Jesus said to him, Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

Peter said to him, Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And all the disciples said the same. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane.

And he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

[1 : 3 3] And then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful even to death. Remain here and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, So could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak. Again for the second time he went away and prayed, My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

And then he came to the disciples and said to them, Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

[2 : 5 9] Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. And while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him. And he came up to Jesus at once and said, Greetings, Rabbi.

And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, Friend, do what you came to do. Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And then Jesus said to him, Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?

[4 : 19] At that hour, Jesus said to the crowds, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day, I sat in the temple teaching and you did not seize me.

But all this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. And then all the disciples left him and fled.

Well, good morning, everyone. Well, it's good to see no one's in the first two rows. I can speak and spit as loud as I want, but it's probably a good thing.

Our families had a cold earlier in the week. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Let's pray. Father, we always need your help to even want to listen to your word and to understand, to believe, to obey.

Father, I pray that you give us a bigger view of your son through your word to us this morning and a bigger view of your grace so that our lives might trust you and obey you more.

[5 : 35] And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, unanswered prayer. Unanswered prayer can trouble many of us in our faith, can't it?

Or seemingly unanswered. Even when we pray for good things, godly things, we feel desperate, but we feel like there's no hope, that there's no help.

When what's happening in your life and what God has asked you to do just feels impossible. When things get worse rather than better.

Whether it's he's asking you to let go of something precious in your life so that you might love him first or it's just some extremely hard, painful times or an extremely difficult act of obedience.

When we feel like we get unanswered prayer, it can really rock us. Is God with me or not? And I think over time we can go two bad directions.

[6 : 50] One is we just stop wrestling with God at all. We stop praying because we don't think he's answering. Another direction is we pray but we're afraid.

We know God is sovereign but we're praying in a way where we're like I'm afraid of your will. I'm not sure I trust your good. Now, please hear me right.

I believe James 5 that says the prayer of a righteous man or woman is powerful and effective. But there is no one more righteous than Christ and in our passage today the Father answered no.

No. The Father said no. It is the greatest no anyone has ever received to a prayer.

I've received no's and I'm glad he said no to a lot of things actually but this is a big no. But in it we see more clearly what's in the heart of Christ.

[8 : 10] We see the depths of Christ's heart here in Gethsemane. So we're just outside Jerusalem we're on the Mount of Olives in the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus has taken his closest friends Peter, James and John to pray. They've just shared the Passover. He knows he's the true lamb. He knows that.

what we looked at last he knows he's the substitute that his people will shelter under his blood shelter from God's wrath.

He knows his death is going to set his people free from the power of sin and Satan. He knows his blood is going to create the eternal covenant community of fellowship with God.

He knows that. His death has been on his mind the entire gospels. It's always at the forefront of his mind. He knows it's the primary objective of his coming into the world.

[9 : 09] He knows it's been leading to this moment. His entire life something really amazing about the person of Christ is he's so in control.

His entire ministry he's in control of his person of the situation but look at him here in Gethsemane. he is not a fanatic.

He's not a suicide bomber who's longing for martyrdom. He's not. He's not a stoic just calmly accepting his fate.

He's a mess. He's a mess. You can't get stronger language in verse 38.

my soul not just sorrowful but exceedingly very sorrowful even to death. I feel like I'm going to die right here.

[10 : 11] And he falls on his face. He's in the dust. And Luke's gospel tells us the fear is so strong. Blood is forced through his pores And it's clotting.

In the cold night air he's sweating drops of blood. He is a mess. Many of his followers have faced death more courageously.

When M and I visited Oxford we went to see the martyr's memorial where there's an X on Broad Street in Oxford.

People just happily going about their day and in the middle of this public place is this X where they burnt at the stake. In 1555 Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer because they supported the English Reformation the truths we hold so dear.

They were burnt at the stake. And apparently Hugh Latimer he's famous for people hearing him say when the flames were coming up be of good cheer Master Ridley and play the man for we shall this day by God's grace light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out.

[11 : 42] So what's going on here with Jesus if his followers can face death like that can't he play the man what can make the divine son of God have such darkness of soul Mel Gibson's movie The Passion I'm not raising it necessarily to recommend it it emphasizes the brutality and the physical pain of his beatings in the cross like that there's no mistaking how he directed the emphasis there it's it's gore in the gospels you see Peter bitterly weeping after he denies Christ he's in mental anguish you see

Judas full of remorse he's in mental anguish but the gospels don't emphasize Jesus' physical pain or his mental pain at the cross it's just very matter of fact and they crucified him it's not the physical pain or mental pain I'm not doubting there was great physical and mental pain but it's Jesus' prayer that tells us what's going on the cup verse 39 my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not as I will but as you will the prophets describe this cup Isaiah 51 17 after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath who have drunk to the dregs the bowl the cup of staggering

Jeremiah 25 15 take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it they shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them it's the cup of his wrath the father doesn't have a bad temper his wrath is his considered righteous judicial anger at evil now many have a problem with the idea of God having wrath let me let me quote from someone who has experienced much more hardship than I have in my life hopefully I get his name right Miroslav Volf he's a theologian he lived in during the time of the war in former

Yugoslavia and he writes this according to some estimates 200,000 people were killed and over 3 million were displaced my villages and cities were destroyed my people shelled day in and day out some of them brutalized beyond imagination and I could not imagine God not being angry how did God react to the carnage by doting on the perpetrators in a grandfatherly fashion by refusing to condemn the blood bath but instead affirming the perpetrator's basic goodness wasn't God fiercely angry with them though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil God isn't wrathful in spite of being love

God is wrathful because God is love because God is love it's at the cross Jesus took the wrath of God but it's here in Gethsemane that he seems to be given this special view of it he's given this foretaste of it he's beginning to taste the abandonment the anger the father as it were set this cup down before him and says will you drink it Jonathan Edwards he preached on this passage in 1757 he says this God brought him to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it and stand to view its raging flames and see the glowings of its heat that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer here in

[17 : 11] Gethsemane he is standing at the mouth of the flames and the father set this cup before him will you drink it no human being has ever faced a death like this so his first prayer my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me he's asking is there no other way is there no other way when I was a scripture teacher at a high school I was called a bigot by one of the students and I've never been called big anything so I had to look up what it meant

I don't know if that was your class Sean was it isn't it so unreasonable of us Christians it's so prejudiced that you we look on the rest of the world sincerely searching for God through other beliefs and we say they're going to go to hell because they're not believing in you're the only way Jesus is praying is there another way I don't want to drink this many believers and churches down play and just let's just be a bit quiet about this idea of God's anger if you just say

God loves everyone what does it cost God to love you nothing nothing but here in Gethsemane we see the cost we see the great love of God when you factor in the wrath of God he's praying is there no other way surely God's almighty wisdom and power he can think of a way that mankind can be saved from hell and brought into heaven at the same time save his son Gethsemane says there's no other way unless Jesus standing at the mouth of this furnace chooses to drink the cup in your place in my place why did the father have his son experience this now in this garden

I think we see the greatness of his choice for you for me the greatness of his choice he's outside he's in Jerusalem he's not in Jerusalem sorry he's outside in the open air there's no walls keeping him he's in the dark his disciples are asleep Judas isn't here yet the crowds are not here yet he can run he can slip away and it's in this moment the father gives him this foretaste of hell he could just run away he knows he's about to face the hatred of mankind he knows he's minutes away from Judas and the representatives of the chief priests and of the people coming and hating him without cause simply for

Jesus saying he alone can reveal the true God to you he alone can reconcile you to God the world such injustice none of us have experienced injustice like that he's about to experience the hatred of the world he came to save but he chose to drink the cup he's got all the power to change this situation Peter uses his sword no doubt aiming for the head but misses and gets the ear and Jesus rebukes him at once Peter isn't protecting Jesus Jesus is protecting Peter from his unfaithfulness he has all the power of heaven to change this situation in the Roman army apparently a legion of soldiers is about 6,000 soldiers do you think that

[22 : 22] I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels one angel would be enough heaven will be emptied of its armies if I just call them in an instant he's got all the power to change this situation but he picks up the cup perhaps even more painful than the injustice and cruelty of enemies is when your friends aren't there for you when you need them the most that is some of you experience that deeper than I have that's deep pain and here we have it his three closest friends seeing him in such agony to stay here and pray he's facing hell and they're so uncaring literally facing hell and they're so uncaring and ungrateful and so weak and unable to stand with him

I can't watch for one hour after such boasts though they all fall away I will never fall away even if I must die with you I will not deny you and all the disciples said the same and the disciples left him and fled abandon him and Jonathan Edwards again he imagines what Christ could have said to himself in that moment why should I yield myself to be thus crushed by the weight of divine wrath for them who have no love to me and to my enemies shall I be the richer for having saved a number of miserable haters of God and me who deserve to have divine justice glorified in their destruction do you see how great his choice is the father sets his cup before him he is free to run away in the dark he knows the world is going to pour out their hatred on him in a moment he has all heaven's power at his disposal his friends are so ungrateful and unfaithful abandoning him and he picks up the cup he chooses!

the cup when he prays for the second and third time I think his prayer is shifting!

the first prayer is there no other way second prayer is your will be done he's praying for help in his human weakness that he might not fail your will be done he's praying that his suffering achieves all God's will all his purposes for his death the glory of God and his grace the eternal redemption of us and our happiness forever the redemption of all creation may your will be done in this now when he prays for the second and third time your will be done I don't think this is him his will being crushed and forced by the father's will I think it's an expression of his deepest desire of his heart every part of his body doesn't want to go through with this but here we see his deepest prayer we get a glimpse of the relationship between

God the father and God the son in that phrase when he said do you think I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels I think I imagined it as this fatalistic view where the son had no other option but to go to the cross and here he's saying if I appeal to my father he'll rescue me at once Jesus doesn't see fatalism he doesn't see the father taking the cup and forcing it down his throat the father would send angels to save his son of course he would so when you praise your will be done it's an expression of his deepest longing longing it's not just accepting this is the script your will be done I have to follow it it's not saying well suppose it doesn't matter what

[27 : 32] I want it's only what the father wants it's not that it's my deepest longing is that your will be done he chooses to obey his father he trusts his father's will that it's good well Jesus praying your will be done is first something he alone had to do for us and second it becomes a great model for us to pray the same thing in any situation we're in but it first has to be for us he alone had to drink the cup of God's wrath you and I can't do it I wondered why he tells his disciples ahead of time you're all going to fall away because of me he tells

Peter you're going to deny me this night three times I don't think he's rubbing their noses in it he's not rubbing their noses in their favor he's preparing them when you fall when you're faithless I know the weakness of your sinful nature that's why I'm picking up the cup we get to drink the cup of the Lord's supper we get to drink the cup of covenant of peace of fellowship because he drank the cup of wrath him praying your will be done is drinking a cup we will never have to drink the first Adam was in a garden he was told by

God obey me obey me about the tree obey me and you will live and he chose not to the second Adam is in a garden the representative of the human family obey me about the cross about the tree obey me and I will crush you abandon you agony when I completely withdraw from you obey me no one has ever been asked to do that and he chose to drink the cup your will be done he's our Passover lamb he's our true and better Adam the head of the new family it's his obedience that covers his family what can

I ask have you have you come to him to take shelter under his blood please don't be I don't know if you're new to Christianity or looking into it but don't be indifferent about the idea of God's anger we use hell as a bit of a curse word we make jokes about it but look at the terror of the son of God in Gethsemane it's right to be afraid but be afraid so that you come to him he alone can obey in your place he alone can drink that cup you can't drink it I can't drink it I don't want to drink it I won't have a drink thanks to him but also if you're a believer who is afraid that your faithlessness you just think he'll give up on you and you can't keep up your side of the relationship look at the faithlessness of these disciples he knows that he knows our weakness and he chose to pick up the cuff for you there's nothing you can do he's taken hell for you knowing we are so weak you can't stuff it up now because he chose to pick up the cup looking at his choice that empowers us to voluntarily choose to pray your will be done

God never will set before you the cup of wrath never is a bit random but I was doing washing up in the sink once and I cut myself on tongs I don't know how you do that but I managed to do that and I was bleeding in the sink while was trying to dress my wound for some reason that was just the moment in my life where I saw my blood and I knew that I will never be caused pain as punishment it never means his anger not wrath he never sets the cup of wrath before us because it's already been drunk he sets before us things very precious in our life that we don't want to let go of because he wants to give us more he sets before us very hard things to do hard situations but there's only one thing strong enough to convince our hearts to voluntarily choose to pray my deepest desire is your will be done is if we look at

[34 : 16] Jesus in Gethsemane and he did it for me he took hell for me Elizabeth Elliot many will know her name she was telling the story of what God used in her life to teach her to trust his will she tells this story when I was about four years old a young woman who was on her way to China as a missionary visited our home when I was eight years old I found out that John and Betty Stam this woman who came to visit had been captured by Chinese communists chained together stripped half naked and marched through the streets of a little village and they were both beheaded when

I was 12 I found a prayer that Betty had written when she was about 18 years old I was so taken by it and wanted to make it my own prayer that I copied it into the back of my Bible and little could Betty have ever imagined that anyone would ever read that prayer she just had put it down in her own Bible!

Lord I give up all my own plans and purposes all my own desires and hopes and accept thy will for my life I give myself my life my all utterly to thee to be thine forever fill me and seal me with thy Holy Spirit use me as thou wilt send me where thou wilt and work out thy whole will in my life at any cost now and forever if we look at him in the garden who for your sake drank the cup of wrath your heart my heart I'm still learning this can choose freely choose to say my father your will your will be done will you pray with me let's pray father impress upon our hearts the depth of your love and

Christ's love for us so that you would teach us to wrestle with you in prayer in every situation so that you might find in our hearts that deep down our deepest longing is that we trust you that you are good and that we want you to be glorified in every situation we want you to restore us to the image of Christ for our eternal happiness that will be used by you for the salvation of others Lord find in us that willingness to pray your will be done and to delight in your will in Jesus name I pray Amen