



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

ENCOURAGING & EQUIPPING BELIEVERS IN PRAYER

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## GOING TO GETHSEMANE

Jesus loved to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane is an urban garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Jesus often spent time there with His disciples, "And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him" (**Luke 22:39**). It was His custom to go there with His disciples. At Gethsemane, He fellowshiped with them. He talked with Him. He laughed with them. He sang with them. He prayed with them. He taught them.

However, this night was different. He did go with His disciples. Yet, on this night, He goes for Himself. On this night, He would completely submit Himself to the Father's will. He would cement His choice to accept His calling as our suffering and dying Savior.

Jesus had already accepted God's call to be the Savior of sinners. The Word of God says in **Luke 9:51**, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus was resolute; He would go to Jerusalem and die as the Savior of sinners according to the will of the Father.

Now, the hour has come. He is about to face all that was prophesied about Him – the humiliation, the shame, the pain, the

agony, the death as the suffering Servant and Savior sent by God. In these final hours before this takes place, He prays His will into the Father's will. He meets His Father alone and in anguish.

It is our privilege to get a glimpse of Jesus at Gethsemane. Through the Word of God, we get to go to Gethsemane with Jesus. What does this trip to Gethsemane teach us about Jesus and our prayer

lives? This issue of **The Prayer Closet** will focus on the lessons of Gethsemane:

### Prayer is essential in battling temptation.

The first lesson that we glean from going to Gethsemane is that prayer is essential in battling temptation. When Jesus and the disciples reach Gethsemane, He gives them a loving command, "And when he was at that place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (**Luke 22:40**). We see the love of Jesus here in Gethsemane. Jesus is about to suffer like no one else ever has or ever will. Yet, He has deep concern for His disciples. He knows what is coming. He calls on them to pray for strength to face temptation.

This loving command of Jesus Christ applies to all His people. Jesus knows that the enemy will attempt to destroy our faith. Satan labors to get us to turn and walk away from Jesus. The world seeks to entice us to love it more than Jesus. It strives to lure us away from the Word and worship of Jesus. The flesh craves what it desires regardless of what Jesus

desires. We are no match for temptation in our own strength and wisdom.

For this reason, Jesus teaches us to pray. Pray for God's strength to stand firm. Plead for God's power to resist any and all temptation. Ask for God's wisdom to find a way of escape. Call on the Lord to help you when you face the temptations that will come your way.

What Jesus says here is in line with His teaching in **Matthew 6:13**, "And lead us not in to temptation, but deliver us from evil." He instructs us

here also to pray against temptation. We are to pray either that He would keep us from being tempted or to support or deliver us when we are tempted. Temptation is going to come. This needs to be an essential part of our prayer lives. Daily we need to seek His help from the temptations that will come our way for that day.

**Through prayer, we pray our will in submission to His will.**

After this command, Jesus gets alone with His Father to pray, "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down to pray" (**Luke 22:41**). Jesus needed time to be alone with His Father. Why did He feel such a need for prayer? The Bible says, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine, be done" (**Luke 22:46**). Jesus is involved in an intense conflict.

Jesus was wrestling with the powers of darkness. Satan and his forces were hurling fiery arrows at Him. Jesus is battling all of hell. However, at the same time, it was battle of wills. Now, at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus was struggling with this question, "Was there some other way, any easier way to redeem and save sinful people?"

Here we are drawn deep into the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus Christ is both God and man. Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures – a divine and a human nature. These natures cannot be divided only distinguished. With respect to the divine nature, He had no other will than that of the Father.

Yet, with respect to His human nature, Jesus Himself makes a clear and careful distinction between His will and the Father's will. If He did the Father's will, it is because He chose to do it, not necessarily, because it always came easily or automatically. In Gethsemane, we see the human will wrestling with the divine will.

Humanly speaking, Jesus did not want to suffer what was ahead – humiliation, torture, having the sin of man placed on Him, the death of the Cross, the wrath of God, the penalty of sin, which is death. In this text, we see His humanity as clearly as

anywhere in Scripture. As a human being, Jesus had the same instinct to preserve His life that anyone has. No one loved life more than He did. Everything in His humanity recoiled against the coming torture, suffering, and death. Because of this, in the agony of His soul, He asked the Father for some other way of salvation.

Nevertheless, He accepted what the Father willed. How was He able to this? He did it by prayer. He brought His heart's desire before the Father and yet submitted to what the Father willed. He poured out His soul to the Father, submitting not just His request, but also Himself.

In this text, Jesus sets the supreme example. Prayer is the way that we surrender ourselves to what God wills. We can bring our petitions to the Father. We can share our heart's desire to Him. There's nothing wrong with telling God what we want or what we feel we need.

Yet, we must be submitted to Him and His will. Our prayer lives have to have a healthy balance between petition and surrender. On the one hand, we are to bring our desires to our Father. Jesus teaches us to ask, seek, and knock (**Matthew 7:7**). Yet, this same Jesus teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Every desire, no matter how passionate or cherished, must be submitted to the Father and His will. In everything, we are to say, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

As we pray, God gives us the power to accept and submit to what He wills. In times of communion with God, He works in our hearts so that we desire what He wills. It's not easy; sometimes it's painful. Yet, the exercise of prayer brings us to the place that we can submit our wills to God's will. It is by fellowship with God in prayer that we come to the place of surrender to God and His will. Jesus teaches us this and models it for us at Gethsemane.

**Jesus shows you how much He loves you through His praying at Gethsemane.**

As He prayed at Gethsemane, Jesus was at the end of His physical and emotional endurance. He is at the point of complete collapse. Dr. Luke

tells us, "And his sweat were as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (**Luke 22:44**). Jesus was under such pressure at Gethsemane that capillaries in His head were bursting. This was mingling with His sweat, giving His sweat a red tint. He had great drops of sweat mixed with blood, showing how much pressure He had on Him. He was wrestling hard in prayer to submit to the Father's will.

Jesus was at the point of death in Gethsemane. In mercy, God sent help, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (**Luke 22:43**). This should show you that Jesus loves you more than you can imagine. He didn't just die for you. He suffered all the way to the cross. He submitted to a horrible, God-forsaken death that no one would ever want to die. He died this death because there was no other way for sinners to be saved. There was no easier road to redemption. There was no alternative to the Cross.

Through prayer, Jesus chose the one thing that would bring the most suffering to His body and soul. Here we see the wonder of His love. It's not simply that He faced death. He faced a death that terrified Him. As a man, the suffering, the torture, and the separation from His Father absolutely terrified Him. Yet, He willingly chose this for you. Even though as a man, He was horrified at what He had to endure, He willingly submitted to this for you. He lovingly chose damnation for you. You will never have to suffer what Jesus did at Gethsemane or Calvary because He suffered it for you. That's how much Jesus loves you. This love ought to stir us to love Him, worship Him, pray in His name, and serve Him with all our being.

### **The harder things get, the more we ought to pray.**

Jesus models this principle in **Luke 22:44**, "and being in agony he prayed more earnestly." In this text, we see Jesus in great distress. The word "agony" refers to a bitter striving or a fierce conflict. He was literally having a fight in His soul. It means an extreme distress in a violent conflict. He was

wrestling and striving to submit His will to the Father's will.

It's crucial to notice the wording of the text. It says, "and being in agony, he prayed **more earnestly**." The Bible is showing us that the more agony He was in, the more He prayed. Rather than giving up on prayer because He was having so much of a struggle, Jesus prayed more than ever. In His great distress, He gave Himself to pray more than ever.

That's why I say, the harder things get, the more we ought to pray. This is Jesus' example to us. When we are fearful, the more we ought to pray. When we are discouraged, the more we ought to seek God. When tempted, the more we ought to call on His name. When anxious, the more we need to cast out worries on Him. When we feel defeated, the more we need to pray to our Lord. Don't stop praying when things get hard; let it drive you to pray more.

A lady came up to me at a worship service. She had previously asked me to pray for her family and her. She asked, "Have you been praying for us?" I said, "Yes, ma'am. I certainly have been." She quipped, "Well, stop. Things are getting worse."

This is often how we feel. When we pray and things get worse, there is a temptation to give up on prayer. Nevertheless, in our difficulties and distress, we must continue to pray. We cannot give up on seeking the Lord. When things get harder, the more we ought to pray. When it gets worse, let it motivate you to call on the Lord even more. Don't quit. Don't give up. Don't slack off, no matter what. Pray harder.

### **Jesus tells us to keep praying even when our prayer lives are a failure.**

Jesus had earlier called on the disciples to pray that they might be able to withstand temptation (**Luke 22:40**). When He had finished praying, He went back to the disciples. What did He find? The Bible says, "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping from sorrow" (**Luke 22:45**). Sadly, Jesus found them sleeping instead of praying. It

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had been a long day for them with Jesus teaching them and revealing that He would be betrayed, tortured, and executed. The pressure of the day had worn them out. Rather than praying, they chose to sleep.

It's interesting how Jesus responded to them. Maybe I should say it's interesting how He didn't respond. He didn't rebuke them. He didn't chastise them. He didn't tell them that they were miserable failures. The Word of God gives us His response, "And said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, let ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46).

What a gracious response! Even though they had failed to pray, Jesus simply calls them once again to pray. They had a failure in their prayer lives. Yet, Jesus did not stop telling them to pray. He challenges them to pray even though they had failed in this.

This lesson from Gethsemane ought to encourage and motivate us. If you haven't been praying as you ought to, Jesus says, "Rise and pray." If you've given up on prayer because things have gotten worse, Jesus says, "Rise up and pray." If you are struggling in prayer, Jesus says, "Rise up and pray." No matter whether you are in your prayer

life, veteran or beginner, maturing or struggling, or somewhere in between, Jesus says, "Rise up and pray." If you will seek Him, He will hear and He will respond. Jesus loves you no matter what and calls you to pray no matter what.

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