



Willing

Jesus followed the Father's will in all things.

MARK 14:32-42

In 2008, a New Zealand man refused to submit to the seat belt law and received tickets 32 times over a five-year period. Rather than buckle his seat belt, he created a fake seatbelt to give the illusion he was safely buckled into the driver's seat. The belt worked to stem the flood of tickets, but it was of no value when he hit another car head-on and died from the injuries.

- Why would a person refuse to submit to something that was for his own good? In what areas do Christians sometimes struggle to submit to God's will?
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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

MARK 14:1-52

Jewish leaders had begun to look for ways to arrest and kill Jesus (Mark 14:1-2). Though they wanted to arrest Him, they also wanted to avoid a riot among the people, who had hailed Him as Messiah during His triumphal entry.

Meanwhile, Jesus returned to Bethany for the night, as was His custom during the week of the festival. At dinner, a woman came and poured an expensive jar of perfume on His feet (14:3-11). This caused concern by some in the room, including Jesus's own disciples. They questioned why the perfume had been wasted; it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus's response shows the focus He had on the cross (14:6-8), while one of His disciples, Judas, schemed a plan to betray Him (14:10-11).

On the day before Jesus's crucifixion, Jesus sent His disciples to prepare the Passover meal (14:12-16). As He shared the Passover meal with the disciples that evening, He told them that one of them would betray Him (14:17-21). He knew it was going to happen, and He did nothing to prevent it. He submitted to the cross because that was the Father's plan.

Jesus reinterpreted the Passover meal in light of His own death (14:22-26). The wine represented His blood and the bread represented His body. He was giving both of them for our sins.

After singing a hymn, the disciples departed from the room to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (14:26). He again spoke of betrayal, and Peter pledged that He would never fall away. Jesus informed him that before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny Him three times (14:27-31). All of this happened on the way to Gethsemane, the place where Jesus would surrender anew to the will of God for His death, burial, and resurrection.

- **Read Mark 14:32-42. What words and phrases demonstrate Jesus's resolve to submit to God's will? What parts of the passage demonstrate the disciples' reluctance to accept God's plan?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DISTRESSED (MARK 14:32-34)

³² Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ He said to them, “I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.”

VERSES 32-34

Jesus led His disciples to ●**Gethsemane**, a garden on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives. The name *Gethsemane* means “olive press,” likely because the slope was filled with both olive trees and olive presses. The symbolic imagery of this place is striking since Jesus was being pressed in His own mind and spirit concerning His impending death.

Jesus told the disciples to **sit here** while He took **Peter, James, and John** farther into the garden to pray. It was not unusual for Him to call this inner circle into a deeper level of commitment (5:37; 9:2; 13:3). Of all the people that should have provided Him companionship and support, it was these three disciples.

He was **deeply distressed and troubled**. The Greek word translated *deeply distressed* described the reaction of the women who came to the tomb and found it empty except for an angel (16:5-6). The word *troubled* describes a condition of extreme anxiety (Matt. 26:37; Phil. 2:2).

Jesus expressed His distress to the inner circle of disciples, telling them that He was **deeply grieved to the point of death**. Luke would reveal that Jesus actually sweated drops of blood as He prayed in anguish about the cross (Luke 22:44). This would be the first bloodshed in God’s plan for the remission of sin (Heb. 9:22). That plan was ultimately accomplished at the cross, but it certainly was unfolding in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus did not die in a callous, unfeeling manner. Rather, He felt the weight of these events. He had counted the cost of following His Father’s will, and He was willing to pay the price.

Remain here and stay awake, He instructed the disciples. Perhaps He was telling them to watch for the search party that was coming for Him. More likely, He was encouraging them to pray with Him during His hour of need. Jesus experienced real, human emotion, including anguish and distress. We have a Savior who is able to empathize with us.

○ How do the terms used by Mark help us understand the humanity of Jesus?

SURRENDERED (MARK 14:35-36)

³⁵ He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, “‘Abba’, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.”

VERSES 35-36

After asking His disciples to remain where they were, Jesus went *a little farther* into the garden. He carried with Him the anguish and distress described in the previous verses and planned to take that anxiety to His Father in prayer. The normal Jewish posture for prayer was standing with one’s hands uplifted to God. However, nothing was normal about the prayer that Jesus was praying in the garden. Instead, He *fell to the ground* prostrate before the Father. Both Moses and Aaron had expressed this same broken humility before God when they asked, “God, God who gives breath to all, when one man sins, will you vent your wrath on the whole community?” (Num. 16:22). Jesus seems to be dealing with the same issue, but it was personal to Him because He is the one on whom God would vent His wrath.

Jesus began His prayer with *if it were possible . . .* knowing that with God all things are possible (Mark 10:27). God is unlimited in His power, but He is also sovereign in His will. It may have been possible for God to remove death and anguish and wrath from Jesus, but it was not possible for Jesus to be our Savior and avoid being the substitute for our sin.

He asked that *the hour* might pass from Him. This was a reference to His appointed time to die for the sins of the world. Jesus would surrender to the will of God even when nothing in His humanity desired to endure the cross.

“Prayer is not meant to change the mind of God but to align our will with His will.”

Abba was an intimate Aramaic expression for *Father*. It was not the way a Jew would address God. Rather, it was the way a child would address his earthly father. Jesus’s relationship with God was intimate.

He knew the will of the *Father* for His life but struggled with the anguish of all that was involved in His death on the cross. Answering His own condition from the previous verse, Jesus declared, ***all things are possible for you.*** The question was not whether it was possible, but whether it was the Father's will. Prayer is not meant to change the mind of God but to align our will with His will.

What was ***this cup*** Jesus asked the Father to take away from Him? Certainly, it would have included the physical anguish and emotional suffering of the cross. But was it more than that? In the Old Testament, the cup indicated punishment and judgment poured out by God (Isa. 51:22; Jer. 25:15-19; Rev. 14:10). It was symbolic of the wrath of God in Psalm 75:8, "For there is a cup in the LORD's hand, full of wine blended with spices, and he pours from it. All the wicked of the earth will drink, draining it to the dregs." More than physical suffering, Jesus's humanity dreaded the separation from God caused by taking on the sin of humanity (Mark 15:34). Yet He surrendered with the concession, ***nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.***

● How does Jesus's willingness to follow the Father's will point to His love for the Father?

● How does our love for the Father help us surrender to Him in times of difficulty?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God's Purpose of Grace*

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (See 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13.)

WEAK (MARK 14:37-39)

³⁷ Then he came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn’t you stay awake one hour?” ³⁸ Stay awake and pray so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ Once again he went away and prayed, saying the same thing.

VERSES 37-39

While Jesus agonized in prayer, the disciples could not adhere to His simplest request. Their weakness is apparent as Jesus *found them sleeping*. This should not be a surprise—they had been through a long, emotional day. It was likely around midnight when this occurred. It would have been normal for them to be exhausted. But this was not a normal day, and Jesus was not facing a normal battle in prayer. The human weakness of the disciples is a reminder of our own weakness in following the will of God for our lives.

“Being unaware of our own limitations is not a great place to be.”

Jesus addressed *Simon* with the old name Jesus had changed to Peter (John 1:42). Most likely, Jesus singled out Peter because of His prior claim not to fall when all the other disciples would fail Jesus (Mark 14:29). Peter had made a bold claim but failed to account for his weakness in the flesh. Jesus asked him, *couldn’t you stay awake one hour?* Being unaware of our own limitations is not a great place to be.

Again, the Lord encouraged His disciples to *stay awake and pray*. These were the two actions needed to combat the flesh. He declared that *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*. No matter how willing a person may be, the flesh is still weak. This natural weakness poses a spiritual danger, and often those who are weak physically or emotionally have difficulty battling *temptation*. After warning about the weakness of the flesh, Jesus again left them alone with the encouragement to watch and pray. He gave them another chance to do what was right.

- How does the contrast between Jesus and His disciples emphasize our human weakness?

BETRAYED (MARK 14:40-42)

40 And again he came and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to him. 41 Then he came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up; let’s go. See, my betrayer is near.”

VERSES 40-42

For a second time, Jesus returned to find His disciples sleeping. They were tired and **could not keep their eyes open**. They **did not know what to say** to Him. Perhaps they were embarrassed or ashamed that their flesh was so weak at the time Jesus had needed them. Maybe they said nothing because they had no legitimate excuse. What could they possibly say to Jesus after finding them a second time?

He left them again, then returned a **third time**. Jesus asked them **Are you still sleeping and resting?** Peter had declared that he would not fail Jesus (14:29), but he would fall asleep three times when Jesus had told him to watch and pray. Later he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed (14:66-72). Jesus was betrayed by Judas, but He also was disappointed by His other disciples.

“He was not fleeing the cup but was embracing the Father’s will.”

Enough! was an exclamation expressing exasperation with the disciples. However, it may have meant more. The Greek word could be used to express an account that is paid. Jesus could have been expressing that the time to petition God for the removal of the cup had ended, and He had surrendered to the will of the Father. The time had come for His betrayal and death, and He would not flee from that moment. When he said, **Get up; let’s go**, He was not fleeing the cup but was embracing the Father’s will. The use of the word **see** may indicate that the torches of those who would arrest Jesus were now visible.

Jesus went toward His **betrayer** who was **near**. With His betrayer were **sinners**, those who were pursuing His life. Jesus’s decision to submit to the Father’s will impacted the decision He made in the garden

to awaken the disciples and move toward His death. Our commitment to God's will should also impact our decisions as we move through life.

○ **How does a commitment to the Father's will impact all other decisions?**

○ **How does it impact our faith in moving toward those things that may be uncomfortable to us?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Using Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46; and John 18:1, study the account of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Write down notes on the different accounts. What are the notable differences between the four accounts? What do all four Gospels include that are the same? How is it helpful to have all four accounts in giving you a clearer picture of the events that took place?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers can find comfort in knowing that Jesus experienced every human emotion, including anguish and distress.
- + Believers show their love to the Father through their willingness to follow His will.
- + Believers should humbly pray, knowing they are capable of sin.
- + Believers should embrace God's will for them.



Share with the group situations when you have faced a conflict between the will of God and your own human desires.

What function does the group have in helping believers surrender to the Father's will? How can the group pray for you?



What are the weakest areas of your flesh? Why is it important to acknowledge the weakness of your flesh when doing spiritual battle? How can watching and praying contribute to victory over those temptations? What can you learn from the disciples in this passage? What can you learn from Jesus?

PRAYER NEEDS
