



Sunday, March 26, 2023: "Submitting to the Father's Will"  
Commentary (The UGP Curriculum)

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**Lesson Text:** Matthew 26:36-50; **Time of Action:** 30 A.D.;  
**Place of Action:** Gethsemane

**Golden Text:** "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

**I. INTRODUCTION.** As we consider our LORD's ordeal in the Garden of Gethsemane, we must realize that He was confronted with an infinitely more difficult situation. The eternal salvation of the people He loved so much depended on Him; yet the death that He had to die would go beyond loathing or terror. It would be a death for sin—a death that would require the sinless One to become "*sin for us*" (see II Corinthians 5:21). However, the incarnate Son realized that He had to take on this most repugnant death Himself to secure our redemption. Jesus willingly took our sin upon Himself but not without a struggle. This week's lesson details some of the anguish He experienced in anticipation of that awful event.

**II. THE LESSON BACKGROUND.** Our lesson takes place on the night following the eating of the Passover meal by



Jesus and His disciples. Later that evening the LORD instituted the LORD's Supper (see Matthew 26:17-25). Judas had earlier made arrangements with the chief priests to betray Jesus to them (see Matthew 26:14-16). After establishing the LORD's Supper as a memorial (see Luke 22:19-20), Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and left the upper room and headed out to the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 26:30). As they walked, Jesus made a startling announcement to His disciples. He stated that each of them would be offended (or would desert Him) because of Him that very night would (see Matthew 26:31). Led by Peter, the disciples responded to Jesus' revelation by affirming that they would die on the LORD's behalf (see Matthew 26:33-35). What they didn't know was that their resolve to stay with Jesus no matter what, was soon to be tested. This is where our lesson begins.

### **III. DARKNESS IN THE GARDEN (Matthew 26:36-38)**

**A. The refuge (Matthew 26:36).** Our first verse says **"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."** As **"Jesus"** and His disciples talked, they came **"unto a place called Gethsemane."** This was often called the garden of **"Gethsemane."** It was a secluded spot on the Mount of Olives. Its exact location is unknown today, but we do know that **"Jesus"** often went there with His disciples when they were in Jerusalem (see Luke 22:39). Once inside the garden, **"Jesus"** said to **"the**



**disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."** The LORD ordered His "**disciples**" to wait right where they were while He went on a little farther to "**pray.**"

## **B. The request (Matthew 26:37-38).**

**1. (vs. 37).** This verse says "**And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.**" As Jesus proceeded to His place to pray, "**he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.**" The fact that "**He took**" these three disciples with Him may not have been overly disturbing to the other disciples. It was certainly common knowledge that "**Peter and the two sons of Zebedee**" James and John (see Mark 10:35; Luke 5:10) formed Jesus' inner circle of disciples (see Matthew 17:1-2). The normal routine of the time these three disciples spent with Jesus was now broken by the fact that Jesus "**began to be sorrowful and very heavy.**" The word "**began**" stresses the continuing nature of what was taking place. This word is used twice before in the book of Matthew about Jesus to show the continuing nature of His preaching (see Matthew 4:17), and the continuing nature of Him telling His disciples that He must suffer (see Matthew 16:21). Just as Jesus' preaching continued over a period of time, likewise being "**sorrowful**" would be a continuing experience. The word translated "**very heavy**" has the idea of being troubled. Jesus had a full and clear knowledge of all the sufferings that were before Him. He foresaw the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their ingratitude. He knew that now in a few hours He would be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to



the cross. Death in its most dreadful appearances was staring Jesus in the face and this made Him **"sorrowful and very heavy,"** especially because it was the wages of our sin that He had determined to pay.

**2. (vs. 38).** This verse says **"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."** Jesus never lost sight of His purpose for coming to earth (see Mark 10:45). But as He entered the garden, His oncoming **"death"** and separation from the Father (see Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) began to weigh on Him. So, acquainting them with His condition, He said to Peter, James and John, **"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."** Jesus' words here deeply expressed what He was feeling in verse 37. We all know that sometimes it gives a little comfort to a troubled spirit to have a friend ready to hear about its sorrows. First, Jesus tells them what the seat of His sorrow was. He said it was His **"soul"** that was now in agony. This proves that Jesus had a true human **"soul"** for he suffered, not only in His body, but in his **"soul"** as well. Second, Jesus told them what the degree of His sorrow was. He was **"exceedingly sorrowful,"** or completely surrounded by sorrow at every hand. It was sorrow in the highest degree, **"even unto death."** Jesus' sorrow was a killing sorrow, such sorrow as no mortal man or woman could bear and live. He was ready to die for grief. His sorrows were sorrows of **"death."** Third, Jesus told them how long His sorrow would last. It will continue **"even unto death."** Here in the garden Jesus **"began to be sorrowful"** and He never ceased to be **"sorrowful"** until He said, *"It is finished"* (see John 19:30).



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The LORD's grief which began in the garden would soon be over. Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be "*a Man of sorrows*" (see Isaiah 53:3), but none of His sorrows up to now could compare to this. The LORD followed His expression of sorrow saying to His three disciples "**tarry ye here, and watch with me.**" Jesus wanted them to stay where they were and stay awake and keep "**watch**" with Him. **Note:** *This indicates Jesus' need for their company and presence. Even though Jesus knew that they wouldn't be any comfort to Him, He still teaches us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek the assistance of our brothers and sisters when at any time we are in agony. As the preacher, Solomon said, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken (see Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).*

#### IV. DESPAIR IN THE GARDEN (Matthew 26:39-44)

**A. The first prayer (Matthew 26:39).** This verse says "**And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as**



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**thou wilt."** Leaving the three disciples behind, Jesus "**went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed.**" Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially in season when we are in agony. Apparently, the LORD began to pray in a kneeling position (see Luke 22:40-41) and then sank to the ground. People generally prayed standing (see Luke 18:11, 13), but at this solemn time Jesus knelt. His posture while praying was an expression of His humility. Jesus was horrified at the prospect of enduring His "**Father's**" wrath. He had to face death knowing that His "**Father**" would not be with Him, but against Him in wrath of judgment. Notice the three main elements of Jesus' prayer. First, He began by saying "**O my Father.**" Jesus never lost sight of His relationship to the "**Father**" or of the line of authority between Himself and the "**Father.**" Scripture provides its own commentary on what took place in the garden. Hebrews 5:7 says that Jesus "*offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.*" In His most difficult time, Jesus humbly went to His "**Father.**" His disciples could watch and pray, but only His heavenly "**Father**" could act on His request and bring comfort to His soul. Second, Jesus brought His request to His "**Father**" when He said "**if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.**" This was not a demand but a request. If there was any other way for redemption to be secured, Jesus requested that the "**Father**" take that route. The "**cup**" of which Jesus spoke included His physical sufferings, but that was only a minor part of the suffering He would experience. Jesus had in view the whole process of redemption, which included taking on Himself the sins of the whole world. We might recall Jesus' words to the disciples that they would indeed drink "*of my cup*" (see



Matthew 20:23). The suffering that Christians endure for Christ does not provide atonement for sins; yet it is an opportunity to experience just a glimpse of the rejection He felt (see Philippians 3:10; I Peter 4:12-13). The third element of Jesus' prayer expressed His total submission to the "Father's" will in this matter when He said "**nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**" In other words, He was asking that He might avoid the sufferings that were now at hand or at least that they might be shortened. However, He was willing to accept whatever the "Father" willed. **Note:** *We should glean no more from Jesus' words than that He was really and truly Man, and as a Man He felt pain and suffering. How often have we prayed "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done?" Certainly our experiences with respect to what we know about the LORD's will varies. There are times when we willingly place ourselves in accord with God's desires for us. But at other times we resist His will or refuse to do what we know is right. As He faced the supreme test, Jesus was willing to be totally submissive to the "Father."*

## **B. The first return (Matthew 26:40-41).**

1. (vs. 40). This verse says, "**And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?**" After His first prayer, Jesus returned to the place where He had left His three disciples to wait for Him. We are told that "**he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep.**" Instead of waiting and keeping "**watch**" with Him as He commanded (see verse 38), Jesus found them



sleeping. All eleven of the disciples (Judas had left the group to set his plan in motion to betray Jesus) had previously declared that they were willing to die for the LORD (see Matthew 26:35). But in the garden they were simply called on to perform a far simpler act of keeping a vigil with the LORD while He prayed—and they failed at that, for Jesus said to **“Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”** Apparently, Jesus had been away praying for about an **“hour.”** Regardless of how long Jesus was away praying, His three **“disciples”** should have been wide awake while they waited for His return. This question that Jesus posed directly to **“Peter”** implies that if **“Peter”** could not stay awake long enough to give the LORD moral support during a time of crisis, how could he possibly have the courage to die for the LORD’s sake? We may wonder why the disciples fell **“asleep.”** It may be that since it was late at night they had enjoyed a full meal which, as we all know could lead to drowsiness and sleep. The **“disciples”** weariness and emotional state overcame their desire to do as the LORD had requested; so they fell **“asleep”** at a critical time.

**2. (vs. 41).** This verse says, **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Instead of chastising His disciples for being asleep, here Jesus’ words changed from *“watch with me”* (see verse 38) to **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”** In other words, Jesus was exhorting His disciples to *“Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation.”* In spite of the ordeal Jesus was experiencing, He still was concerned about His disciples. His exhortation to them was to maintain an alert attitude. By





preparing themselves, the disciples could avoid entering **"into"** or submitting to **"temptation."** We should not assume from Jesus' words here that whenever we are tempted it's because we haven't maintained the proper spiritual attitude. It is plain from other Scriptures that all Christians will experience **"temptation"** (see I Corinthians 10:13; I Timothy 6:9; Hebrews 11:37; James 1:2, 13-14; I Peter 1:6; II Peter 2:9). However, some of it can be avoided simply by being alert and aware. In the last part of this verse, Jesus concluded His exhortation to His disciples with a remark that has become proverbial: **"the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."** With this statement, Jesus recognized the disciples' good intentions and also highlighted the ongoing inner conflict that all believers experience. The point here is that the new nature that we receive by faith is ready and **"willing"** to do the LORD's will, but **"the flesh"** or our sinful nature **"is weak"** and unable to please the LORD. This same theme is prominent in Paul's writings. He acknowledged this problem of **"the flesh"** when he wrote that no good thing could come from the strength of **"the flesh"** (see Romans 7:15-25). The desires of **"the flesh"** can only produce evil (see Galatians 5:16-21; James 1:14-15).

**C. The second prayer (Matthew 26:42).** This verse says **"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."** After talking with His disciples, Jesus felt the need to be alone once again. In order to spend more time in prayer, Jesus **"went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I**



**drink it, thy will be done."** It's interesting that Jesus didn't stay with the disciples and pray with them. At special times in our relationship with God, it's necessary for us to be alone with Him. Jesus seemed to have sensed that need. In essence, Jesus was saying *"My Father, if I must do this (suffer and die for redemption) and it is not possible for me to escape it, then I pray that what you want will be done."* Jesus' "**second**" prayer differed from His first prayer only slightly. Here it appears that Jesus was even more resigned to the fact that the "**cup**" (see comments on verse 39) before Him was the absolute will of the "**Father.**" Jesus' expression of submission to God's will seems even stronger in this "**second**" prayer than it was in the first one.

**D. The second return (Matthew 26:43).** This verse says "**And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.**" Jesus' words of admonition and gentle rebuke in verse 41 had very little effect on the disciples for after Jesus returned to them the second time, here Matthew writes "**And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.**" Mark's Gospel tells us that the disciples didn't know what to say to Jesus (see Mark 14:40).

**E. The third prayer (Matthew 26:44).** This verse says "**And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.**" Only a general statement is made here concerning Jesus' "**third**" prayer. Matthew simply says that Jesus "**prayed the third time, saying the same words.**" Jesus' prayers were not "**vain repetitions**" (see Matthew 6:7). He was not trying to



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impress anyone with His prayers. He was in extreme anguish and the repetitive nature of His prayers flowed from the anguish of His heart. **Note:** *A lesson for us here is that we need to be prepared to face the trials of life. Jesus, knowing about the trial He would experience spent time in prayer preparing for the trial ahead. Although we can't foresee the trials we will go through, we always need to be prepared to face them. Oftentimes, like the disciples, we neglect to pray; and as a result, also like the disciples, we fail our LORD when trials come our way. However, through prayer, God provides strength and encouragement (see II Corinthians 12:7-10). Those disciples who were slow to learn their lesson in the garden would soon know the reality of our LORD's instructions as they entered into spiritual warfare. Years later, as he probably remembered this situation, Peter himself would write "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (see I Peter 4:7).*

## V. DETERMINATION IN THE GARDEN (Matthew 26:45-46)

**A. Jesus allows His disciples to continue to sleep (Matthew 26:45).** This verse says "Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." There was no longer any opportunity for "the disciples" to be of



assistance to the LORD in His distress. Therefore, after praying for the third time, Jesus returned to **"His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest."** The phrase **"the hour is at hand"** means that the time had arrived when **"the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."** In other words, the time had come for Jesus' atoning sacrificial death which would provide the way of salvation for believers. Maybe, as Jesus spoke these words, He could see the lights of the mob coming to apprehend Him (see John 18:3). Undoubtedly, Jesus' prayers had refreshed Him and prepared Him for the terrible times ahead. The purpose for Jesus coming to earth was soon to be realized (see Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

### **B. Jesus awakens His disciples (Matthew 26:46).**

This verse says **"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."** Even though this ordeal before Jesus was unspeakably severe, we still can sense a spirit of determination as He exhorted the disciples saying **"Rise, let us be going."** It was time for Jesus and His three disciples to join the rest of the group because as He said **"behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."** In other words, Jesus was saying to His disciples, *"Look, My betrayer is near!"*

## **VI. DETAINMENT IN THE GARDEN (Matthew 26:47-50)**

### **A. The crowd (Matthew 26:47-48).**



**1. (vs. 47).** This verse says **"And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."** At the very moment that Jesus was speaking to His disciples, **"Judas, one of the twelve, came."** He was identified as **"one of the twelve"** disciples but he was only one of them in number for he was not saved but lost (see John 17:12). **"Judas"** arrived where Jesus and His disciples were in the garden leading **"a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."** The method used by the temple officials, **"the chief priests and elders"** was clear. They wanted to take Jesus when He was away from the sympathetic crowds, and they wanted to make sure that they had sufficient force to discourage any opposition.

The **"chief priests and elders"** mob may have been unsure of the number of people who would be with Jesus. According to Luke 22:52, Jesus asked these temple leaders why had they come out there with swords and clubs? Did they think He was a thief? **Note: Roman soldiers who were part of this group, no doubt had the "swords," while the servants of the "chief priests and elders" brought "staves" or clubs. But, the truth is all of this was unnecessary. Even if there had been ten times as many, they could not have taken Jesus if He had he not surrendered. His hour having now come to give Himself up made all this force unnecessary. When a butcher goes into the field to select a lamb for slaughter, does he take an armed army with him? Of course not! He doesn't need to. Yet the religious leaders brought all this force to apprehend the Lamb of**



## **God.**

**2. (vs. 48).** This verse says **"Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast."** Judas had a clear advantage over this mob, for he knew Jesus' habits and he could recognize Him. In addition, Judas had given the officials who were with him **"a sign saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he."** The **"sign"** to identify Jesus would be Judas greeting Him with a **"kiss."** This would prevent any embarrassing mistakes. In the last part of this verse, Judas told the mob that once he identified Jesus with a **"kiss,"** they were to **"hold him fast"** or grab Him and don't let Him go. Judas was aware that sometimes Jesus escaped from those who wanted to secure Him (see Luke 4:28-30; John 8:59; 10:39).

### **B. The kiss (Matthew 26:49-50).**

**1. (vs. 49).** This verse says **"And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him."** As this mob approached **"Jesus,"** Judas came near Him and said **"Hail, master"** which means *"Greetings Rabbi"* (or teacher). Then he **"kissed"** Jesus. This betrayal by one of the Twelve must have felt like a dagger to Jesus' heart. Judas called our LORD **"master"** and betrayed Him. A **"kiss"** in ancient times was a show of love, allegiance and friendship (see Genesis 27:26; 45:12; Exodus 18:7; I Samuel 20:41; Psalms 2:12). But Judas broke all the laws of love and duty, when he profaned this sacred **"sign"** to serve his evil purpose. **Note: *As believers, knowing what we know***



*about Jesus, one would think that when Judas came close to Him, surely now, if ever at all, his wicked heart would relent. Surely, when Judas came close to look Jesus in the face, one would think that he would either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. It's hard not to ask the question, "How could Judas come into Jesus' very sight and presence only to betray him?" Peter denied Christ, but when "the LORD turned and looked upon him," (see Luke 22:60-62) for a time Peter relented; but Judas came up to his Master's face, and betrayed Him. No wonder Jesus called him the "son of perdition" or the one who is surely lost (see John 17:12).*

**2. (vs. 50).** Our final verse says **"And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him."** To the one who betrayed Him, Jesus gave a gracious response; He called Judas **"friend"** and then asked him **"wherefore art thou come?"** or *"why have you come?"* Some translations say *"do what you came for."* Here is one of the most touching things in the Bible. The LORD still reaches out to Judas in friendship while he is about to betray Him. The Greek term translated **"friend"** was used only two other times in the New Testament (see Matthew 20:13; 22:12) to indicate an association but not necessarily a good relationship. Calling Judas **"friend"** was also a fulfillment of Psalms 41:9 where the psalmist said *"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."* Here is an instance of Jesus practicing what He preached, for He teaches us to *"love your enemies"* (see



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Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27). Certainly, "**Jesus**" demonstrated Christian love when He spoke to Judas. The last part of this verse says "**and (they) laid hands on Jesus and took him**" which indicates that "**Jesus**" allowed Himself to be taken quietly. He didn't even let His disciples defend Him (see Luke 22:49-51) which demonstrates that there is no question that "**Jesus**" had resolved to do His Father's will even though He knew the outcome (see Philippians 2:8).

**VII. Conclusion.** In this week's lesson we have seen the personal struggle that Jesus experienced in the garden of Gethsemane. We have noticed the honesty of His prayer request. We also have noticed His singleness of purpose in submitting to the Father's will above everything else. We have seen the effect that Jesus' time with the Father had on Him. Although His three closest followers let Him down and a fourth one betrayed Him, Jesus' garden experience prepared Him for the cross.

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