



“Surrendered”
Luke 22:39-46

Idea: Authentic, God-honoring prayer is not focused on bringing the Lord’s will in line with ours but rather submitting those plans to His will.

Intro: Chuck Swindoll is the senior pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas. He is best known for his radio broadcast *Insight for Living*, which extends his preaching ministry to millions through more than 2,000 stations around the world. Several years ago, when Chuck’s oldest daughter Charissa was in high school, she was on the cheer squad. One day while studying in his church office, he received an emergency call from her school. Charissa had accidentally fallen from the top of a pyramid during practice and landed on the back of her head. To her amazement and everyone else’s, she could not move. It took Chuck about fifteen minutes to drive from his church to the school campus. As you might expect, while he was driving, he was praying, “Lord, You are in charge of this situation. I have no idea what I am going to face. You be the Lord and Master. I am trusting you in all this.”

When Chuck arrived at the school, the rescue squad already had Charissa immobilized on a stretcher, so he slipped down on his knees beside her. In angst, she said to him, “Daddy, I can’t move my fingers. My feet and legs are numb. I can’t feel anything in my body very well. It’s kind of tingling.” At that moment, a sense of fear for his daughter began to swell up in him. But he leaned closer to Charissa and whispered, “Sweetheart, I will be with you through all of this. But more important, Jesus is here with you. He is Lord over this whole event.”

Chuck and his wife Cynthia were totally helpless. They had no control over the situation or over the healing of their daughter’s body. She was at the mercy of God. He states, as he tells the story, “I can still remember the deliberateness with which I acknowledged Christ as Lord in my heart and encouraged her to do the same.” Well, they went on to the hospital and waited for hours in the hallway as extensive X-rays were taken and a team of physicians examined their little girl. They prayed fervently and confidently.

Thankfully, Charissa made a full recovery with no lasting damage. She did sustain a fracture, but it caused no long-term paralysis. To God’s glory, she was healed. However, Chuck and Cynthia are quick to point out that had Charissa been permanently paralyzed, they would still believe that God was in sovereign control in that fall, and that He would still be Lord. They had long before then surrendered themselves and everything in their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They had determined to let God hold the reigns of their lives.

Perhaps, you have heard the cliché, “Let go and let God.” People have been encouraging others with it for decades. It is difficult to know the origin of this cliché, but many people would say it goes back to a college student in the nineteenth century who took six postcards and wrote a large letter on each of them. Put together

the six postcards read L-E-T-G-O-D. He placed them on the mantelpiece in his room where he was living at school. One evening a draft blew through the window and the “D” fell to the ground. As he picked it up, what he saw seemed to be a message from God, the secret of the Christian life, “Let go.” Only by letting go can you let God carry out His will in your life. Jesus models this surrender for us as He wrestles with the reality of the cross looming in His future.

Read Luke 22:39-46.

Inquiry: In the first half of chapter 22, Luke records what took place between Jesus and the disciples as they observed the Passover meal together. Two major things are revealed to us. First, Jesus is the true Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, and second, Judas Iscariot will betray Jesus to His enemies. In verse 39, we learn that the meal is over, and they have left the city and gone to the Garden of Gethsemane. This olive grove is on the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley to the east of the city of Jerusalem. It seems that this was one of Jesus’ favorite places to pray when He was around Jerusalem.

Jesus had set His face toward Jerusalem several months before this night (9:51). He fully knew and embraced what awaited Him there. He had come *“to seek and save the lost”* (19:10), and the cross and the tomb were the means by which that mission would be accomplished. While Jesus was aware of the events ahead of Him and what they would achieve on behalf of sinful humanity, He was not looking forward to it. There is a divine dread in the text. Now, this is not to say that Jesus was fearful. Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus was always in control and in full power, whether quieting a demon (4:35), calming a storm (8:22-25), or feeding a multitude (9:10-17). He fearlessly approached His own death. For example, after the transfiguration He said to the disciples, *“Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men”* (9:44). A short time later, He set His face toward Jerusalem. Then, as He nears Jerusalem, just before ascending the hill to the Holy City, He said, *“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise”* (18:31-33). Finally, in the upper room, He was fearless and eager to eat the Passover with His disciples, knowing that He was the Passover Lamb who would be devoured (22:14-16). Jesus knew no fear.

In Gethsemane, however, there is an unexpected change. Jesus is overcome with a fearful dread of death. Mark’s parallel report says that He *“began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.’”* (Mark 14:33-34). Mark’s expression *“greatly distressed”* (ἀδημονέω) bears the element of astonishment. R. Kent Hughes commenting on Jesus’ horrified astonishment says, “It is hard for us to fathom this, but His fear of death could well have killed Him.” There is a divine dread.

Luke adds to the description of this scene by telling us that Jesus was in such agony that He began to sweat blood as He earnestly prayed to the Father (vs. 44). Jesus’ body and soul were racked with a fearful anguish over His impending death. Jesus knew fear.

What caused this unexpected change? Many people throughout history have faced death courageously, so where is Jesus’ courage? He had squared off with Satan, demons, religious leaders, and numerous impossible situations without fear, but now the thought of the cross and everything that goes with it caused Him great distress, even to the point of death. Well, it is important to keep in mind that no one past, present, or future has ever faced the death that He faced. Jesus is God, and He is coequal with God the Father and God the Spirit. He exists in relation to the Father as Son. As such, He has always existed in eternal, perpetual, and unbroken relationship with the Father and the Spirit (1 John 1:1-3). Jesus’ invocation *“Father”* in verse 42 reminds us that the Father loves to give to the Son. So, as Jesus agonizes over what awaits Him, He pleads for the Father to remove the cup of His wrath from Him if it is at all possible. His plea was grounded in the fact of His absolute sinless purity and the fact that the cup was filled with sin and wrath. This cup was steaming with a brew that was so awful, so fearful, so dreadful, so unbearable, so appalling, so horrendous that Jesus’ soul was revulsed

and thus convulsed. He who knew no sin would become sin (2 Cor 5:21) and experience the full wrath of God the Father.

It is in response to this horrid situation that Jesus prays. As He pleads here, He is praying to an omnipotent Father by whom all things are possible rather than an impotent one. Nevertheless, Jesus surrenders Himself to the will of the Father if there is no other way. You see, while fear might have gripped Jesus' heart because of what awaited Him, He wanted the Father's will more than anything. This desire to be obedient to the Father's will required His unmitigated surrender. As we watch Jesus' surrender to the Father's will, we learn that authentic, God-honoring prayer is not focused on bringing the Lord in line with our plans but rather submitting those plans to His will. The Christian life is a surrendered life. There are three things I want to point out in regard to being surrendered to the Lord.

1. Posture of Prayer (vs. 41)

As Jesus begins to feel the weight of what He was about to endure, He takes the disciples and retreats to Gethsemane for the sole purpose of praying. He leaves eight of them at the edge of the garden and takes Peter, James, and John a little farther before going on alone (Mark 14:33). Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus petitioned the Father three times that night saying, *"If it be possible."* The weight of the cross was unbearable, and He sought a different way.

Luke describes Jesus as kneeling to pray. Matthew and Mark describe it as Jesus falling on His face in response to the agony (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35). Both descriptions portray humility. Jesus demonstrated His need of the Father to get Him through the next few days. You see, as a man, Jesus had placed the exercise of His omnipotence at the discretion of the Father. Therefore, He once again humbled Himself before the Father, expressing His great need, and demonstrating His perpetual commitment to His will.

As Jesus displays for us, the only proper posture for prayer is one of humility. It is submission. It is the bowing of the knee in total surrender to the Lord's will and direction for your life. As Jesus, on His knees, pleads with the Father about the events that were coming, He asks that they might be removed, but with each petition He humbly surrendered to the Father's will (vs. 42)

"Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." It is in this statement that we learn whether we are praying in ultimate trust in God or ourselves. If we are sure that our approach is the right way, then we do not want to consider the idea that God may have a different and better plan in mind. The posture of prayer, however, is one of humility. It accepts God's will no matter the hardships that may come with it. It is not focused on bringing the Lord's will in line with ours but rather submitting those plans to His will. This posture of humility willingly aligns my will with the Lord's will.

The Christian life is a surrendered life as the posture of Jesus' prayer reveals. There is a second thing I want you to see about this life.

2. Power from Prayer (vs. 40, 43-44)

With the cross just hours away, we might expect Jesus to ask His disciples to pray for Him there in Gethsemane, but that is not what He does. He says to them, *"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."* He is not the only one in danger that evening. The disciples will face threats from within themselves along with those that will come from others.

Sadly, they failed to heed Jesus' instruction. He returned to them three different times in the garden, and each time He found them sleeping rather than praying. We may wonder about the temptation that

threatens them. It will revolve around their allegiance to Jesus. When He is arrested, they will scatter in fear. Peter will even deny that He knows Jesus three different times.

It is here that Christians need to remember that we are never far from some luring suggestion from the world, the flesh, or the devil. We are never far from some whisper that would destroy us. So, we must pray as an inoculation against temptation as Jesus did. He prayed in the garden, submitting His will to the Father's, and an angel was sent to strengthen Him in His resolve to the Father's will.

Paul understood the power of prayer. He encouraged the Philippian church to bring all the things that made them anxious before the Lord in prayer, promising them that the peace of God would guard their hearts (Phil 4:6-7). Then he offered his own experience as an example of this peace. Paul had learned how to be joyful and peaceful in all circumstances. No one wants to be hungry or lacking, yet Paul said, *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"* (Phil 4:13). Rather than fussing to God or walking away from the faith because of hardship, Paul had learned to surrender himself to the Lordship of Christ, and in that surrender, he discovered a power that enabled him to press on in the faith.

The Christian life is a surrendered life, and power is given to believers that enables them to submit to the Lord's will as they pray. This gift leads to a final thing I want you to see about this life.

3. Persistence through Prayer (vs. 45)

As the disciples were sleeping, Jesus was praying. When the disciples were scattering, Jesus was following the Father's will. His persistence is directly related to His prayer with the Father and vice versa for the disciples. Jesus experienced the power of prayer. People will often make the statement, "There is power in prayer." This is true; there is power in prayer in the sense that the power is related to God. Prayer in and of itself, however, has no power. Prayer is more than content. It is a process of relationship with God. The power we discover in prayer is seated in God. As a result, this power enables believers to persist in God's will. Luke tells us that after agonizing in prayer to the point of sweating drops of blood, which is a real but rare medical condition called hematidrosis, Jesus *"rose from prayer."* He had received His answer from the Father. The answer was "no." There was no other way for sinful humanity to be forgiven. Instead, it was the will of the Father to crush the Son as the only satisfactory offering for sin (Is 53:10). As such, He surrendered to this will and persisted in it.

Lance Zavitz reminds us that "The altar is not a bargain counter where you haggle with God. With Him it is all or nothing." Jesus did not haggle with the Father. Paul also did not haggle. He pleaded with God three times to remove the thorn in his flesh, but God declared the sufficiency of His grace to sustain him (2 Cor 12:7-9). So, he surrendered to Lord's will and persisted in it.

Peter, James, John, and the other eight men failed to pray so that they would not enter temptation. Therefore, it should not surprise us to see them scattering when the heat gets turned up. Their posture was wrong, which resulted in no power and persistence. The Christian life is a surrendered life.

Conclusion: The young man who placed the phrase "LET GOD" on his mantle, learned an important lesson that night. Letting God step in your situation first means that you must let go. Our preference is always to have God swoop in and save the day, but we want Him to do the work while we hold the reigns. Chuck and Cynthia were powerless to help their daughter. It was very possible that she would have remained paralyzed. While they did not want that, they had long before then surrendered themselves and everything in their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They had determined to let God hold the reigns of their lives. Have you let go and surrendered? If so, your prayer life will show it.