

# Matthew 26:39

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*In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays to His Father. He asks for another way to be made for Him to complete His mission of saving the world that would not require Him to suffer and die. But having made this request, Jesus tells His Father that He will submit to His will.*

The parallel gospel accounts of Jesus's prayer are found in Mark 14:35-36 and Luke 22:41-44.

Matthew continues his narrative of Jesus's final night.

Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane most likely took place on the night of Nisan 15 (late Thursday by Roman reckoning). See "[The Bible Says Timeline of Jesus's Final Day](#)" to learn more about the timing and sequencing of this event.

When Jesus arrived at Gethsemane (the olive press), *He* asked *His* disciples to "sit here while I go over there and pray" (Matthew 26:36). *He* also asked them to "pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40). Jesus then took Peter, James, and John further into the garden and confided to them how deeply troubled *He* was and asked them to keep watch (Matthew 26:37-38).

Matthew summarizes what happened next with a concise but loaded verse:

*And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."*

We will attempt to unpack this verse according to the following outline:

**JESUS GOES FURTHER INTO THE GARDEN TO PRAY**

**JESUS ADDRESSES GOD AS "MY FATHER"**

**JESUS'S REQUEST**

**JESUS'S RESPONSE**

**LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS BEING MINISTERED TO AS HE PRAYED IN GETHSEMANE**

**ISAIAH 49 AS A PROPHETIC GLIMPSE INTO JESUS'S CONVERSATION WITH HIS FATHER**

**PSALM 13 AS A MESSIANIC FORESHADOW OF JESUS'S PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE**

## JESUS GOES FURTHER INTO THE GARDEN TO PRAY

*And He went a little beyond them... and prayed.*

Jesus went *a little* further into the Garden from *them* (Peter, James, and John). Luke, whose gospel provides the most details about this moment, described the distance that He withdrew from them to be “about a stone’s throw” away (Luke 22:41). Depending on who is throwing the stone, this could be anywhere from 30-100 feet. At any rate it seems to have been within earshot because the disciples seem to have been able to hear what Jesus was *saying* when *He prayed*.

Matthew says Jesus *fell on His face and prayed*. And Mark records the same idea: “He... fell to the ground and began to pray...” (Mark 14:35). Luke says that Jesus “knelt down” when “He began to pray” (Luke 22:41). This may indicate that Jesus knelt on *His* knees as *He* first began to pray but over the course of praying *fell on His face*. We know that Jesus was praying over a considerable amount of time because *He* woke up His disciples three times before *He* was arrested (Matthew 26:40-44, Mark 14:37-41). From these gospel accounts, the Bible tells us that Jesus both knelt and was *face* down on the ground as *He prayed to His Father*.

Laying sprawled out on the ground, *face* down, is a posture of great humility. It was a common practice throughout the ancient and medieval ages for kings to require supplicants to prostrate themselves face down on the ground when they were in the king’s audience. But here is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16), and the Son of God (Matthew 16:16, 26:63-64, 27:54, Mark 9:7, Luke 3:22, John 5:19), prostrating himself on *His face* before God the Father

In doing this, Jesus shows Himself as the most humble of servants (Isaiah 53:11, Matthew 20:28, Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus lying down *on His face* before *His Father* is a remarkable image of divine humility. And it is one that Jesus calls us to imitate as we follow and serve *Him* through the trials of our lives (Matthew 5:5, 20:27).

Another reason Jesus may have *fell on His face*, was from the immense emotional exhaustion from *His* grief and distress (Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 26:37-38). Once again, this gives us a glimpse into the fullness of *His* humanity. *Jesus* felt emotions deeply. And *He* was affected by them. In this moment he was floored (“fell to the ground”—Mark 14:35) by *His* anguish. But *He* never let *His* feelings rule Him, however powerful they may have been. *He* always chose to trust God, *His Father* and to obey *Him*. *He* did however recognize *His* need for assistance from *His Father*, so *He prayed*.

We should also imitate Jesus in this way whenever we experience powerful emotions that seem overwhelming.

- We should cast our cares upon the Lord (Psalm 55:22, 1 Peter 5:7) and pour out our feelings and bare our soul to God (Psalm 142:2).
- We should ask for *His* perspective on them (2 Corinthians 2:10, James 1:5).

- And commit to following *His* will (Proverbs 16:3, 1 Peter 5:6).

There is no problem too big for God (Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37). *He* works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). God is big enough to handle our complaints and our emotions. Moses, Hannah, David, Jeremiah, and Daniel all poured their souls out to the Lord in their distress (Numbers 11:10-15, 1 Samuel 1:15, Psalm 13, 22, 28:2, 35, 40:1, 42, 43, Jeremiah 12:1-6, Daniel 9:3-4). And God answered them. Our *Father* in Heaven works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). As this episode shows, God does not always do as we would prefer, but *He* always answers in a manner that is for our best.

During this extremely trying time, when Jesus was overwhelmed by the weight of the world's sin (Isaiah 53:6, John 1:29), Jesus went to *His Father and prayed*. In response to the excruciating pain *He* was about to willingly suffer on its behalf (Isaiah 53:10), Jesus went to *His Father and prayed*. As Jesus was emotionally grieved, even to the point of death (Matthew 26:38) Jesus went to *His Father and prayed*.

### **JESUS ADDRESSES GOD AS “MY FATHER”**

*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.*

Matthew wrote that Jesus was *saying* this prayer. The Greek tense Matthew used for the word that translated as *saying* has a continuous aspect. Mark records something similar—“And He was *saying*...” (Mark 14:36). So does Luke (Luke 22:42). The Greek tense that all three of these Gospel writers employ indicates that Jesus was repeatedly *saying* this request as *He prayed* throughout the night. Later, Matthew's account reports how Jesus *prayed* this prayer on three separate occasions throughout *His* time in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:42, 44).

When Jesus *prayed* to God in Gethsemane *He* referred to God as: *My Father*.

This term of address both revealed Jesus's divinity and *His* humanity. Jesus was paradoxically both God and Man. *He* was the Divine Word become Flesh (John 1:1, 1:14)

In *His* teachings Jesus had often described God as: *My Father*.

(Matthew 7:21, 10:32-33, 11:27, 12:50, 15:13, 16:17, 18:10, 18:35, 20:23, Luke 10:22, 22:29, John 5:17, 6:32, 8:19, 10:18, 10:29, 14:20, 15:1).

Jesus prayed and taught *His* disciples to pray to God as their *Father*.

(Matthew 6:6-8, 6:9, 7:7-11, 11:25-26, John 11:41, 17:1-26).

Jesus was God. In relationship to God in Heaven, Jesus was God the Son. Jesus looked to God in Heaven as God the *Father*. And Jesus obeyed *His* heavenly *Father* because the Son loved and trusted *His Father*. And God the *Father* loved and trusted *His* only begotten Son. Jesus's prayer gives us a glimpse into the divine relationship of the Trinity.

When Jesus prayed to *My Father*, *He* was calling out to the One Who Sent Him to redeem the world (John 6:38). God had sent Jesus to do this task as a Father would send a Son to do family business. And Jesus as the Son of God looked to perfectly follow *His* Father's *will* in all things. There was always closeness and intimacy to their relationship. Earlier in *His* ministry Jesus told the Jews that, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). This was why during *His* desperation, Jesus prayed to God as *My Father*, as *He* sought guidance and strength for what was to come.

Mark's gospel, which was based on Peter's eyewitness account, reveals that Jesus's language was even more familial and intimate as *He* prayed this prayer,

"And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:36)

"Abba" was a term that a young Jewish boy would use to call for his daddy. Jesus's prayer was not unlike the cries of a frightened boy, calling out, "Daddy, Daddy, help me." Few scriptures capture the frail humanity of Jesus and *His* divine relationship as God to *His* Abba *Father* as powerfully as this passage.

## JESUS'S REQUEST

*"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."*

What Jesus asked of *His* Father was for another way for Him to redeem Creation. *He* does not define which aspect of the *cup* or circumstances *He* desired to *let pass*. *He* could have been asking for God to not require Him to suffer. *He* could have been concerned about dying an excruciating death on the cross. Jesus, like any other person, would naturally not wish to suffer and die. *He* might have been concerned about experiencing the full weight of sin, and being forsaken by *His* Father.

It would be reasonable and instinctive for Jesus to desire to avoid all these terrible things *if it was possible*. These terrible circumstances are represented by the phrase: *this cup*.

Metaphorically, *this cup* represents at least two things.

- A Person's Circumstances and Responsibilities Assigned by God
- God's Wrathful Judgment, which was to be poured out upon Jesus, on behalf of the entire world.

The first thing *this cup* metaphorically represents in scripture is the circumstances and/or responsibilities that each person experiences. Sometimes this is seen as a blessing—"my cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5). Sometimes it is seen as something bitter to be faithfully endured—"You have made them to drink tears in large measure" (Psalm 80:5).

Whatever the circumstances, *the cup* comes from God. God will not allow any temptation into our lives we cannot endure (1 Corinthians 10:13). However, God leaves it up to each individual to drink faithfully.

Scripture teaches that God is sovereign (Proverbs 16:33, Isaiah 45:7, Ezekiel 12:25).

- Everything is under *His* control (Job 42:1-2).
- God does whatever *He* pleases (Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 46:10, Jeremiah 32:17).
- *His* hands hold life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39, Ecclesiastes 7:14, Amos 3:6).
- All things were from the Lord or permitted by Him (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11a, 15, Lamentations 3:38).
- No detail goes unnoticed by Him (Job 28:23-24, Psalm 139:12).

God's sovereignty means that everything a person experiences is from the Lord (Job 1:21, 2:10).

And the identity, circumstances, conditions, and responsibilities each person uniquely experiences are a metaphorical *cup* that is assigned by God for that person to drink. (This is one reason why we are not to judge other people. Only God knows fully what was in their *cup* for them to drink).

A *cup* holds something to drink. And when someone passes you a *cup*, they are offering you a drink. In the ancient world, it was customary to drink and considered an insult *if* you did not drink from the *cup* that was offered to you.

Our lives are a gift from the LORD (Psalm 100:3). The life circumstances and responsibilities that we experience are the *cup* that God has offered to us. *This cup* was Jesus's lot or portion in life. It is the same for us. Some cups are sweet. Other cups can be bitter. Drinking from *this cup* means to embrace the identity and person God has given you to be by living faithfully in whatever circumstances you are in.

The second thing that *this cup* could metaphorically refer to is God's wrathful judgment against sin. The prophets used a cup or drink as a metaphor for God's wrath and judgment upon sin (Isaiah 51:17, 22, Jeremiah 25:15-16, Lamentations 4:21, Ezekiel 23:31-34, Habakkuk 2:16, Revelation 14:9-10, 16:19).

God the *Father* poured out *His* wrath on Jesus *His* Son on the cross when Christ assumed the entire guilt of the world and became the complete embodiment of sinful humanity (Matthew 27:45-46):

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of

God through Him.”  
(Romans 5:8-9)

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”  
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”  
(1 John 2:2)

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed....

...But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.”  
(Isaiah 53:5-6)

“having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14)

Jesus was sinless and did not deserve God’s wrath. Nevertheless, *He* chose to bear “the sin of many, and [He] interceded for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

In other words, as our Messiah, Jesus the Son of God willingly exchanged the blessings of *His* righteousness for the bitter curses of our unrighteousness and sin. He traded *His cup* of blessing and abundance for our bitter *cup* of wrath and judgement. And in so doing Jesus became our *cup* of salvation (Psalm 116:13, Matthew 26:27).

*This cup* that was being offered to Jesus by *His Father* on this night of Passover was exceedingly bitter. It was full of terrible circumstances and sufferings. And it was full of *His Father’s* wrath and judgement against the sins of the world. But *this cup* was the Messiah’s to drink because it was part of God’s plan to redeem the world (Isaiah 53:5-6, 10-12)

If Jesus was to drink from *this cup*, it would mean being:

- Misjudged and Condemned (Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 26:63-66)
- Abused and Tortured (Psalm 22:16, Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 26:67, 27:26, John 19:1)
- Rejected by His Own (Isaiah 53:8, Matthew 27:21-25)
- Humiliated and Mocked (Psalm 22:6-8, Isaiah 50:6, Matthew 27:39-44, John 19:2-3)

- Forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:46)
- And Killed (Psalm 22:15, Isaiah 53:9, 12, Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37).

A few weeks earlier, Jesus alluded to the circumstances of *His* death with the expression “the cup I am about to drink” (Matthew 20:22). The mother of James and John asked Him to grant that her two sons sit on *His* right and left in *His* kingdom (Matthew 20:21). Jesus asked the two brothers if they were able to drink the cup which He was about to drink, and they responded: “We are.” Jesus told them: “My cup you shall drink,” signifying that they also would be killed for their faith, as Jesus will be killed. But this would come much later for them. James was the first of the twelve to be killed for his faith (Acts 12:2). John would be the last, he died while exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith. It was there where he wrote the book of Revelation.

And as Jesus submitted to arrest, *He* used the metaphor of a *cup* to describe what he was about to suffer. Shortly after Jesus *prayed* this request to *His Father* of letting *this cup pass from Him*, Jesus said to Peter: “the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).

Jesus would drink from *this cup*. But *His* request of His Father was: *if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me*. This request was earnest (Luke 22:44). (More on this below). Facing the bitterness of this suffering and wrath, Jesus asked *His Father* *if it is possible*, if He could grant another way for Him to redeem the world without having to experience these awful things.

The heart of Jesus’s request was for *His Father* to *let this cup pass from Me*. *He* was asking the *Father* to let *His* wrath pass over Him as God’s wrath passed-over the houses of Israel the night of Passover before they were liberated from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:13). On that Passover God’s wrath came to every house in Egypt who did not have the blood of the lamb on the door posts (Exodus 12:21-23), but spared every house of Israel. God’s wrath and judgment against Israel’s sins fell upon to the Passover lambs (Exodus 12:12-13).

On this Passover Night, Jesus anticipated God’s wrath being poured out upon Him. Jesus is our true Passover lamb who takes away our sin (John 1:29, Corinthians 5:7). Because of Jesus and *His* sacrifice, God’s wrath passed over us and fell on Him. God the *Father* declined Jesus’s request; *He* did not *let this cup* of *His* wrath *pass from His Son*. And Jesus chose to drink the cup of God’s wrath of *His* own free will. *He* did this because *He* loved *His Father* and *He* loved people.

Because Jesus drank *this cup*, we do not have to drink the fullness of God’s judgement and condemnation. Jesus drank it for us:

“This is what your Lord, the Lord, your God  
 Who contends for His people says:  
 ‘Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering,  
 The chalice of My anger;  
 You will never drink it again.’”  
 (Isaiah 51:22)

Yet even in *His* profound grief, Jesus's petition is full of faith. The expression *if it is possible* acknowledges that God is in control. It recognizes God the Father's authority over all things. As God, Jesus knew that all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26). And so, *He* was asking for another way, but at the same time Jesus was willing to trust *His Father* even if it meant having to *drink* this bitter *cup*—*yet not as I will, but as You will*.

## **JESUS'S RESPONSE**

*“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”*

Jesus's response in the Garden of Gethsemane: *yet not as I will, but as You will* was the opposite response of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

When Adam ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he essentially said, “Not as God wills, but *as I will!*” (This is what we tell God every time we sin too). When Adam did this, he brought sin and death into the world (Genesis 3:19, Romans 5:12). This act separated Adam and his offspring from God and *His* good plan for their lives (Genesis 3:22-24)

“Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”  
(Romans 5:14)

But Jesus is “the type of Him who is to come.” *He* is the “second Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45). The second Adam, Jesus, said the exact opposite of what the first Adam said. Jesus said, *yet not as I will, but as You will*.

Just as Adam placed his own *will* above God's *will* in the Garden of Eden and brought sin and death into the world, Jesus, the second Adam, put God's *will* above *His will* (Matthew 26:39) in the garden of Gethsemane and as a way to redeem the world and place it back into harmony with its Creator and to grant eternal life by grace to all who would believe in Him (John 3:16),

“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one [Adam], much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”  
(Romans 5:17)

Jesus chose to drink *this cup*. For the joy set before Him, *He* despised the shame of the cross and the bitterness of *this cup* and has now sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Luke's account provides an interesting insight. There Luke records Jesus as saying:

“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”  
(Luke 22:42).



The Greek word translated as “willing” is a form of βούλομαι (G1014—pronounced: “boo'-lom-ahēe”). This word is used to reflect someone deciding/determining to do something. It describes someone’s premeditated intentions or plans. Matthew used this word to describe Joseph’s intentions to secretly send Mary away before the angel came to him and explained Jesus’s divine conception (Matthew 1:19) And Mark uses this word to describe Pilate’s political calculation when he released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified according to the mob’s demands (Mark 15:15). So the passage from Luke is:

“Father, if You are willing [in your intentional plan], remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”  
(Luke 22:42).

The premeditated intention of βούλομαι (G1014) is different than the Greek word translated as “will.” The word “will” as in “yet not My will” is θέλημα (G2307—pronounced: “thel'-ay-mah”). “Thelēma” is used to reflect one’s wishes or desires. It describes something someone would like to occur. But our desires do not have the final decision-making power. Examples of this usage include the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus’s model prayer says “Your will (“thelēma”) be done” indicating that it is God’s desire for humans to follow *His* way (Matthew 6:10). But clearly God has left it up to humans to decide:

“Father, if You are willing [in your intentional plan], remove this cup from Me; yet not My will [desire or wish], but Yours be done.”  
(Luke 22:42).

In this choice of words, Jesus indicates that it is *His desire* (θέλημα) for the *cup* of suffering and wrath to pass. But from Jesus’s perspective, that is for *His Father* to decide (βούλομαι). This is because Jesus is determined (βούλομαι) to follow *His Father’s will* (θέλημα), *His plan*. This would seem to provide an excellent model for our own prayers.

Jesus’s decision (βούλομαι) to obediently follow the LORD’s will (θέλημα) was a messianic fulfillment of Isaiah’s first Servant Song.

“He will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not be disheartened or crushed  
Until He has established justice in the earth.”  
(Isaiah 42:3b-4a)

Even though Jesus was pressed hard in Gethsemane (“olive press”) and distressed even to the point of death (Matthew 26:37-38), *He* was not crushed by the heavy burden of sin to the point of giving up or being defeated by the temptation to follow *His* emotions and desires (θέλημα). Despite the intensity of *His* trials, *He* faithfully executed *His Father’s* mission (βούλομαι) for Him which was to establish “justice [harmony with God] in the earth” (Isaiah 42:4a).

## **LUKE’S ACCOUNT OF JESUS BEING MINISTERED TO AS HE PRAYED IN GETHSEMANE**

Luke's gospel account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane provides specific and interesting details regarding *His* humanity.

“Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.”

(Luke 22:43-44)

Luke reports that “an angel from heaven appeared to [Jesus], strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43). This indicates that God the *Father* both heard and answered Jesus's prayers. The *Father* listened to His Son's prayers which were offered in grief, distress, and agony (Matthew 26:37-38, Luke 22:44). The *Father* answered *His* prayers to not give in to temptation (Luke 40) and to *let this cup pass from Him*.

*His Father* did *not let the cup pass*, but *He* did send an angel to strengthen *His Son* before *He* drank it. This verse from Luke's Gospel also tangibly highlights Jesus's dependence upon *His Father* for strength and grace to accomplish *His Father's will*.

If Jesus needed to be strengthened by God to overcome *His* trials, we also need God's grace and power to minister to us to overcome our trials. Our Heavenly *Father* usually does not send us angels to minister to us in our time of need, but *He* and the Son have sent us something far better than angels to empower and equip us in our trials. *He* has sent us the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). *He* has sent us Himself.

God, Himself, empowers us, as believers in Jesus, to victory in Christ whenever we are tempted (Ezekiel 26:27, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:5, Ephesians 3:16, Colossians 1:11). God's Spirit lives inside every believer and is available to help every believer overcome trials in God's strength (Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, 2 Timothy 1:14). But it is up to us to choose to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh (Galatians 5:18). The Spirit and flesh are always contending against one another, urging us to choose them. God left it up to us to choose which to follow, but it is a binary choice; there is no third option (Galatians 5:17-18).

If Jesus, being God, depended on God for strength, so should we.

Apparently, the angel that came to strengthen Jesus in *His* agony did not remove *His agony*. Luke tells us that Jesus was “in agony” as “He was praying very fervently” and that “His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). God did not take away Jesus's anguish or remove the cross. Jesus still had to overcome *His* anguish by trusting in *His Father*, and walk through the trial.

Similarly, when God strengthens us, *He* often does not remove the pain of our trials, but gives us the power to overcome them by walking in faith. The Bible describes our ordeals as sharing in Christ's sufferings (Acts 5:41, Romans 8:17, Philippians 3:10).

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the

sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.”

(1 Peter 4:12-13)

If we share in Christ’s sufferings, we will partake in *His* reward and reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:21, Romans 8:17b).

Jesus gives us an example of striving strenuously to overcome temptation.

“He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.”

(Luke 22:44)

The physical condition of sweating blood is a confirmed medical condition called “Hematidrosis.” It is a rare condition, but according to medical authorities it usually occurs around the face. It is believed to be triggered by the body’s “fight or flight” response during a time of extreme distress or fear, such as when we are facing death or torture.

Jesus was in extreme distress (Matthew 26:37-38, Luke 22:44). And *He* was facing both death and torture—and more. *He* was overcoming the sin of the world, and would assume all of the wrath due it upon Himself. Jesus was very much in a “fight or flight” circumstance when *He* was praying fervently in Gethsemane. Through *His* fervent prayer and the ministry of angels, *He* did not fight physically or flee physically. Instead, *He* submitted to *His Father’s will* and walked through the trial.

Although *He* was God, this passage makes clear that the cross was neither easy nor painless for Jesus. Rather, it was excruciating and taxing. Once again, Luke’s account emphasizes Jesus’s humanity.

## **ISAIAH 49 AS A PROPHETIC GLIMPSE INTO JESUS’S CONVERSATION WITH HIS FATHER**

The forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah (as with Isaiah 42:1-4, 50:4-11, and 52:13-53:12) is a “Servant Song” prophesying about the Messiah as a servant. But the beginning of this particular Servant Song is unique in that it consists of a frank dialogue between the Servant and the LORD (Isaiah 49:1-6). In this dialogue, it appears Jesus is agonizing over the rejection by *His* people, and *His Father* assures Him that redeeming Israel “is too small a thing”; His Father assures Him that He will redeem the entire world (Isaiah 49:6).

It gives us a glimpse into the divine conversation between the Son of God and God *His Father*, and not only this, but the conversation recorded by Isaiah between the Servant and the LORD seems to contain thoughts and emotions felt and expressed by Jesus, the Son of Man who came to serve (Matthew 20:28) during this lonely hour in Gethsemane:

“But I said, ‘I have toiled in vain,  
I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity;

Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the LORD,  
And My reward with My God.”  
(Isaiah 49:4)

Here the Servant responds to the LORD who sent Him. It appears this is a prophetic insight into the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. It is a confession of grief and distress (Matthew 26:37-38). The Servant (Jesus, the Messiah) confesses, that *He* has “toiled in vain,” and that *He* has spent all that *He* has “for nothing and vanity.”

In other words, the Servant is telling the LORD that He feels as though *He* has failed to accomplish the mission for which *He* was sent. The Messiah is to redeem Israel. But even though Jesus came to *His* own, *His* own did not receive Him (John 1:11). At this particular moment in Gethsemane, Jesus has been betrayed and knows *He* is about to die at the hands of those who rejected Him.

Part of the reason Jesus’s soul was “grieved to the point of death” (Matthew 26:38) may have been because *He* was rejected by the nation in *His* mission to redeem Israel. *He* may have been tempted again to redeem and reclaim Israel on *His* own terms, instead of trusting *His Father’s will*.

The devil had already tempted Him once to gain what was rightfully *His* by worshipping him (Matthew 4:9). Jesus had the capacity to ask *His Father* for twelve legions of angels to fight for Him, but *He* declined to do so (Matthew 26:53). This could be why *He prayed: yet not as I will, but as You will*, because although Jesus desired the *cup to pass from Him*, *He* desired even more to do *His Father’s will*. Continuing with Isaiah 49:

“And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,  
To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him  
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,  
And My God is My strength).”  
(Isaiah 49:5)

Here the LORD speaks words of comfort to *His* Servant. The LORD tells Him that despite their rejection, Jacob and Israel will be brought back and gathered to Him. Despite what the Servant is feeling, *He* has not failed, says the LORD. The Servant is restored and honored by this. *He* finds *His* strength not in Himself, but in God. Again, this thought is seen in Jesus’s prayer to *His Father: yet not as I will, but as You will*.

But incredibly, there is an even larger purpose at stake than merely redeeming Israel, that the LORD tells *His* Servant that *He* will accomplish:

“He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also make You a light of the nations  
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”  
(Isaiah 49:6)

The LORD tells *His* Servant that it was “too small a thing” to only redeem Israel and that *He* will also redeem “the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” In other words what appears to be the Messiah’s failure (Israel’s rejection of Him) is actually a significant part of God’s much larger plan to redeem the Gentiles across the end of the earth. This is not a defeat for the Servant. It is a total and largely unforeseen triumph!

Even though *He* is troubled in Gethsemane, Jesus will conquer death and sin. After *He* rises, Jesus tells *His* disciples that they will be *His* witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” The Apostle Paul, in Romans 11, reminds the Gentile believers residing in Rome that though the Jews’ hearts are now hardened, God has used it for the Gentiles’ advantage—the kingdom of God is now available to them as well. And Paul says that one day all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-26a).

Isaiah’s prophecy in this Servant Song continues with the LORD addressing *His* Servant,

“Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One,  
To the despised One,  
To the One abhorred by the nation,  
To the Servant of rulers,  
'Kings will see and arise,  
Princes will also bow down,  
Because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”  
(Isaiah 49:7)

Here the LORD promises *His* wrongfully despised and abhorred Servant that even though the nation of Israel will loathe Him, there will be Kings who will see, arise, and bow down to Him. *He* will be greatly exalted. We know this did take place, as Jesus told *His* disciples that *He* had been granted all authority in heaven as well as in earth (Matthew 28:18).

The theme of this promise that every knee will bow to Jesus is repeated in the final verses of the fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 53:10-12) as well as in Paul’s admonition to the Philippian believers. In Philippians, Paul admonishes believers to choose the same mindset as that of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Philippians 2:5-10). Jesus chose to be “despising the shame” *He* was feeling, and do *His* Father’s will, looking to this promised reward (Hebrews 12:2).

Paul exhorts each believer to choose this same road as Jesus. To choose Jesus’s mindset, to humbly serve and suffer now in this life, makes sense, because the result is a much greater reward than anything we can gain on this earth. If we follow God’s will, then God will exalt us in His timing (Matthew 20:27, 2 Timothy 2:12, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6).

Christ came first to serve (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:42). Because of *His* faithful service, *He* has been granted all authority and given the earth as *His* reward (Matthew 28:20, Philippians 2:10, Hebrews 12:2). Jesus offers us the same promise, and urges us to overcome temptation, even as He overcame (Revelation 3:21). Jesus’s striving in the Garden is an example for us which we can emulate in striving to resist sin and temptation.

The Servant Song continues in Isaiah 49:8-12 with the LORD echoing these similar promises and themes to *His* Servant.

### **PSALM 13 AS A MESSIANIC FORESHADOW OF JESUS'S PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE**

When we hear Jesus's Gethsemane prayer—*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will*—in light of the fact that *He* was about to be arrested, tortured, and executed at the hands of *His* enemies, we hear echoes of Psalm 13 by Jesus's ancestor, King David.

We invite you to reflect and consider the Messianic overtones of this short, six-verse psalm.

David begins the first two verses of Psalm 13 by praying. He asks God a series of four questions about *His* goodness amidst desperate circumstances. Each question begins: "How long?" (Psalm 13:1-2). It appears that David's psalm is a prophetic prediction of what Jesus asked *His Father* in Gethsemane.

"How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide your face from me?  
How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?"

Unlike David appears to be doing, Jesus does not seem to question God's goodness, but both David and Jesus are calling out to God as *He* is facing desperate trials. And Jesus's request to *let this cup pass from Me* is an expression of asking for God to relent in a similar way that David was asking God to relent. It appears that this prophetic psalm provides additional insight into Jesus's request.

After asking these questions, David then pleads his case:

"Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,  
And my enemy will say, 'I have overcome him,'  
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken."  
(Psalm 13:3-4)

Like David, Jesus is also facing the prospect of an inglorious death at the hands of *His* enemies. David asked God to deliver him from death and defeat by sparing his life. God delivered David from the shame of death at the hands of his enemies by granting him victory over them.

This psalm applies not only to David, but also prophetically to Jesus the Messiah, even though God does not rescue Jesus in the same way. God does *not let the cup pass*. *He* allows Jesus to be delivered into the hands of *His* enemies and be killed. *He* allows Jesus's enemies to gloat over *His* dead body. But God does deliver Jesus to victory, not by means of preventative escape, but through resurrection.

Finally, even though David is in the depths of his despair and can see no way out, he chooses to trust in God's faithfulness:

“But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;  
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord,  
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.”  
(Psalm 13:5-6)

Jesus too, adopts this perspective. *He* also chooses to trust in *His Father's* goodness, knowing that even in agony, shame, and death, victory will be ultimately and forever *His*. This faith in *His Father* is what allows Him to say: *yet not as I will, but as You will*.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>39</sup> And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”**