

The Battle To Accept God's Will

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Matthew 26:39 ³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*."

The Battle Is Difficult

There are seven petitions in the Lord's prayer, seven things that we ask for. Which of these is the hardest to pray?

The fifth can be difficult. We ask that we learn to be as forgiving to others as God is to us. When we are filled with anger and resentment towards someone, we do not want to learn to forgive. We would rather like Jonah pray that God would punish them for their evil ways.

The fourth can also be hard. We ask for daily bread, when what we would really like is gold, and rich food, and fancy clothes.

Yet, there is none so hard to pray as the third. "Thy will be done." It is a very hard thing to sit with Jesus in the garden and to pray honestly from the heart, "Your will be done." To give up control of our lives and trust Jesus's will is always a hard thing. There are times when it is especially difficult.

We have many examples in scriptures of those who learned to pray this petition from the heart.

Think of Joseph or Daniel unfairly facing prison or slavery, and praying with a humble heart if this is your will Lord let it be so.

Imagine Mary and Martha sitting by the bed of their dying brother. They sent for the Lord but he wasn't coming. Imagine praying, "Your will be done."

Think of Mary the mother of Jesus as she says to the angel, "Let it be to me according to your word." Did she know what her husband might think? Did she know what the villagers might say behind her back. Yet she accepts the Lord's will for her life.

In the midst of war, famine, disease, sickness, loneliness, poverty or any other tragedy or suffering there is no greater battle than this: to learn to surrender your will to the Lord and to say with Jesus in the garden "your will be done."

The Battle Is Bitter

The battle can be hard and bitter.

My daughter Kaylee and I have a battle of wills twice a day. Twice a day she must take her Keppra. It's a big pill and it tastes terrible. She has had to take two of them twice a day every day for most of her life. These pills are so terrible that even grinding them up and mixing them with a large amount of ice cream or chocolate does not hide the taste. So, we battle. She clamps her jaws shut and I try to pry them open. She can't understand why the pills are necessary. All that she knows is the bitter taste.

In the same way we fight God. We too can't understand why the suffering is necessary. All we know is the bitter taste.

It takes great faith to look beyond the bitter taste and trust God's will, to drink the bitter cup as Jesus puts it in our text. What bitterness exists in your life? Are you willing by faith to drink the bitter cup and trust the Father's will?

At the very beginning of Matthew chapter eight, in only two verse we hear the account of a leper who showed such a faith.

Matthew 8:2-3 2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Look at the faith of that leper.

First, he comes to Jesus. He comes near to Jesus, close enough to "worship" him. In context that means he either kissed his hands or more likely bowed down the ground and kissed his feet. He wasn't supposed to do that. It was against the law of Moses for a leper to approach anyone that closely. Yet he does it. Not as an act of defiance against God's law but as an act of faith in Christ's mercy.

Second, he has no doubt the Jesus has the power. He doesn't as other men ask if Jesus can help. There is absolute confidence.

Third, he from the heart genuinely utters those three words which are the hardest to say, "Your will be done."

What that man desired above all else was to remove the bitterness of leprosy, but he was willing to subject his will to Jesus'.

It can be bitter to accept Jesus will.

The battle is unfair

It can be bitter and hard and sometimes it seems unfair. Sometimes it's the sin of others that cause us to suffer. Why should I have to suffer? It's not my fault.

The day after our text Jesus drank the bitter cup and went to his death on the cross according to the Father's will. However, exhausted from a rather difficult night he did not have the strength to carry his own cross. The Roman soldiers weren't about to do it themselves, so instead they grabbed a random man from the crowd, Simon of Cyrene and forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

How unfair. It wasn't Simon's cross. He wasn't condemned to death. It wasn't his job to crucify Jesus. Why should he have to carry such a heavy cross?

It was unfair but not for Simon. It was unfair that Simon the sinner only had to carry the cross and didn't have to die on it. It's unfair the Jesus the righteous took his place and ours on the cross.

Accepting God's will often feels so unfair, and it is unfair but **not to us**. This is why we gladly learn to pray "thy will be done." It is hard it is bitter but the end is our salvation.

God's will is Jesus in the garden.

God's will is Jesus on the cross.

God's will is Jesus dying for your sins.

We pray "your will be done," because God's will is that Jesus died for you.

The battle is difficult, the battle is bitter, and the battle is unfair, but the battle belongs to the Lord.

In our Old Testament reading Jehoshaphat faced a battle he couldn't win. The Lord promised that he would fight for him, and the people of Judah wouldn't have to do a thing. By faith the people arose and went up to the battle. When they arrived, there was no longer any enemy for the Lord had vanquished their enemies. By faith the people saw the victory of the Lord.

The battles before us are difficult, bitter and seem unfair. Yet it is the Lord who fought for us in the garden and on the cross. The journey through the valley and up the mountain might be long and arduous, but at the end we find the enemy vanquished and the victory is ours through Jesus Christ.

However bitter the Lord's will is in the moment, the end is salvation and victory.

Revelation 7:14-17 "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters¹. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This is God's will for you through Christ Jesus who died so that you might live. Amen.