



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 61”

September 13th, 2009
Pastor Darryl R. Curtis

Family Life Baptist Church
909 West Saginaw Street
Lansing, Michigan 48915
Phone: (517) 393-9399
Email: info@familylifebc.com
Website: <http://www.familylifebc.com>

Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 61

Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46, John 18:1

Then Jesus went with His disciples across the Kidron Valley to a garden called Gethsemane. When they had entered the place, He said to them, **“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”**

[Jesus] took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and began to be deeply grieved with great distress and agony. Then Jesus said to them, **“My soul is extremely sorrowful even to the point of death. Stay here and watch with Me. Pray that you may not be tempted.”**

Jesus went a little farther away, about the distance of a stone’s throw, knelt on the ground, and fell on His face. He prayed that, if it were possible, this time of agony might pass from Him. **“Abba, Father,”** He said, **“everything is possible for You. My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet do not do what I will but what You will.”**

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, we talked about the necessity of an active prayer life. I made the point that as important as is the necessity of being obedient to God by following His instructions, the essence of our relationship with God is actually prayer. Every relationship in which a human being engages is based upon communication, and prayer is the form of communication that we have with God.

I also made the point that there is a general blessing that everyone, good, evil, just or unjust, receives. **Matthew 5:45** tells us:

45 [God] makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

The benevolence of God is such that the vast majority of children are born healthy, even those born to pagans and unbelievers. God bestows the blessing of a reasonable portion of health and strength on the majority of mankind, whether they believe in Jesus Christ or not. In our country, the vast majority of the people are gainfully employed, whether they believe in God or not. Our state is considered to be in a deep recession because the unemployment rate is 12%. We are alarmed about employment prospects although 88% of the population is working.

Because the general blessing of God is so benevolent, many people consider personal prayer a very low priority activity. People don’t see the need



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

for personal prayer, because the general blessing of God is sufficient to keep them in a state that they find tolerable. We may pray ritual prayers before we eat and before we go to bed because our parents trained us to do so, but to personally commune with God as we would with a friend is not something that we consider until the day approaches in which we find our need for God to be a compelling necessity. Look at **Luke 16:19-22**, in which Jesus says:

19 “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

The rich man should have used his gifts from God to take care of Lazarus, as the necessity of giving alms to the poor, especially poor people that were as close as Lazarus was to the rich man, was understood among the Jews. But the rich man did not see that which he owned as gifts from God, but rather as his own possessions, and decided that since he owned his riches, he had no requirement to share with Lazarus. So when Lazarus died, his suffering on earth was changed to joy as he was carried by the angels to Abraham, which the Jews interpreted as we would interpret going to heaven, and the rich man’s joy was changed to suffering, which the Jews interpreted as the opposite. Jesus confirmed their interpretation, as the lection continues, in **Luke 16:23**:

23 And being in torments in Hades, [the rich man] lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

The rich man began to understand the necessity for prayer as the general benevolence of God was taken from him. A negative change in our circumstances can make us interested in the things of God regardless of how preoccupied we may have been with the things of this world. Let the doctor say heart attack, stroke or cancer, or let the boss say layoffs, firing or going out of business and see how quickly the level of interest increases among people who were previously disinterested in God. It is clear to me that one of the reasons that we have trouble is to bring us closer to God. And the rich man figured out prayer when he felt the heat and saw Lazarus and Abraham. **Luke 16:24** records:

24 “Then [the rich man] cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

Father Abraham, have mercy on me. The prayer, “Have mercy on me”, is the essence of the prayer of the last resort. The prayer of the last resort is not really a good place to start praying, but many people start there, and it is better to start there than nowhere. God controls the circumstances in the universe,



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

including ours, and it is better to not wait until we get in trouble to try to meet Him. And while there is a general blessing from God, the general blessing has limitations. **Psalm 90:10, 12** tells us:

10 The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

A heart of wisdom comes from recognizing the limitations imposed by God, that our time of strength is finite. The general blessing of God is time-limited for each of us, and we will eventually, probably within eighty years of our birth, have to die and give an account to God of that which we have done with that which He has given us. Statistically, the average life expectancy in the United States is 78.2 years, 75.6 years for men and 80.8 years for women, which is 38th among the 195 nations listed in the United Nations. We live in a strong nation, because the world average life expectancy is only 66.57 years, 64.52 years for men and 68.76 years for women.

God is the creator and sustainer of the universe, and He imposes the limits on us. He is not a cosmic bellboy with the mandate to make sure that we have whatever we want. Rather, in the model prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to pray, in **Matthew 6:10**:

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The “your” of whom the verse speaks is God. Jesus tells us to pray that the will of God be done. Jesus instructs us to pray for God’s leadership and involvement in our lives. But the rich man was not particularly concerned about God’s will, as he ignored the obligation to Lazarus that God gave him when Lazarus was begging at his gate. God’s answer to the rich man’s prayer was “no”, reflecting the rich man’s lack of concern about God’s will. God spoke through Abraham, in **Luke 16:25-26**:

25 But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

One of the purposes of prayer is to teach us to be concerned about eternity as we pray during time. The rich man found that a lack of focus on the things of God during the time that we live on earth does not translate into God’s favor during eternity.

Our text for today teaches us prayer that concentrates on the will of God while designed to alleviate the pain of death. **Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46, John 18:1** says:



Then Jesus went with His disciples across the Kidron Valley to a garden called Gethsemane. When they had entered the place, He said to them, **“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”**

[Jesus] took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and began to be deeply grieved with great distress and agony. Then Jesus said to them, **“My soul is extremely sorrowful even to the point of death. Stay here and watch with Me. Pray that you may not be tempted.”**

Jesus finds himself in a place similar to that of the rich man. He is in distress and agony. He calls upon those who are the closest to Him to pray with Him. Peter, James and John are known as Jesus' inner circle, as both here, and when Jesus came to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead, He allowed these three in the room with Him watch Him pray. It is obvious that we ask people to pray with us because we believe that they have a relationship with God and will have influence with God on our behalf.

Jesus hoped that the inner circle of His disciples would understand His situation and would pray the prayer of agreement with Him. Jesus told them that they also needed to pray for their own strength to endure the trial that they would have to go through. I have already established the point that none of us is going to live on earth forever, and that some sickness or some other type of trial is immanent for all of us. God gives us the opportunity to develop faith and strength in Him through the exercise our prayers to Him so that we will be prepared for the trials that come from Him. In this lection, Jesus is calling on those who are closest to Him to develop that strength.

Although Jesus and the disciples are praying their prayer for strength to endure a trial, it is good for us to not wait until the trial is eminent to establish a relationship with God. We ought not pray only when we have trials, but we should recognize that every decision that we make, regardless of how trivial it may be, is a better decision if it is covered with believing prayer. As prepared as we may think ourselves to be to make the decision, our decision will be improved if we consult with the Lord before we make it. As sure as we may be about the correctness of our decision, our decision will be improved if we pray that our decision be within the will of God. Yes, I know that we have political positions, we have the preferences learned from our family of origin, and we have spousal influences that shape our decision making, but even considering all of those things, our decision making will be improved by prayer and fellowship with God. Jesus tells us, stay here and watch, and pray that you may not be tempted. As the lection continues, Jesus prayed:

Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46

Jesus went a little farther away, about the distance of a stone's throw, knelt on the ground, and fell on His face. He prayed that, if it were possible, this time of agony might pass from Him. **“Abba, Father,”** He said, **“everything is possible for You.**



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Jesus said that everything is possible for God, and, after all of the miracles that Jesus performed during His ministry, He should know. Through the power of God, Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, and cleansed lepers. Everything is possible. God could let the rich man out of hell; it is possible. God could allow you to pass the test without studying and doing your homework; it is possible. God could take cancer away even as it is in its' last stages; it is possible. The hymnologist said, "God can do anything but fail. There are no limits on that which God can do.

But then, in His prayer, Jesus says:

My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.

The cup that Jesus wants to pass from Him is the experience of the Cross.

Jesus' first reference to the possible, **"everything is possible for You"**, refers to God's ability, which is infinite. But Jesus' second reference to the possible, **"if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me"**, refers to God's will, which has limitations. God doesn't do everything that He can do for us just because we ask. There are some requests that God does not grant us, if He granted them to us, His overall plan for us would not come to fruition. If God did that which we asked, He would be acting in other than our best interest.

So, when we pray for something, sometimes God says "yes", that we can have that for which we pray immediately. Sometimes, God says "wait", that we can have that for which we pray, not now, but rather when the time is right. And sometimes, God says "no", that we cannot have that for which we pray, because He has something better for us than that for which we are praying. And having faith in God means that we recognize that His decision for our lives is better than our own.

Listen to Peter's description of God's plan for us, as given in **1Peter 1:13-21**:

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

In verses 13-16, Peter calls upon us to apply our minds to understand the grace of Jesus Christ and to obediently live holy lives in accordance with our faith in that grace. **1Peter 1:13-21** continues:

17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,



19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Verses 17-19 refers to praying to God, our Father who is in Heaven, and to live according to the wisdom to which our prayer brings us, recognizing that we should live as God instructs us because He has redeemed us from our sinfulness. Redemption means that our sins have been paid for, and they are paid for by the precious blood of Christ. **1Peter 1:13-21** continues:

20 [Christ] indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Verse 20 tells us that Jesus shedding His Blood for us was foreordained, or planned, before the foundation of the world. Jesus shed His Blood during “these last times”, which means during the lifetime of Peter, but Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross was planned by God before God created the world. God foresaw the sinfulness of Adam and Eve in the garden, and the subsequent sinfulness of all mankind, and decided to remedy the problem of sin by creating the sacrificial system, with Jesus Christ being the one sacrificed to die in our place and to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed.

The death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was part of the initial plan that God made before He created the world. Jesus Christ’s death on the Cross is a great benefit to us, as it allows us sinful men to have a relationship with a Holy God.

Remember that rich man in hell being punished for ignoring Lazarus? The Bible does not say that he was a murderer, a thief or an adulterer, but simply someone that ignored one of the laws of God.

We have all ignored some law of God, so we would all be in his situation if it weren’t for the fact that Jesus Christ has taken our punishment in hell for us.

John 3:16-17 tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

But in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays:

“Abba, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for You. My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.

God can answer Jesus’ prayer positively, that is, He has the ability to allow Jesus to avoid the Cross. But if God does, what happens to the plan that He foreordained from the foundation of the world? If Jesus Christ avoids the Cross and doesn’t die for your sins, who does?

Obviously, you do. Remember the rich man. Jesus Christ died for your sins so that you do not have to pay the penalty. If Jesus Christ doesn’t die, then



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

you have to pay the penalty yourself. So, although it is possible for God to allow Jesus to avoid the Cross, if God does so, the damage to His plan will be incalculable. God's Word becomes null and void, or even worse, useless.

And Jesus, although crushed and made impotent by the impending weight of the Cross on His mind and heart, recognizes the necessity of the plan of God being completed. Jesus prays:

My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet do not do what I will but what You will."

In this prayer, we recognize that sometimes that which we want conflicts with the plan of God. In the plan of God, sin brings pain and death. Listen to the episode of the death of Moses in **Deuteronomy 32:48-52, 34:4-7**:

48 Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying:

49 "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession;

50 and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people;

51 because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel.

52 Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel."

4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

6 And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day.

7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.

Moses was called the servant of the Lord. He spoke to God face to face on Mount Sinai, and God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone as Moses held with them in his hands. The Lord spoke to Moses as I speak to you, but just one offense after Moses became the leader of the children of Israel kept him from leading the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. At the age of one hundred and twenty, Moses was probably stronger and could see better than you or I right now. Moses died, not because of the deterioration of his body in his old age, but rather because of sin.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Sin is the problem. God's plan for us, created before the foundation of the world, is for us to live godly lives. When we deviate from God's plan by committing sin, each sin brings us closer to death. Although our sinfulness will not allow us to avoid physical death, God developed the plan that Jesus Christ die to save us from the second death, that death that the rich man suffered in torment. The second death is not the cessation of life, but rather being disconnected from God the Life Giver, in the lake of fire and brimstone that burns forever and ever. We remain connected with God though our connection with His Son Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed.

So Jesus couldn't avoid the death of the Cross. Unless He died for us, we would have to die for ourselves like the rich man. Sometimes God's answer to prayer is "not your will, but My will, because My will is better for you". The best prayer is always **"not my will, but Yours, be done."** We should always pray with the understanding that God knows best.

The lection continues, in **Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46:**

[Jesus] returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? So you couldn't watch with Me for even one hour! Watch and pray that you may not be tempted. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The disciples were asleep because they didn't get it. Nothing Jesus said or did penetrated their lack of understanding. They didn't pray because they didn't understand the problem or the urgency of their situation. Although Jesus warned them, they refused to believe that Jesus, the most powerful man in the world, would submit to execution voluntarily. They did not understand that Jesus' death was necessary to complete the plan of God for salvation, and their pedestrian thinking did not allow them to even consider that a man with the power and faculties of Jesus would allow Himself to actually be killed. Seeing how Jesus dealt with the Jewish leaders in the past made them confident about Jesus' ability to deal with them in the future. So, they thought to themselves, since Jesus could handle it, what was the need for prayer all about? Peter, James and John wondered, 'The scribes and Pharisees talk about God, but Jesus is God, so why do we have to worry or pray about a confrontation between man and God? It's late. Let's just get some sleep.'

Jesus, however, knew the truth, so He couldn't sleep. The lection of **Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46** continues:

A second time Jesus went off and prayed. "My Father," He said, "if You are willing, take away this cup from Me. Yet if this cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, do Your will and not My own."



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Then an angel from heaven appeared to Jesus and strengthened Him. He was in agony and prayed even more fervently, and His sweat became like large drops of blood falling to the ground.

When God's answer is no and we have to go through a trial, our main need is for strength to endure. God would not grant Jesus' request to take away the Cross, but God gave Jesus the strength to endure the Cross. And sometimes, we have to walk a difficult road, but we can pray, if not for God to take the road away, at least for God to send us help to walk it.

Jesus' help was an angel from heaven. He had no help from His disciples, as the lection of **Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46** concludes:

When Jesus got up from praying, He returned to the disciples and found them sleeping again, exhausted from sorrow, for their eyes were heavy. Jesus said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so you may not be tempted!"

They didn't know how to respond. So Jesus left them and went off again and prayed a third time, saying the same things as before.

Then for the third time Jesus returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and getting some rest? It's enough! See, the hour has come and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up and let's go. Look, My betrayer is approaching!"

As we will find in the next lection, we should never be confident about our own ability to face the trial to come. We should always recognize that we need to keep our relationship with God strong and rely on His support to face the trial, because we have no power in ourselves. Jesus tells the Jewish leaders, in **John 5:30**:

30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

God is the master planner. His plan for our lives was made before we were born. He has given us a certain amount of dominion, a certain amount of decision making authority, but also gives us Biblical instructions to guide our decision making, so that all of our decisions should be as those of Jesus Christ, not doing our own will but the will of the Father that sent us.

But, let us never be so arrogant as to think that we know more than the Father, and that our prayers should supersede His will. Let us always be conscious to pray, "not my will but Yours, be done"

As we cover the trial of Jesus Christ on the Cross, we will find Him to be a praying Savior. Let us recognize our need to emulate His example and become praying men.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church