

Behold Your Savior in the Garden

Matthew 26:36-46

Grace Baptist Church | August 17, 2025

If you would, please open and turn in your Bibles to Matthew 26:36, Matthew chapter 26, starting in verse 36. **Let's pray.**

[Introduction] On April 16th, 1858, John Paton and his wife set off on a boat for the New Hebrides Islands, which are near Papua New Guinea. John Paton was a recently appointed missionary to the islands. Little did they know of the trials ahead of them on this journey. Within the first year of being on the Island, it was already a miracle the cannibals did not kill them, but both his newly born son and wife passed away near the same time. John Paton, after such a terrible loss and sorrow, somehow continued living amongst the people of these islands who did not know about Jesus. As his biography notes, one day, we find him in a tree. Now, John Paton was in the tree because he was being chased by one of the locals who was trying to kill him. Armed with a gun, he chased him around his property until he climbed a tree and got away from his assailant. In this moment, I am sure his heart was beating, he was out of breath, who knows what emotions and feelings he had, but John Paton prays. He recounts that, after the fact that never before or after again, such as this time in his life of all times, did he feel closest to Jesus. In this moment of great trial, Paton turned to his only source of help – **Jesus**. He said Jesus was nearer in this moment than any other before in his entire life.

As John Paton was in anguish, he had the fear of death, alone there in the tree - so he prayed. The people he came to serve and love were trying to kill him, and he turned to prayer. Because John Paton knew His help came from the Lord, and whatever came from His hand and His will was best for him.

In our passage today, we see Jesus, who was sorrowful even unto death, and he also prayed. There in the garden, he prayed alone. And we will see, the people Jesus came to serve and love, ultimately will be successful in betraying and killing him. This happened so that God's purpose and plan would be accomplished, to save rebels. Jesus knows in the garden, whatever is coming, the betrayal of Judas, the mocking on trial, the scourging and whipping, the full death on the cross, if this was the Will of God, that it was what was best for Him at this time. Jesus trusted His Father's plan was best and submitted to Him there.

Have you ever been in a situation that has brought you agony? Have you ever been sorrowful? That's why you're here today – and we will learn from Jesus when we find Him sorrowful and in agony.

[Scripture Reading] We will be looking at **Matthew 26:36-46** today. If you will read along with me.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

[Main Idea] By looking more closely at Jesus in the garden, we see **God's plan for salvation has always been, and will forever be, through Jesus Christ his Son, so believe in Him.**

We see this main idea through three movements in the garden

1. **V.36-39** - Jesus seeks His Father's will, so turn to God in prayer
2. **V.40-44** - Jesus remains watchful and prays, so we watch and pray
3. **V.45-46** - Jesus submits to the Father's will, so we submit ourselves to God's will

Reading in the gospels about the life of Jesus, a majority of the time we see Jesus being the healer of diseases. Or Jesus teaching His disciples. Jesus notices those that others neglect, and He rebukes those who are opposed to the Kingdom of God. But stepping outside of the walls of Jerusalem, walking down to the garden that night with Jesus, we cannot help but notice a scene change. He's no longer teaching or healing. Jesus is face

down on the ground, praying to His Father in His distress. We get to peer inside one of the most mysterious moments of our Savior, Jesus, as He faces the reality of what it would take to become the Savior.

Look now at **verse 36** with me, where we see movement **1. Jesus seeks His Father's will, so turn to God in prayer**

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

[Explanation] Jesus's habit was to get alone with God and pray. That night, after establishing the Lord's supper, Jesus brought his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. Notice in the passage, He makes 3 movements here. First, He places the majority of the disciples on the outside of the garden and asks them to sit. Then, taking His beloved few, He presses into the garden a little further. Here, to the three, who were Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, Jesus exposes His feelings to them. He tells them his soul is very sorrowful, even to death, and asks them to watch with Him. After asking them to watch, Jesus moves a third time, a little further away from them, and falls on his face in prayer.

But here we should ask, why do we find our Lord Jesus "*sorrowful, even to death*"? The one to whom others fell before him on their faces, why do we now find our Lord here prostrated in agony? How do we seek to understand these words and what was causing his sorrow? One commentator defines "*sorrowful, even to death*" similarly to being crushed by grief to the point of death. In this moment, Jesus's agony is so deep it echoes Psalm 42 and 43, "Why are you cast down, o my soul?" This deep agony would continue while in the garden this night.

[Interpretation] What is provoking this turmoil in Jesus? The answer is found in His prayer. "*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*". This cup is mentioned as a metaphor in scripture for destined suffering. There are many Old Testament references pointing to the cup of God's wrath being poured out in judgment for sin. **Isaiah 51:17** makes this clear, saying, "*Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath*". **Jeremiah 25:15**, "Thus says

the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: *‘Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.’*” (ref. Rev 14:10. Isaiah 51:22).

Jesus was in turmoil about the future, not because of the fear of death, but because of the reality of drinking the cup of God’s wrath to save the world. He was experiencing grief over death with the very near reality of drinking the cup of wrath. **J.C. Ryle** writes about Jesus’s sorrow that *“the real weight that bowed down the heart of Jesus was the weight of the sin of the world, which seems to have now pressed down upon Him with peculiar force. It was the burden of our guilt imputed to Him, which was now laid on Him, as on the head of the scapegoat. How great that burden must have been, no heart of man can conceive. It is known only to God.”* Mysterially, here in the garden, Jesus begins to deal with the reality of bearing the sins which the Father would lay upon Him.

These were our sins that brought agony upon Jesus in the garden. Here, the perfect man, who never sinned, knows the cost of sin at the cross and has brought Him to sorrow because of it. Every evil thought we’ve held, every bad intention, each slander and judgment, and all of our sinful endeavors, Jesus knew them all there in the garden. He was not ignorant of our sins, as if He were able to forget them. In the midst of this, we never hear Jesus respond the way we would. We would jump up and down screaming, “This isn’t fair! They don’t deserve this! Why should I get punished for their sins?” But Jesus is not like us. He knows the one who is in control. It’s His Father. And Jesus sets out to obey His Father’s will, no matter what may come.

And as He comes to His Father, because there was no one else to turn to. This is the cry of a Son who knows where His help comes from. His intimacy with His Father allowed him to come right in the middle of this turmoil and cry out to ask if there was any other way salvation could be accomplished. Is there any other way, besides me drinking the full fury of your wrath, to save these people? But not His will, but what the Father has planned. Even if the answer was “no”, Jesus trusted His father.

[Application] Brothers and sisters, in seeing Jesus pray, let us learn that prayer is the best thing we can use in a time of trouble. Jesus is our perfect example in this. In His deepest, most troubling moment, He comes to His father.

In your deepest sorrows and distresses, where do you turn? When the waves of sorrow consume you and you cannot carry on, where do you place your trust? Jesus comes to private prayer with His heavenly Father. J.C. Ryle says, “It is the mark of faith to keep nothing back from our best Friend.” The first person we must turn to for help must be

our God, who is our best Friend. We should never think of anything too little or impossible to bring before our Father. We must tell all of our sorrow to our Father in Heaven. We pray understanding that God doesn't require us to come to Him with perfect emotions and feelings. Jesus experiences this turmoil as being fully human and fully God. Because of Jesus's life and humanity, He is certainly able to empathize with our sorrows and weaknesses, and the Father is ready to hear our prayers. So, we come early and often to bear our cares to God in prayer. The Father is near and ready to receive you in any condition or state you find yourself in.

[Interpretation] Scripture also gives us another meaning of the cup. Earlier in Chapter 26, verse 27, Jesus *"took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"* Jesus institutes a cup for the forgiveness of sins – that comes through His blood of the covenant. Jesus is facing the cup of wrath from God, that in exchange, he might give us the cup of the covenant, which brings forgiveness of sins. Jesus was set to drink the full cup of God's wrath on behalf of your sins.

[Application] See, the cup of wrath you and I deserved, Jesus will drink to the very bottom. Every last drop of punishment for rebellion that you and I deserve, Jesus is going to drink on the cross of Calvary. So that when You and I believe in Him for salvation, and we come to take the Lord's supper, we drink the full cup of God's mercy and grace and love. This is the beauty of this scene here in the garden. For the joy that was set before Christ, He endured the cross, that we might be saved. His separation and punishment at the cross are what caused Him sorrow in His earthly body. How could one who had a perfect relationship with God stare down this great punishment? This was His turmoil; He faced that night.

Jesus's sorrow leads Him to pray to His Father. We, too, should quickly come to our God in prayer at all times.

As we continue in the passage, movement 2 shows that:

2- V40-44 – Jesus remains watchful and prays, so we watch and pray

And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And

again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

[Explanation] Now remember, in Jesus's time of need, He brought his best friends with Him to watch and pray. We see three times Jesus is praying, then comes back to find these disciples asleep. He rebukes them because it seems like they do not understand the gravity of the situation at hand.

[Interpretation] In this most desperate time, when Jesus is crying out to His Father because of His sorrow, He is alone in the garden. The disciples who earlier said they would never fall away or deny him now cannot even stand to be awake and praying for an hour. As Jesus says to Peter, *"So, you could not watch with me one hour?"*. Not only does it happen once after Jesus's instruction, but it also continues a total of three times when he finds them sleeping.

Look at Jesus's instruction in verse 41, *"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak."* Jesus gives them the solution to not entering into temptation at this moment, to watch and pray. But revealed in the passage, they continue to fall asleep.

[Application] We should rightly understand then that even the mightiest of men for God are weak and in need of God's sustaining strength. This passage teaches us that in true disciples of Christ, there is great weakness that needs to be watched and prayed against. The Spirit of God is willing, but our flesh is weak. So, we put no confidence in our flesh, but we place our confidence in Jesus Christ, who did not sleep in the garden. Christ, who did not fall into temptation in the wilderness. Christ, who abided in prayer for us that night, so He might endure the cross, despising the shame, so we who could never measure up for salvation, would be saved by His work. Jesus does not excuse weakness for His disciples. He teaches us that because we are weak, we should be encouraged to continually watch and pray.

[Illustration] Here's an illustration to help us understand this a little better. Did you know that certain eagles and snakes sometimes fight? But the eagles have to be strategic about how they fight. See on the ground, the snake will almost always win. So, the eagle swoops down, snatches the snake, and brings him into the air. Then, the eagle attacks the snake by dropping, grabbing, and fighting in the air. If the eagle stays on the ground, fighting on the terms of the snake, it will be defeated. So the eagle must engage on different terms to defeat the snake.

[Application] If we engage in battle against sin in the terms of the world, we will lose the fight. Jesus here teaches us how to fight temptation on different terms, by watching and praying. We watch and pray so that we don't fall prey to the temptations or schemes of this world. Like King David on the rooftop, there will be things in our lives that seek to lure us away. We must watch and pray and stay close to the Lord, because our flesh is weak, but the Spirit is willing. But friends, where we have failed, Christ never failed. Christ gave in to no temptation, but for our salvation, he stayed awake in the garden that night. For our sake, He perfectly watched and prayed, so that He might honor His Father for us who failed miserably. Trust in this perfect Jesus.

Thinking about our church, just as the disciples were asleep in Jesus's most critical time, when a brother or sister in this church is walking through a deep sorrow or trial, where are you to be found? Are you also asleep during their time of trial? Or do you carry their burdens with them in prayer and support in love? And brother or sister walking through a trial or sorrow, do you bear that burden by yourself? First, we should take our cares to God, and then also we should bring our burdens to bear with our brothers and sisters in this congregation. If we carry our burdens alone, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hurt the church, which is ready and able to care for those whom she is responsible for.

Look here at V.42-43. *"Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again."*

[Explanation] Jesus's prayers become more pointed as they continue. In the second prayer, Jesus does not even ask for the cup to pass. And if it cannot pass unless he drinks it, he asks for the Father's will to be done.

[Interpretation] Here, Jesus continues to fully submit himself to God. Nobody is forcing Jesus into this. Jesus, through prayer, is willingly preparing to become the scapegoat for the world. Jesus is preparing to become the one whom God would lay the sins of the world upon and send outside the city gates to be crucified.

[Application] Like Jesus, we should entirely seek to submit ourselves to God's will. As we bring our needs and cares to God our Father, we must know that His plans and purposes are always best. In submitting to God's will in prayer, we acknowledge that God is our all-wise Father. Like in Jesus's situation, that does not always mean that our problem will be

resolved as we like. Some of our prayers will only be answered in heaven. We must work towards growing in a holy desire for God's will in all areas of our lives. We are not God, and we do not know what is best for ourselves. We as sinners have ruined our own lives. We have all gone our own way and have often chosen things that harm and injure us. Just as a little child does not understand the dangers of running onto the highway, we are ignorant of the schemes of this world and sin to lure us into destruction. Therefore, we must work to submit all of our will unto the Lord's care and guidance. Where do we understand the will of God most clearly? We find God's will in studying God's word together, with private and public prayer. J.C. Ryle says that warm feelings and joyful seasons are not the truest evidence of grace. A will that is in line with God's is more valuable. For even the Lord Jesus Himself did not always rejoice, but he could always say, "may your will be done." So, we bring our good and sinful desires into obedience with God's will. What sin, this morning, hinders you from fully submitting to God's will? Bring it to the Lord in prayer.

3 V45-46 – Jesus submits to the Father's will, so we submit ourselves to God's will

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

[Explanation] We've seen Jesus enter the garden with the disciples, we've seen his three prayers to the Father seeking His will, and now we come to the end of this short story. Here, Jesus returns to the disciples and tells them to rest later, for the time has finally come. And He would be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

[Interpretation] Reading these few verses, we find ourselves at the last change in this story. Jesus, who was just sorrowful unto death and crying out to the Father about the plans to soon take place, now seems confident in what will come from God's hand for Him. The question earlier in His prayers was, was Father, is there any other way this can be accomplished? Is this your will? And now we see a Son who is fully submitted to His Father's plans. Through His struggle in prayer those several hours, He is now ready to face the cross ahead of Him, where he would bear the sins of the world for all who would believe in Him for salvation.

In Revelation chapter 5, there is a cry and a weeping over the one who could open the scroll. "*Who is able to open the scroll and break its seals?*" The answer is only Jesus.

Only the Lion, the Tribe of Judah, the root of David. Here in the garden, who can drink the cup of God's wrath to save sinners? **Only Jesus.** Who can drink the cup of God's wrath to save the sleeping and soon betraying disciples, only Jesus. Isaiah 53:10 shows the suffering servant saying, *"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief, when his soul makes an offering for guilt"*. The plan of God the Father from the beginning was to crush His only Son.

[Application] Why do you follow and trust Jesus? Why would you follow him to the garden, see him sorrowfully praying? Follow him to the betraying kiss of Judas. Or to the mocking of the crowd. Then, finally, His crucifixion. Why would you follow Jesus if His sufferings also might be your sufferings? That if they persecuted the Master, they also would persecute you for following Jesus? We follow Jesus through everything because of the hope of the resurrection on the third day after His death. Jesus rose from the grave, defeating sin and death, so that you and I who believe in Him also will pass over death for eternity. We trust and follow Jesus because He is the only hope in this life.

In the garden tonight, God's plan for salvation did not fail. God's plan for salvation has always been, and forever will be, through Jesus Christ His Son, so believe in Him. There was no other way that this could be accomplished, or it would've happened. And praise God it didn't work out any other way, because by Christ giving His life, we find life.

We are finally starting to see the fulfillment of John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." We don't perish because God gave His son to die and be resurrected, that we would pass over death untouched to eternal life.

Have you believed in Jesus for salvation? Have you turned from your sin and turned to follow Christ? Wait no longer, for He does not promise tomorrow. Trust in this perfect Savior, and you will find salvation for your soul, a best friend in times of trouble, and an advocate who did not fall asleep in this critical moment on earth, but one who lives to intercede for you in heaven to the Father. He prays for you even now, Christian, and He promises that He is waiting in Heaven for us, when we will join the eternal banquet of God's mercy, and drink together again the cup of the covenant of His blood.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Hebrews 12:1-3.