

A Prayer Before Dying

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Luke 22:39-46

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Well, it was great last month, Pastor John, Pastor Dale and I got to go to Great Britain and go through a reformation tour with G3 Ministries where we got to trace the steps and see some really significant places that were instrumental in the reformation of the church in the 1500s, the reason that we're Protestants. And so, among those types of things that we saw, we saw several memorials to those men who died as martyrs and many women as well who died as martyrs at the hands of those who did not like the message of the scriptures. See, it's a common thing to misunderstand, the reformers were not innovators, they were excavators. They had rediscovered the truth of the scriptures that had been lost in centuries of adding dogma upon dogma and getting lost, the truth of the gospel, that it's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

One of the worst perpetrators of this was Queen Mary I who reigned from 1555 to 1558. She had 288 Protestant reformers burned at the stake for preaching the gospel, quite simply. She's come to be known as Bloody Mary. You wonder where the drink got its name from, it's got a sad background to it. October 16th, 1555, Hugh Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley were among the first of the Marian Martyrs. She had them burned at the stake for preaching the gospel. Both men encouraged each other as they face this daunting and scary possibility of being martyred for the faith. It was Ridley who said to Latimer, "Be of good heart brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame or else strengthen us to abide in it." That's an amazing statement.

Latimer then encouraged Ridley while they were fastened to the stakes. He said, "Be of good cheer, Ridley, and play the man we shall this day by God's grace light up such a candle in England as I trust never will be put out." I will say after having been there for a couple of weeks, there is still a candle there, but it's quite a little flicker from what it once was. They had another companion, Thomas Cranmer. He was friends with them. He was burned at the stake on March 21st, 1556. However, at one point he recanted the Reformation doctrine that they had come to believe.

He buckled under the pressure of the queen. They gathered at Oxford and Cranmer's statement was approved where he would renounce what he had been teaching, but he got in the pulpit, and he threw out the manuscript. He declared that the Pope was the antichrist, that Catholic doctrines were false, and preached the gospel. He confessed that his re-cantment was as of cowardice. They grabbed him out of the pulpit. They strapped him to a stake, and he chose and put his hand in the fire first. It was the hand that he said signed the re-cantment. And then he burned to the wrist and then his whole body.

Wow, who does this? Why? Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer. Even though Cranmer wavered, at the end he was faithful and went to the stake. Here's Paul in Philippians chapter 3, he says, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and I count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ." Then Paul says this at the end of his life, he says, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me, the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing." Just a few months after that, he was beheaded for being a gospel preacher.

How did these men have such courage and strength and many, many others? That's just four men, one from the Bible, three from English history, and there were many, many, many more. Well, here's an answer to that. These men surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ, and they were transformed by the gospel. That is the clearest and only explanation of why these men would do this. They understood that Christ's call to every Christian that would follow him, that they would take up their cross and follow him no matter where that took them, even to the stake, to the guillotine, to a cross. In concluding this eight-part series on the Cross Taking Life we find ourselves today where the church is really much more comfort driven and I don't mean that here. I mean that in a broad sense. That doctrines like this, the understanding of taking up our cross is rarely taught because it's just not comfortable. We would rather have a great big genie in the sky who grant us all our wishes than a God who calls us to surrender our lives and trust of him giving us salvation.

Let me give you a little bit of a synopsis of the seven previous messages in case you didn't hear any of them or any one of them. I wanted to just do a really quick recap to how we get to where we're going to be today in Luke chapter 22. In that first sermon, we see Christ calling all those who would follow him to take up their cross, that it was essential to being a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. We don't take up our cross to earn our salvation. We can't earn our salvation. We can't do it. We can't be good enough. Our good count outweighs our bad. We need a Savior, and that Savior is Jesus Christ. Once we are saved and place our trust in him, our life then is defined by taking up our cross and following him. It's essential.

The second message in the series, we understand that taking up our cross is a daily thing, not just a one-time thing. In the third sermon, we understand that there's no such thing as an almost Christian, someone who kind of likes Jesus or even says they love him, but really have not given their whole life to him. We understand in this fourth sermon that we need to count the cost. It's a huge cost to give our life, and yet in the fifth sermon we understand that what's gained is what's amazing. It's not just sacrificing for the sake of sacrifice. It's not just going through troubles just for the sake of going through troubles. There is an end to this. We have a temporary sacrifice, but there's an eternal gain and that gain is Jesus Christ. In the sixth and seventh sermon, there was a tie in with understanding that what Christ calls us to is true greatness and true greatness is found

in him, not the way the world defines it, but in self-denial. The last shall be first and the first shall be last, he says.

He confronts the religious leaders in that seventh sermon because they were legalists, they were trying to earn their way. They looked good on the outside, but in the inside, they didn't know God. Instead, they rejected Jesus and wanted to put him on the cross and kill him. But self-denial and trust in Christ is the sure remedy of false religion. You see, a Cross Taking Life describes the Christian life, the new life following Christ, swimming upstream against the world that hates him, and so that's how it's described, like taking up a cross. Christ took up his cross in a unique way and we're going to look at what happens just before he does this.

You see the kindness of Christ, he does not just call us, save us, and then send us on our merry way with luck. He equips us, he stays with us in fact all the way through until he brings us home to him, and one of the keyways that Jesus equips us and has us connect to him is through prayer and specifically, we understand and we're going to look at the passage today, that prayer is absolutely instrumental in helping us take our own cross and following him. That's a daunting task. We can't do it in our own strength. We need him and he shows us how in Luke chapter 22, today. In fact, our main point is this, Jesus demonstrates the essential nature of prayer as fuel that empowers cross taking. You see, for Jesus, his cross was coming at the point of this story, and he prepared for that cross by prayer leaving us an example of how we too can take our cross.

Our cross is different than his. His cross ensured our salvation. Our cross is a reflection of the life that's lived and following the pattern of his life. So Luke chapter 22, where are we at in this story? Well, the plot is thickening. The religious leaders don't like Jesus, so they're plotting to catch him, arrest him, they want him dead, and so they employ Judas, they pay him what's really a pocket full of change in order for him to betray Jesus. There's the Passover meal where the Lord transformed and elevated that meal into an understanding of the Lord's Supper, showing a visual picture of what was going to take place and what Jesus was going to do the next day in the giving of his body and the spilling of his blood in the New Covenant. Peter's denial was predicted, fulfillment of prophecies, all building to a climax, preparing for his crucifixion, and now we come to the calm before the storm and this calm is a lesson in prayer.

Would you stand? We do this at Redeemer Bible Church in honor of God's Word. I'm going to read to you a portion of the passage I'm going to be preaching from today. If you've got one of the free Bibles, it's page 977 on that Bible. You can follow along if you'd like to. Here's what it says, "And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." You may be seated and may God bless his Word to our hearts. And so now we're going to look at the effectiveness and essentialness of prayer in the Cross Taking Life.

Luke's count of this story is a little bit different than Matthew and Mark's and that's why we have all these testimonies. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we get perspectives from different angles

and so this is Luke's angle. All saying and all compatible, not in denial of one another or contradictory to one another but all giving the same account from a different angle. And so Matthew and Mark are about 40% a little bit longer and they go into a little bit more detail overall. Luke is a little bit shorter then, it's a little more streamlined. What's missing in Luke's? Well, the word Gethsemane, that's the name of the garden that Jesus went to. It's just referred to here as he went to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom. We know that was the Garden of Gethsemane, the other ones tell us, and that was on the Mount of Olives.

We see in that account in Matthew and Mark that he rebukes the disciples three times for falling asleep during prayer time. They fell asleep and he comes back to them three times, "Could you not pray for an hour?" There's a deeper description of the turmoil that Jesus was going through. Now in Luke's unique details here, he makes a note that Jesus was kneeling when he prayed, that he was a stone's throw from the disciples, and he gives a reason as to why the disciples fell asleep.

We don't see there were three rebukes, but what we do is an understanding that it wasn't just that they were tired or sleepy, there was something more to it and we also see that the Father sent an angel to help him in the garden to tend to him as he was in anguish about the daunting task that he was going to do by going to the cross for the sins of mankind. This is Jesus praying before dying and this prayer focuses him, gives him purpose and understanding as he prepares to take his cross and leaves us with an amazing example. And that's the first of these effective and effective essentials of prayer before cross taking is this, ***Prayer Prepares You to Face Temptation***. Now, I don't want to pass over verse 39 too quickly. Sometimes we can read our Bible and go right past something that's significant, and I think there's something significant here in that word custom. He says, "And he came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives."

It was Jesus' custom to pray. Can we say that about ourselves? Even before we get in the deep weeds of this, we're being convicted. Because there's nobody in here, now correct me if I'm wrong, that would say, "you know what? I don't need to listen to a message on prayer because I just pray way too much anyway, and I don't need to pray more." No, this is a prayer more sermon and I can guarantee you that to a person, everyone in here would say, "Yeah, you know what? I probably could pray more." Not only pray more, but to pray with a better understanding of what prayer does in our lives and of course, what it achieves in God's will. And so, this was his custom and so he was going to this customary place to do this.

Now Judas would've known that because we see Judas show up there with the guards. He knew where Jesus was going. Now here's good news. Jesus would've known that Judas knew that. Jesus wasn't hiding. Instead, he was facing the battle that was before him and what God had called him to do and was preparing for it and he was doing so by praying. He was not hiding, he was not escaping, he was not avoiding it. This is how he dove into it headlong.

Now we see these bookends in verse 40 and verse 46 that explains why they should be praying with Jesus. Pray that you may not enter into temptation, verse 40. Then he says it again in 46

after they had fallen asleep. "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." This is pretty amazing. Jesus is going to the cross tomorrow and he's concerned about them. He's showing his continual selfless care of his people. Guys, you got to pray. You're going to face temptation in just a little bit and if you're not praying beforehand, it's not going to go well, and we'll see how that turns out in a minute, some of you already know. So what we see here is that prayer is a proactive process to prepare your heart in temptation. Prayer prepares you to pass the test of temptation. Temptation is not a sin in and of itself. We see Jesus was tempted several times and every time he resisted sin.

In fact, when we hit trials, it's a test. Are we going to trust God in those trials? Are we going to continue to follow him or not? First Peter, Peter of all people knew. He didn't have a good Luke chapter 22, if you read the rest of the story there, he denies Christ three times. He waivers. He promised that he wouldn't, but he did anyway, but he comes full circle, he comes around to it and here he is in first Peter chapter 4. If you want to turn there, do so. First Peter 4, we here have Peter who had his own failings and he says this to remind us. He says, verse 12 of chapter 4, he says, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

You see, it surprised him even though Jesus even predicted, "Hey Peter, you're going to deny me three times." "Never." He said. And then a few hours later he did, did just what Jesus had predicted and so he knows. It still caught him off guard. And here's Peter saying, don't be surprised if you go through trials for the name of Christ. Don't act as if something strange was happening to you. It's predicted. Prepare for it. Praying helps us prepare for it. It gets our mindset of where our focus should be, and our trust should be. We anticipate what's coming so that we're not surprised at life's battle so we can pass the test of temptation. Temptation simply means a time of testing. Will the roots of faith uphold in the winds of suffering? For success and temptation then, the reality here is as Jesus is pointing to, you must have God's help.

It's a key to this readiness when you face these types of things and it's a when, not an if. We see that when his disciples ask him, "Teach us how to pray," In Luke chapter 11, they do that in Matthew 6 as well. So Jesus gives the model prayer, Our Father who's in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, lead us not into temptation. That's proactive. Not that God's going to lead you to temptation, but following him, you're going to encounter it and so we're trusting him. Lord, when I'm faced with it, help me not fall to it before it ever happens.

How do trials tempt us then? We're faced with suffering for Jesus Christ, will we abandon the truth? Some do we see that in the parable of the soils, those two middle soils, they abandon the hope. It grows for a little while, but it says when persecution and trials come, they're out the door. They caught them off guard. Hey, wait a minute. I thought it was supposed to be Christmas every day when you follow Jesus. That all my dreams will come true. Well, way more than your

dreams will come true, but it's a road that takes a cross and follows no matter what happens. It's a time of testing. Will you abandon the truth? Will you abandon Jesus in that? Jesus prayed for them even in chapter 22 before this instance. He says this in verse 32, "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and when you have turned again to strengthen your brothers."

Now what's going on there, it says he prays that they wouldn't fail, but he also acknowledges in kind of a subtle prediction there that they're going to trip. They're not going to fail ultimately, because we know that 10 of these 11 disciples were martyred for their faith as history tells us and the one that wasn't was abandoned to an island. We'll talk about him in just a minute, two of them. And so ultimately, they didn't fail, but in these few hours they didn't do so hot and so he says, "I prayed for you. When you have turned, then you'll strengthen others in that." And so you see Peter strengthening us from first Peter 4 with these very things. But what we also see is just because he prayed for them, it didn't absolve them or relieve them from the responsibility to pray themselves. Think about the times that you've given into temptation in your life. The first checkpoint is did you proactively pray beforehand. Lead us not into temptation.

Help me Lord when I'm faced with temptation, then I may stand. Paul gives us some really clear directives in Ephesians chapter 6. Here's how you stand against the devil, you pray. And here's what you pray and how you pray. You visualize the armor of God. I'm not talking about some weird visualization. He was giving them a word picture of what it's like, something that they could wrap their heads around as they pray, not literally put on your armor. You can't go to the Christian store and buy your armor and put it on. I guess you can. I've seen the little kids toys that they do that for, but the ultimate idea here is a word picture of what's taking place. You pray for the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shoes of peace, the sword of the spirit, and the shield of faith.

These are things that we process as we pray and understanding that Satan is out there, and we can make our stand against him when we are fully clothed in this armor and his flaming darts then don't get us. Don't cause us to run, to abandon, to turn to sin instead of to Christ. Are you proactively praying? Pray. That's number one. #2), ***Prayer Prepares You to Submit to God's Will***. This is really the heartbeat of this. Prayer Prepares You to Submit to God's Will.

Prayer seeks to align your will with the father's will. It's the heart of cross staking to deny self and to defer and to surrender to the will of the Father in your life. It says there in verse 41 that Jesus withdrew from the other 11. Now, it's more than just he walked away and went some other place. There's something more emotional involved there than merely just leaving them. He was purposefully with a really pinpoint focus, going to pray to the Father and set himself apart to do so, remove distraction. He kneeled, that was a sign of intense supplication to humble himself the God man before the heavenly Father. Help.

Now here's a convicting reminder for all of us. If the perfect God man prayed this way, how about us? The one who is truly God, truly man as man calling out to the Father for help. It's a reminder for us how kind it is that God shows us this and this wonderful example. That withdrawing and that kneeling down, it's not so much some type of magic formula that God

hears your prayers more if you're kneeling rather than standing or sitting, but what it's showing is he's focused and has a right attitude of submission to eliminate these distractions. There's a great example in history. Susanna Wesley, she had 10 children, two of which were John and Charles Wesley. They started the Methodist denomination. John was a traveling preacher and evangelist. He preached for many years, shared the gospel with many people and realized he hadn't believed it himself.

God saved Charles Wesley on the other hand, wrote 1,000 or more hymns, many of which we still sing to this day. She had 10 kids, so going away and kneeling wasn't always the most convenient thing. So what she did to pray, she flipped her apron above her head as a signal to her kids. If the aprons on the head, don't bug mama, she's talking to Jesus. In other words, do whatever you need to do to eliminate distraction and be in the presence of your heavenly Father through prayer. Now we've turned it in this time that Jesus had as alone. There's many people have turned this into a prime example of self-care. That's such a buzzword. It's a new invention of the old me time from the nineties. Now it's self-care. It's all the same and they use Jesus as an example.

See, Jesus did that. He went alone. However, Jesus' time away always involved prayer, communion with the Father to fuel serving others, serving God in his life. This was not an example of mimosas and manicures or beer and bivouacking, that's a fancy word for sleeping in tents. It matched the Bs in the beer. So anyway, weird nerd stuff that pastors do. Alone in prayer was the key thing. To be alone in prayer, in order to be spent for others, to be spent for God and His will, and that's what we see here in verse 42. Here's Jesus. This is where it all comes down to. "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done."

Here's an honest prayer. Jesus presents his preference here as the God man, truly human and we see his desire. This is my preference, but my desire is to submit to the father's will. This is the heart of cross taking. This is the heart of the Christian life. This is the heart of all prayers that we pray. Father's will. I am here to do the father's will. I take my cross. This is what Jesus is doing. The Father's will is to take his cross the next day in sacrificing the God man, the God of the universe who created is going to die at the hands of his own creation to save them.

And he's praying for the strength to do it because he's going to hold the full weight of the wrath of the Father to pay for the penalty of sins and he's an innocent man, sinless. This is God's amazing grace in demonstration and we see him crying now, if there's another way, let's do it. The other two accounts, Matthew and Mark says he prayed this three times. This was serious. And the answer was, "There's no other way." There's only one way that God had planned to save mankind and that was the substitutionary atonement, fancy word, that Jesus would die in the place of those who would place their trust in him for salvation. He would take on the wrath that they deserved and they would receive from him the gift of salvation, the gift of his righteousness, all as a gift. Nothing can be earned in that. This is the heartbeat of prayer.

I remember a time 12 years ago where I was associate pastor at a church and had felt the call to be a lead pastor at a church and had the churches backing behind me to discover where I could see that happen. And two churches kind of emerged in the decision-making process. One to stay in San Jose, my hometown where I was and lead a church there or there was a church just outside of Denver. So this was the prayer. "Lord, whatever your will is. Not my will, but your will, but I really want you to do my will Lord." The church in Colorado kept jumping forward and saying, "You've passed the next level. You've passed the next level." I get the email and I would sulk, and my wife would say, "Why are you sulking? This is exciting." I said, "I know." She said, "We're praying for God's will." I said, "I know, but I want God's will to be my will."

I was being a little bit of a brat and she called me out on that, and I realized that I was wanting or saying that I wanted God's will, but I really just wanted my own will, and I wanted God to stamp his approval on my will. And really that's a lot of times how we pray. Now, we can give our preference, Lord, I want to stay in San Jose, but whatever your will is. Once I released that, I was excited about Colorado. God freed me up to that, and then the church in San Jose jumped forward and I took that and was there 10 years before I came here. Now the lesson isn't to manipulate God, that's not what's happening there. It's surrender, knowing that if I did go to Colorado, it would've been the best thing because God was involved in it.

Jesus was truly human here and his preference like a natural human tendency was to want to keep living and especially knowing that he was going to face the Father's wrath and he appeals to the Father who sent him, remove this cup and that was a symbol. The cup was in the Old Testament, the infliction of punishment from the wrath of God. This was the cup that he talked about when James and John wanted to take the right and the left and the coming king, hey Jesus, can you ensure that we get the right and the left next to you, the most prominent positions in your kingdom? And Jesus said, can you drink my cup? And they foolishly said, yeah.

He was referring to the wrath that was going to be pored out and the truth was they couldn't. But in another sense, he said, "Yeah, you actually will one day." We know that James was martyred in Acts chapter 12:2, "For his faith, he stood strong." John stayed strong to the end. He wasn't martyred, but he was isolated on the island of Patmos. Both of them incurring that cup because of their gospel witness. And what we see here is that this cup was the only way to save. This was God's plan. Jesus' cross was unique in this way. He bore the Father's wrath so that we don't have to, but what we learned from this is that the goal, according to John MacArthur, the goal of all true prayer is that God's will be done, and we see this here.

The goal of all true prayer is that God's will be done. The goal of all true prayer is that God's will be done. Is that your goal when you come to God in prayer or is it seeing him as the great genie or Santa Claus in the sky? This is what the Word of Faith movement has done. Oh, if you just have enough faith, you just tell God what you want and he's going to give it to you. Really? God's son didn't get what he wanted. He deferred to the Father's will, because you know what? His will and the Father's will were actually one and the same and he went, because the Father's will is always better than our will, and that's what we defer. Tell God what you might want but

defer to him that even if you don't get it, you'll get his will, which is always better. Matthew 6:10 in that model prayer that Jesus gave, and I just had quoted that, your kingdom come, your will be done when you address the Father, not my kingdom, my will. Oftentimes, that's how we pray.

That leads us to #3), ***Prayer Strengthens Your Fervency and Obedience***. Prayer prepares you to face temptation. Prayer prepares you to submit to God's will. ***Prayer Strengthens Your Fervency and Obedience***. You see, the Father didn't take the cup away, but He did send an angel to help him. God stands beside the one who suffers according to His will. You are not alone in this process. So, does that mean that when you pray God's going to send an angel? He might. Oftentimes he might, and we don't know it, but here's what he sends for sure. He sends Jesus. He's the one who's sympathetic.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 4. We get a clear picture of this. We see now fast-forward an understanding of what is all taking place here in Luke chapter 22 and 23 and the other gospels that talk about this. Luke, excuse me, Hebrews chapter 4 starting in verse 14, familiar passage to some of you, but listen to this. He says this, the author here says, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." Facing temptation, facing difficulty, hold fast your confession. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."

We can't ever say, "God, you don't know what it's like." Yeah, "But one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. Flawless. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." God does not leave us high and dry. He sends us Jesus as we take up our cross and follow. Prayer has been often a sweet comfort as we connect to that. Can you testify as you've prayed in those darkest of moments? I remember being 9,000 miles from home on a missions trip, totally alone, overwhelmed with culture shock. I felt abandoned until I prayed and I went to the scriptures and God's peace rested on me in a moment. Have you had moments like that? I've lost both parents, the grief, and the sadness of losing, crying out to God, "Are you there? Can you help?" Yes. I watched a fellow pastor choose sin, backed by his elders who feared men rather than God. And I cried out, "How is this happening?"

Prayer is a ballast in the boat on the stormy seas of life. Jesus was truly human. You see, he's going through the agony here and the distress and anguish and what did he do? He prayed more earnestly, so much that he sweat like blood. Some would say that's just a metaphor, kind of like saying sweating bullets, that he sweat it was like the flow of blood. However, there is a medical condition called hematomatosis where there's a mental emotional strain causing the capillaries in the veins to burst and then blood mingles with sweat as it comes through the pores. I really think that's what's taking place here, because this is the burden of taking on the sins of mankind to save us.

Either way, we get a clear picture that our agonies do not even come close to the agonies that Jesus went through. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 12:2 says this to us. It says, "None of you have shed blood to the point of resisting sin." No, we cave pretty quickly. So here's Jesus

with sweat and blood tended by an angel pleading with the Father, resolved to do the Father's will, and don't miss this. What does it say?

"And when he rose from prayer..." he's ready. He's ready to face what he's going to face and do so with a firm. Resolve before the bomb's bursting around long before the boat capsizes in the sea, pray. Long before you're in the middle of temptation, lust, greed, gossip, foolishness, filthy talk, stealing, reacting to harsh treatment by a loved one or a boss or a stranger, have you pleaded? Have you agonized, recognizing your weakness and absolute need for God's help long before? Most of the time though, sin is an unplanned failure, but prayer is the pre-planned reliance on God. So here's Jesus, he rose from his agony, from the blood-sweat surrendered to God's will. And how did he respond? Hebrews 12:2 says this as well, "For who the joy set before him endured the cross." Here's the picture. This is going to be tough. This is going to be hard. This is going to be harsh to go through, but as he prayed and got his strength from the Father, he had joy in doing the Father's will.

This is a hope for us, and this is a reminder to us too. Taking up our cross doesn't mean please be the most miserable person you could ever be because, man, people are going to flock to Jesus because of that. No, it means that Christ is worth taking up our cross and following him, and we're going to do so not with some silly smile painted on our face, but rejoicing always because God is in control and we trust him with our lives.

Listen to what John Owen says, the great puritan. He says, "It is the duty of all believers to be preparing themselves every day to die cheerfully, comfortably, and if it may be triumphing in the Lord. That's what Ridley and Latimer did. That's what Paul did. That's what Cranmer ultimately did. Listen to Spurgeon, he says, "If the road were a thousand times rougher than it is, it would be well worthwhile to walk in it for the sake of walking with Christ there. Following Jesus means fellowship with Jesus and the joy of that fellowship cannot be told." Meaning it's speechless. Prayer strengthens your fervency to obey. You rise ready to do God's will no matter what comes.

And that leads to **#4) *Prayer Frees You from the Paralysis of Grief and Fear.*** And Matthew and Mark, as I said before, Jesus went to the disciples three times. "Could you not pray for an hour? Wake up, pray." Luke tells us why, verse 46. "And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow." They weren't just lazy, they weren't just tired, but all this emphasis and warnings from Jesus on suffering and him going to the cross had taken its toll on them and their response, I'm going to tune out. I'm going to sleep it off. Now sleep is important to our emotional wellbeing. It really is. It's a gift from God and a reminder to us that we're not God. Only God is described as the one who neither sleeps nor slumbers.

We as creatures sleep and need it. However, for them, this sleep was a form of escape. Prayer is the opposite of avoidance. They were avoiding it. I don't know how to deal with it. I'm just going to sleep. We bring it to God. In this case or maybe your case, avoidance, escape, fingers in the ear does not solve the problem at hand. "Why are you sleeping?" Jesus reminds them of the ultimate remedy, prayer. Prayer where it's going to prepare you for what's about to hit. You see, prayer is the means to daily die and taking up one's cross. Submitting to the sovereign will of

God in full trust with an alertness that temptation may not catch you off guard or by surprise. Facing temptation's test by being steadfastly fixed to Jesus Christ. That's what prayer does. Sadly, their failure to pray stands in contrast to Jesus' example. They didn't, they fell asleep. What happened? Well, for Judas, his lack of communion with Jesus as a whole, he ends up betraying him and brings the guards there and kissed Jesus, sold out for a pocket full of change.

Peter in panic, cuts off one of the guard's ears Malchus, he strikes with a sword. He couldn't even wield the sword right, panics. I guess that's where the word panicky Pete came in. I don't know that for a fact. Recorded in the other gospels at this point, all 11 fled. They ran fast. Get out of this situation. See you later, Jesus. They all failed the test. We know that John eventually came back at the crucifixion, but they all failed the test on some level. Now Jesus prayed for them and ultimately, they did not. Ultimately, they hung in there and were true and ended up dying martyr's deaths, most of them.

Jesus, on the other hand, faced a kangaroo court that was stacked against him with false testimony. He was beaten, his beard was ripped, crown of thorns. He was equipped 40 times with this nasty thing called the cat o' nine tails. He was mocked, he was shamed. He was thrown up between two cheap thieves. And what did he do? Steadfast to the end, not my will, your will. As you look at recent or consistent or lifelong failures in sin, is there an absence of prayer connected to it? Well, Jesus words remind us in John 15:5, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." Prayer is how we can connect to the one who can do anything and do everything. So yes, this is a pray more sermon, but it's not just pray more but with a greater precision and understanding of various aspects of prayer.

You see, prayer helps us in facing temptation long before it happens. What will you face this week? You're going to face something, maybe several somethings. Pray beforehand so that you're not surprised by it, and it doesn't throw you off. Prayer prepares us to submit to God's will. Remember, your prayers are a focus of Lord, not my will, but your will. Tell him what you want. Tell your preference but know that whatever he answers is better. It's the heartbeat of all prayers. Prayer strengthens our fervency and obedience. This is how you're able to rise and do his will in your life. Prayer frees us from the paralysis of grief and fear. "We do not fear the one who can kill the body." Jesus said, "We fear the one who throws the body into hell. Who's that? It's God.

So, he's provided a way for us to be held by the one who Hebrews chapter 1 says, "Upholds the universe by the power of his word." He's there. Our salvation is kept in heaven according to first Peter chapter 1. You see, prayer is an indispensable means to equip us to face the trials of life by taking our cross and following Jesus, empowered by the Savior whose cross is victory for the sinner. Sinner. Don't be offended, that's all of us. The scriptures say, "All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Meaning that all of us have done enough to merit God's wrath, but God himself has given away out by giving his son Jesus.

So, to receive Jesus by faith, taking on God's grace as a gift that's received by faith in Christ alone. That's the essence of what it means to follow, to believe, to receive salvation. That is the

ultimate, not my will. My will has been terrible, my will has caused me great harm. My will, I act as if I am God, but there's only one God, and he does a way better job at being God than we do. So we submit and surrender, and maybe that's you today. Maybe you've never surrendered to Christ, you've been trying to be God in your life and you have been met with utter failure.

There's good news today, and it's Jesus Christ who was not a failure, who redeemed sinners by faith. Trust in him today and believe in him. And if you've already done that, the Cross Taking Life is essential. It's daily, it's all encompassing. It's a temporary sacrifice with an eternal reward. It is a path to humility which results in true greatness and a genuine, authentic life without hypocrisy and service of our king, all possible by the heart of prayer, depending on the one Jesus Christ who empowers, saves, and accomplishes what he calls us to do. Amen. Let's pray.

Jesus, we are incredibly grateful today for your example, and it's not just an example, but you are the life giver. You are the one who went to the cross in a unique way to save sinners like us. We celebrate this every Sunday as we gather and know that you are the one who was promised to come and that you came and that you promised that you'll return for those who are yours. Lord, I pray for those today who have yet to submit to your will, that they would do so today. They would believe in you as the only one who saves. And I pray for those who have, that as they face this week, they would take up their cross and they would prepare for anything that may come unwavering in their faith in you and their trust in you in doing so. We thank you that we can trust you and it's in your name we pray. Amen.