

Message Series: **'Simple Prayers That Strengthen the Soul'**

Message Title: **'Lord, strengthen me to do your will today'**

Scripture Sources: **Luke 22:39-46, Mark 14:41, 42**

Date: Sunday, July 2, 2017

Teacher: John Garner

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### **In Times like These**

For many of us, there are moments and circumstances that are so difficult and unsettling that prayer to God rises up within the soul...we can't help ourselves, we must somehow turn and talk with God. Even when we are unsure of who God is and when we aren't sure of what words to use or not use. And what can be unnerving to us is the haunting question...'what does God think of me, where do I stand with God, does he want me?'

The Bible makes it refreshingly clear that God wants us to pour out our weary and wondering hearts to him in prayer. Prayer...talking with and listening to God. The God of history, who is supremely revealed in the person of Jesus, in his words and works. He longs for you to come near to him in faith that he exists and that he is good. Hebrews 11:6

"In Simple Prayer we bring ourselves before God just as we are, warts and all...sometimes Simple Prayer is called the 'Prayer of Beginning Again'...Simple Prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father. There is no pretense in simple prayer. We do not pretend to be more holy, more pure, or more saintly than we actually are. We do not try to conceal our conflicting and contradictory motives from God or ourselves. And in this posture we pour out our heart to the God who is greater than our heart and knows all things. (1 John 3:20)" (Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home: R. Foster)

Simple prayers that by God's grace lead to stronger and wiser souls that face life with honesty, courage, and hope. What simple prayer are you longing to pray today?

### **A Simple Prayer Like No Other: Luke 22:39-46**

As this Scripture is read, try to immerse yourself in the circumstance Jesus is facing. Jesus knows what is at stake. The opportunity for humanity to experience salvation from the penalty and power of sin. Sin...the failure to love God supremely, ourselves wisely, and others sacrificially.

The way salvation will be made possible is through the unimaginable anguish of the hours leading up to the crucifixion and the ghastly crucifixion itself.

Vss. 41-42: He kneels...when the customary practice was standing with eyes open and arms raised, he kneels under the weight of it all, and prays a simple prayer. Vs. 42. Jesus starts with a mature and correct perception of God. "Father" He sees God as a wise, powerful and compassionate Father.

And he makes a bold 'ask' of the Father. "...if you are willing, take this cup from me..."

'Is there a Plan B Father? Is there another way to secure humanity's source of salvation?' He unashamedly asks for Plan B. Let us not minimize this gut-wrenching prayer of Jesus. He prayed for a Plan B. Ponder that. He asked for Plan B. Why? Because this 'cup' was no ordinary cup. "The cup in the Old Testament has associations of suffering and of the wrath of God. Sin must be punished. Death is the penalty. Jesus knows this and his soul shudders. The temptation to turn the other way is real. A battle rages in his soul.

Yet, he prays on... "yet, not my will, but yours be done." If this path of suffering and sacrifice is the singular way to provide salvation from sin, so be it. Jesus is willingly submitting to the Father's will.

### **And the Father Responds: Luke 22:43-46**

The Father strengthens the Son's resolve to walk the narrow and stony path laid before him. Three times Jesus prays...submission to the will of God is sometimes a gruelling journey to walk. This simple prayer strengthens Jesus spirit as God infuses him with courage and vision...the picture of seeing people liberated from sin and reconnected with God.

And the cup is held by Jesus. He is emboldened to rise from prayer and face his God appointed destiny. Mark 14:41-42. The cup is drained.

**Our Simple Prayer: 'Lord, strengthen me to do your will today.'**

God calls followers of Jesus to lives marked, noticeably so, by love, righteousness, justice and compassion. To live out Micah 6:8 and the teachings of Jesus summarised brilliantly and practically in Matthew 5-7, the famous Sermon on the Mount. And there will be times when to cost to live like Jesus will be steep and the temptation to do our will and not God's purpose will be intense and insistent.

We are called as followers of Christ to express the mindset and heartbeat of Christ in all realms of society...in academia, sports, business, social settings and the list goes on. As we celebrate our 150 birthday as a country, the best contribution we make is living out faith, hope, and love as engaged citizens or members of society.

Yet, let us not be naive...there will be times when we have to face a certain battle, it may be moral, ethical, relational...what battle do you need to win? What temptation do you need to resist courageously and act as you need to? Name it, without shame. What good word do you need to speak or good work do you need to do, with God's strength, again be as specific as possible.

**How does God Strengthen Us?**

He uses his words of Scripture, often promises of his presence, to infuse us with fresh courage and wisdom to know how to respond to the temptation before us. God by His Spirit infuses us with wisdom and a reminder of why doing God's will matters, to us and others. And certainly to God.

2 Timothy 4:16-18. Sometimes all we are left with in the battle is God. Like Jesus was in the garden, his friends fell asleep. Like Paul in a hostile courtroom, his friends bailed on him...but listen to his hope infusing words: "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it." Vs.17

Friends, God wants to work in the lives of others...through you. What battle do you need to win today, in God's power? What good words and works do you need God's strength to do, beginning today? Be as specific and faith filled as possible...and rise and go forward into your day, believing that God is with you, for you and will readily and generously infuse you with strength to make his love, grace and truth known and experienced by others.

'Lord, strengthen me to do your will today. Amen.'

Suggested Reading: Prayer – Philip Yancey

Prayer – Tim Keller

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home – Richard Foster