

Matthew 26:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Analysis

Fell on his face (ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, epesen epi prosōpon autou)—the posture of extreme humility and desperate supplication. **O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me**—the 'cup' (ποτήριον, potērion) represents not death itself but the cup of God's wrath against sin that the prophets described (Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15). Jesus, in genuine human nature, recoiled from this infinite horror. **Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt** (πλὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ᾽ ὡς σύ, plēn ouch hōs egō thelō all' hōs su)—the pivot from human desire to divine submission.

This prayer reveals both natures of Christ: his humanity genuinely shrinking from the cup, his deity willingly submitting to the Father's redemptive plan. The garden agony makes clear that Christ's sacrifice was no passive martyrdom but an active, costly, willing substitution. The cup could not pass—there was no other way (Hebrews 2:10).

Historical Context

In Jewish sacrificial practice, the priest examined the lamb to ensure it had no blemish (Exodus 12:5). Gethsemane was Christ's self-examination—the spotless Lamb of God fully aware of the sacrifice he was about to make. The 'cup' imagery was deeply rooted in Jewish understanding of divine judgment. To drink someone's

cup meant to share their fate. Jesus would drink the full cup of God's wrath so that believers might drink the cup of salvation (Psalm 116:13).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's request 'if it be possible' combined with 'not as I will, but as thou wilt' model the proper balance of honest petition and ultimate submission in prayer?
2. What does the fact that the cup could not pass reveal about the absolute necessity of the cross for human redemption?
3. How does contemplating what was in the 'cup' (God's wrath against all sin) deepen your gratitude for Christ's willing substitution?

Interlinear Text

καὶ προελθὼν μικρὸν ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ

And **further** **a little** **fell** **on** **face** **G846**
G2532 G4281 G3397 G4098 G1909 G4383

προσευχόμενος καὶ λέγων, Πάτερ μου εἰ δυνατόν

prayed **And** **saying** **Father** **O my** **if** **possible**
G4336 G2532 G3004 G3962 G3450 G1487 G1415

ἐστιν παρελθέτω ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο· πλὴν

it be **let** **from** **me** **G3588** **cup** **this** **nevertheless**
G2076 G3928 G575 G1700 G4221 G5124 G4133

οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς σύ

not **as** **I** **will** **but** **as** **thou**
G3756 G5613 G1473 G2309 G235 G5613 G4771

Additional Cross-References

John 6:38 (Parallel theme): For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Matthew 26:42 (Prayer): He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Philippians 2:8 (Parallel theme): And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Hebrews 5:7 (Prayer): Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

John 5:30 (Parallel theme): I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 14:31 (Parallel theme): But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Matthew 20:22 (Parallel theme): But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

John 18:11 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

John 11:41 (Parallel theme): Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

Numbers 16:22 (Parallel theme): And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?