

Prayer, Its Use and Abuse

"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done."

Matthew 26:42

As we ponder this prayer by Jesus we are seeing Him make a request and then qualify it with an expressed submission to the Father at the end. Why did Jesus make this request? Was He opposed to the horrors ahead of Him?

The ending to His prayer indicates His submission to whatever the Father had for Him to endure. What the problem was, is understood as being the dreadful fact that He had to have our sins laid on His holy person.

He had already said to the disciples in Gethsemane,

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."
Matthew 26:38.

Our way of saying it might be, *"The situation is killing me."* But in Jesus' case the situation actually did kill Him. No person in history has suffered to the extent Jesus did.

God certainly allows us to come in our misery and ask Him to remove the pain or the source of our grief.

We know that such extreme crises as the death of a loved one cannot be reversed in this life. However, there is hope in many difficulties of life that the problem may go away if God chooses to give us relief. For this reason we come and ask for relief.

Never be afraid to ask for relief from your situation. In John 15:7 Jesus makes a very remarkable comment on prayer when He says,

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."

This sounds very enticing at first glance. Many who abuse prayer only quote the last part of this promise and ignore the condition in the first part.

If we are to exercise this promise, we need to practice what is meant by *"remain in Me"* and *"My words remain in you."* For if these two things are not present when we pray than the promise does not hold. In the next few verses Jesus defines what remaining

in Him and having His teaching in us.

First He speaks of obeying His commands so we will remain in His love. V. 9-10. Then He tells us that we shall be joyful when we are obedient to God's will V.9. Next Jesus tells us to love each other as He loved us. V.12-13. Finally He says to bear lasting fruit and then the Father will give us what we ask V.16.

So a flippant quoting of the statement *"ask what you will and it shall be granted"* is not possible. We must be obedient, loving, submissive, fruitful, followers of Jesus in order to have this kind of prosperity in prayer.

Now, it is possible to lead this kind of life in order to have power in prayer. Jesus never called His disciples to do what they could not. He sets before us an amazing possibility in prayer. We need to cultivate the life described in John 15:9-16.

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