

Willing  
November 12, 2023  
Allen Power

Mark 14:32-43

Opening: "Wear your seatbelt." "Don't text and drive." "Eat a healthy diet and exercise."  
Why would a person refuse to submit to something that was for his/her own good?

The will of God is a complex subject involving God's sovereign will -- what He decrees will happen, His preceptive will -- revealed in scripture, and His dispositional will -- what pleases or displeases Him. For this brief study let's use a simple definition: God's will is His "plan and purpose for His creation and for each individual."<sup>1</sup> God's way is always the best way. The easiest way to know we are living in His will is to obey what He has told us in scripture. Why do followers of Christ sometimes struggle to submit to God's will?

In full disclosure, sometimes doing God's will leads to suffering, but God will give us grace for the suffering while He uses it for our ultimate good and His glory. As the stress and agony of Jesus' crucifixion began to descend on Him, He affirmed both His humanity and His commitment to surrender to God's will. Before we gather in our Care Groups to get to know each other better and share our prayer needs, let's spend a few minutes in a brief meditation on this familiar text as we learn about doing God's will.

**Mark 14:32–43 (ESV)** — **32** And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." **33** And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. **34** And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." **35** And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. **36** And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." **37** And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? **38** Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." **39** And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. **40** And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. **41** And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42** Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." **43** And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

- Our key focus in these few minutes is verse 36. In that verse Mark quotes Jesus saying, "*My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.*" He begged His Father to take away the "cup of suffering" but knew He must drain it. Why does His request encourage us?

- The physical torture of the next day would be horrendous, but it was the temporary separation from His Father that tore Jesus' heart to shreds. As Jesus became sin for all mankind the Father would have to turn away because He could not look at sin. The terrible separation would cause Jesus to cry out: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*<sup>ii</sup>
- Though in His humanity Jesus begged His Father for another way, He surrendered to God's plan knowing that His suffering was the only way to purchase salvation. Jesus willingly said to the Father: *"I want your will to be done, not mine."*
- Reading the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion always makes me sad. Ironically, and theologically, it should make me glad because his suffering paid for my salvation, but humanly speaking it makes me sad until I get to the empty tomb.
- Seeking to do God's will can also make us feel sad though scripture tells us it is the path to joy. Though we trust that He knows best, sometimes we hesitate.
- When we think of doing the will of God does it feel more like a diet than a delight? Does it feel more like a job than a joy? Does the thought of surrendering to God's will fill us with dread like scheduling a colonoscopy; more like a procedure than a privilege?
- In full disclosure, let's not gloss over the fact that sometimes, doing God's will leads to pain and persecution (1 Peter 4:19) yet scripture tell us doing His will is what is best for us (Prov. 3:5-6). Do we strive to do God's will out of guilt? Jesus died to free us from guilt.
- Here's the point: Obligation shouldn't be our motivation for submitting to God's will. We should have a willing heart to do what God directs knowing that His will for us is best for us. It begs the real question: How can we surrender in a way that He can transform our selfish will into a willing heart?
- In **Psalm 40:8 (ESV)** David wrote: *"I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."* Jesus always delighted to do God's will. Even in the face of terrible suffering, Jesus not only did what the Father directed, He went to the cross voluntarily and with a willing heart.
- We know the old saying, *"Fake it till you make it."* Why does that strategy fail when it comes to doing God's will? Why does faking a willing heart not work? [Illustration: Wax fruit, plastic flowers, and a "fake" willing heart.]
- In Psalm 51, David's psalm of confession after adultery and murder He prayed in 51:10: **10** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* [then in verse 12] **12** *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*
- Notice David didn't say, *"I'll do better, Lord."* *"I'll try harder."* He submitted himself to God the only One who could "create a clean heart" and "restore" the "joy of his salvation."
- David Mathis writing for Desiring God: *"It is "a willing spirit" that tastes the joy of his salvation (Psalm 51:12), and it is a glory to our King when his people "offer themselves freely" to his worship and service (Psalm 110:3). Christian faith cannot be forced. God wants to win us from within, and empower Christians by his Spirit to live willing, freely, from the heart."*<sup>iii</sup> We must be willing to ask God to transform our hearts to do His will.

- “Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch watchmaker and later a Christian writer (*The Hiding Place*) and public speaker, who worked with her family members to help many Jewish people escape from the Nazis during the Holocaust in World War II by hiding them in their home. She and her family were caught, and Corrie was arrested and sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp.”<sup>iv</sup>
- “Corrie talked about her need to pray often: “God, make me willing to be willing.” She told God that He would have to make her willing to forgive the monstrous guards at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. And God did! She told God that He would have to make her willing to tell God’s good news of forgiveness and love. And God did!”<sup>v</sup>
- Jesus’ prayer, David’s prayer, and Corrie’s prayer teach us a lot about how to do God’s will with a willing heart.
- Other thoughts?

Here’s the Takeaway for us from Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane:

- Jesus (in His humanity) begged for another way but immediately surrendered to God’s will. He went to the cross as He did everything in His earthly ministry, doing the Father’s will with a willing heart.
- How can we do that? How can we see past dreading the difficulties that may come with doing God’s will and look forward to the joy of doing what He knows is best for us?
- Like anything in the Christian life, we do what God commands us to do and then ask the Father to do what only He can do.
- As we desire to do God’s will, we shouldn’t try to “fake it till we make it” or try to make obligation be our motivation.
- Like Jesus we must be committed to doing God’s will even if it’s hard.
- Like David we must ask God for a newly created heart so we can do that.
- Like Corrie ten Boom we must ask Him to make us willing to be willing.”

---

<sup>i</sup> [Will of God](#). (2003). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1673). Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 27:46). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-isnt-impressed-with-your-duty>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrie\\_ten\\_Boom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrie_ten_Boom)

<sup>v</sup> <https://waterfromrock.org/2018/11/08/day-23-i-am-willing-to-be-made-willing/>