

FROM GETHSEMANE TO THE CROSS

By Terry Jones, March 16, 2008
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

Matthew 26:36-41, 27:33-38

CENTRAL SERMON THEME – Jesus' submission to the Father's will means He decides to willingly die on the cross and models how we are to respond to God's will.

INTRO. - I am Terry Jones and I approve this message. Our message is, *"May God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."* Jesus prayed during hours of agony in an olive grove called Gethsemane, *"Not my will but Your will be done."* The gospel writer, Luke, records Jesus saying similar words on the cross, *"Father, into Your hand I commit My spirit."* God asks us to submit to His will. God approves of this message.

Your efforts to yield to God's will may be similar to my struggles with God's will. I remember the first time I said to God, *"Not my will but Your will."* For me becoming a Christian hinged on my will versus God's will. On an Easter Sunday, I decided stop resisting God. Our minister, a wonderful minister and Christian man, introduced me to the church as 'one of the Jones boys.' There are five of us Jones boys. I think he did not remember which one I was. My father never remembered which was which. He called the roll before he found the name he wanted. On that day I gave my life to Christ, I received Christ, I repented toward God, and I surrendered my will to God. I made my confession of Christ as the Son of God. I thought confessing Christ and surrendering my life to Christ in repentance and biblical baptism would satisfy God forever. One time should do it!

Years later I prayed, *"Your will be done"* in desperation during a serious illness. A major illness can teach us to pray. This time I surrendered to God's will with some options attached. Through that experience I learned, *"Not my will but Your will be done"* God is so supreme He does not bargain with us.

How are you doing with God's will? Does your story include some struggles with God's will? Our first struggle begins with understanding God's will. Let us seek God's will.

I. SEEK GOD'S WILL

A. God has a general will for the entire world.

1. 2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
2. In John 3:16 the direct object of God's love is the entire world in order to save those who believe.
3. Illus. - Jesus does not want any of His grace wasted. Imagine for a moment someone drives into a filling station to buy gas. After the car is filled with gas this individual pumps gas on the ground. Before someone can stop this person hundreds of gallons of gasoline is wasted. What a waste! Someone could use that gas. God's grace is abundant and free. Anyone who neglects Christ is wasting His grace.
4. When we pray to God, "Not my will, but Your will be done" God's first response is to save us from our sins.

B. After God saves us He transforms us.

1. Applic. - We may think we are saved and God is finished with us.
2. Rom. 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is.
3. Rom. 8:28 - God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. V. 29 - Those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.
4. Applic. - I fear that many of God's people were born again but have never been transformed past our spiritual infancy.
5. Illus. - In Acts 5, Luke reports the Apostles of Jesus were brought before the ruling council who ordered them to be flogged and not to speak any more about Jesus the Christ. After they beat them, the council released them. Verse 41 - They went on their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. American Christians would have been screaming and yelling about their mistreatment. Why do I say this? We complain about much smaller problems than the Apostles suffered. The Apostles had been transformed to submit to God's will and rejoice in His will.

C. God has a will for His church.

1. Our Long Range Plan, The Bridge, is made up of five categories.

- a. **EVANGELISM** – Focusing on presenting the message of salvation to those who are not saved. Matt. 28:19, 20 - Go therefore and make disciples of all the nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
 - b. **DISCIPLESHIP** - Training those who are Christians to mature in their faith and Christian character to become like Jesus Christ. Mark 12:30 - You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.
 - c. **SERVICE** - Christians mature and grow as they serve within the ministries of the church James 2:18 - "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."
 - d. **RELATIONSHIPS** – Christians are to love another with the love of Christ within their own families and within the church family. John 13:34 - Love one another, even as I have loved you.
 - e. **SUPPORT** – In order to accomplish our mission to lead others to a personal, lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ the church will need proper tools such as land, facilities, technology, and equipment. Ephesians 4:15, 16 - But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
2. Our Vision for Christ's Church in 10 to 15 years is: *A church of Christ-sharing believers who study and apply the Bible, selflessly serve, display a Godly love for families, friends and community, and provide the necessary resources to support the mission of the church.*
- a. "Christ-sharing believers" is Evangelism.
 - b. "Believers who study and apply the Bible" is Discipleship.
 - c. "Selflessly serve" is Service.
 - d. "Display a Godly love for families, friends and community" is Relationships.
 - e. "Provide the necessary resources to support the mission of the church" is Support.

3. Our Mission is to lead people to a personal, lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ.

D. Illus. - At a meeting of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Bobby Richardson, former New York Yankee second baseman, offered a classic prayer: "Dear God, Your will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. Amen." Bobby Richardson.

II. SUBMIT TO GOD AS JESUS DID

A. Jesus submits to God's will.

1. He goes to Gethsemane to pray.
 - a. Gethsemane means "oil press."
 - b. Groves of olive trees grew on this hillside and still grow there today because olive trees reproduce with sprouts from their roots.
 - c. The olives were squeezed until they gave up their oil.
 - d. Jesus will feel the squeeze of God's will in his soul and the end product will be complete obedience.
2. Jesus goes there to pray about His impending brutal death.
 - a. He understands God's will is for Him to suffer and die on the cross.
 - b. Jesus is human with all the desires to live.
 - c. At thirty-three He brings these desires before His Father praying - If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.
3. Illus. - A mother had a young son who could not handle a 'no' from his mother. After an especially trying day, she finally flung up her hands and shouted, "All right, Billy, do whatever you want! Now let me see you disobey THAT!" Our Daily Bread.
4. Illus. - As the Union Pacific Railroad was being constructed, an elaborate bridge was built across a large canyon in the West. Wanting to test the bridge, the builder loaded a train with enough extra cars and equipment to double its normal load. The train was then driven to the middle of the bridge, where it stayed an entire day. One worker asked, "Are you trying to break this bridge?" "No," the builder replied, "I'm trying to prove that the bridge won't break." In the same way, the temptations Jesus faced were not designed to see if He would sin, but to prove that He would not

sin. Today in the Word, March 14, 1991. Jesus obeyed all the Father asked of Him.

B. Jesus enters Gethsemane burdened with sorrow and grief.

1. "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death."
2. Luke's gospel says His sweat was like drops of blood.
3. Jesus is about to break under the burden of suffering the cross for the sins of humanity.
4. Jesus knows the Father's will is the suffering of the cross.

C. Jesus prays under the pressure of the cross in submission.

1. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me."
 - a. Cup is God's wrath against sin.
 - b. Jesus is a normal man who does not want to suffer.
2. "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."
3. God's will was for Jesus to go to the cross.
4. Jesus decided to endure His punishment while praying in Gethsemane.
 - a. A false witness said Jesus was going to destroy the temple but Jesus kept silent.
 - b. The high priest asked if Jesus was the Messiah and Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah.
 - c. The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy.
 - d. They spit on Jesus' face.
 - e. They beat Him with their fists and slapped Him.
 - f. His enemies released a criminal to insult Jesus.
 - g. The soldiers had a mock ceremony to make Jesus a king with a crown of thorns and a scarlet colored robe.
 - h. Soldiers crucified Jesus outside the city of Jerusalem.
 - i. His enemies continued to mock Him until He died.
 - j. Add the guilt of sin and pain only God could endure being so humiliated and we have Jesus paying for our sin.
 - k. Jesus suffered the equivalent of Hell for us.

D. Jesus is obeying His Father's will.

III. SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL

A. We will pray "your will be done" but we attached some conditions.

1. Jesus submitted Himself without any conditions but include conditions such as:
 - a. "I will give You my heart if You will heal me."
 - b. "I will give You my money if You make me rich."
 - c. "I will forgive if you humble them first."
 - d. "I will submit to You if you will never let me have pain again."
 2. God will work in His own timing.
- B. Jesus prayed knowing God's will but we pray to know God's will.
1. Ex. - I have prayed, "God, what do You want me to do? Show me your will." God is silent. I pray again to know God's will. God is silent. I have prayed for God to inform me what His will is before I submit to Him. The Almighty and Sovereign God responds, "Submit to Me first without any conditions and then I will show you My will."
 2. The first part of submitting to God is - *Not my will*.
- C. Submission to the will of God benefits other areas of life.
1. Eph. 5 - Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord.
 - a. A husband submitted to God will love his wife with the love of Christ who gives up his will to lust to follow God's will to be a one-woman man.
 - b. A wife submitted will follow the leadership of her husband.
 - c. Children, submitted to God, will obey their parents.
 - d. Obedience follows when we first surrender to God.
 2. Men submitted to God are emotionally and spiritually stronger.
 - a. We men fear that submission to God means we are weak.
 - b. When we submit ourselves to God we are uniting with the all-powerful supreme God.
 - c. We are empowered with God's Spirit to forgive others and to resist temptation.
 3. In Russia, Christians are tested by hardship, but in America you are tested by freedom. And testing by freedom is much harder." Pavel Poloz, recently (1987) exiled from Russia, Moody Monthly, April, 1989.
 - a. Our faith grows under adversity.
 - b. Pain and sorrow make us receptive to God.

CONCLUSION - (Testimony by Jim Steinmetz) At the beginning of a new year everyone looks forward to a new year, new opportunities and making

resolutions to achieve. That is how my 2007 began, but, as the year went on I realized not all is what it seems. After some discussions concerning the business outlook of where I was employed, it was decided that I would be placed on unemployment as of September with no chance of returning.

Now for some, like construction workers or seasonal workers, that is ok and some of you have been through that before. This was something completely new to me. At the age of 14 I used to drive my moped to work at different jobs in my father's construction company. I had never been on unemployment.

I took the first couple of weeks and attended to the usual “honey-do-lists” and thought that with my law enforcement, construction, and retail background I would make some phone calls and be back in business. My will and wants was not God’s will and wants.

I applied to 26 different jobs before I stopped keeping track of them. One State Police Officer job required me to apply with a lengthy application process. I liked the pay, the benefits, and the possibilities. The total applicants were approximately 30 or more. The next phase was a physically agility test to which only 15 out of the 30 some made the cut to get this invitation. My will - to get this job; God’s will - to miss the required time to run the mile-in-a-half by 30 seconds and thus losing this opportunity.

During this process I can tell you my faith wavered on whether God would truly bankrupt my family or provide me with income to support us all. I prayed a lot, daily. My wife prayed, my friends prayed, our Bible study group prayed. I received cards of support, but I felt that I could still use *my will* and find a new career.

In January I had two different interviews for positions that again had great opportunities. My will - to accept either of these positions right away and get started; God’s will - to have two phone calls, both of them rejections, both within the same day. I cried, I yelled, I raised my hands and I looked up and asked, “what do you want from me” and then I prayed more, and I finally begin to realize that it wasn’t about me, it wasn’t my timing, it wasn’t my will. All of that belongs to God. I began to read the Bible with a little more intensity; my prayers had less of me and more of Him.

The final chapter of this is not completely over, but I am comfortable with God's will for me. But let me end with how God provided. I once again had two great law enforcement job possibilities placed before me. The one with the best possibility had the worst hours 4pm-12am with Wednesday and Thursday's off. It broke my heart to think that I would only see my children before bedtime only 2 days a week. But I now knew how to pray in this situation.....Not my will, but Your will be done. If this is where I need to be for the survival of my family and where I could benefit God the most, then His will be done.

As I prayed, along with many of you who prayed for me, the second of the two possibilities came forward that God placed before me. Monday – Friday 8am-4:30pm with weekends off, a very rare schedule in law enforcement.

I am happy to tell you that Monday will be the start of week five of my new 8:00-4:30 Monday through Friday law enforcement job. When I accepted the job by phone, I hung up and cried. I can tell you as a man and a human being, life offers very few chances to cry because you are absolutely happy. There is no doubt in my mind that God provided this chance to cry to prove to me it was His Will and not mine in this situation.

I pray that my testimony will not only reinforce what Terry has preached today, but, will give you hope of God's will for your life as you encounter life's hurtles. That you will pray with strength and confidence that God's will be done for you.

Thank you.