

Let This Cup Pass from Me

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Jesus repeatedly predicted His crucifixion and resurrection, starting with John 2:19. Note Matt 12:39-40 as well as the following trio of predictions common to each synoptic:

First synoptic passion prediction:	Matt 16:21 // Mark 8:31 // Luke 9:22 ¹
Second synoptic passion prediction:	Matt 17:22-23a // Mark 9:20-31 // Luke 9:43b-44
Third synoptic passion prediction:	Matt 20:17-19 // Mark 10:32-34 // Luke 18:31-34

Furthermore, Matthew 20:22-23 // Mark 10:38-39 use the imagery of drinking the cup to refer to Jesus' crucifixion. This language anticipates the prayers at Gethsemane.

In light of this, one would not expect Him in the Garden of Gethsemane to request avoiding the cross. Yet, that is exactly how most interpreters approach the Gethsemane prayers. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed three times that the Father would remove the cup from Him. Italicized references say that He prayed the same thing as before without recording His words.

First prayer:	Matthew 26:39 // Mark 14:36 // Luke 22:42
Second prayer:	Matthew 26:42 // <i>Mark 14:39 // Luke 22:44</i>
Third prayer:	<i>Matthew 26:44</i>

Let us consider the Jesus' first prayer as recorded in all three Synoptics:

Matt 26:39 *O My Father, if [ei + indicative mood] it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*

Mark 14:36 *Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.*

Luke 22:42 *Father, if [ei + indicative mood] it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*

The wording in Matthew and Luke use conditional statements (if it is possible; if it is Your will), but both are first class conditions [ei + indicative mood], assuming that it actually is possible for the Father to remove the cup. Thus, in Matt 26:39, it is assumed as possible for the cup to pass from Christ. Luke 22:42 assumes that it is the Father's will to take the cup from Him. Mark 14:36 explicitly says that all things (including taking away the cup) are possible for the Father. Indeed, Jesus' first prayer asserts the expectation that it is not only possible to take away the cup, but that it is the Father's will to take it away.

Unfortunately, our finitude causes us at times to prematurely reject the right solution, because we imagine a difficulty that is really not there. Our imagined difficulty is as follows:

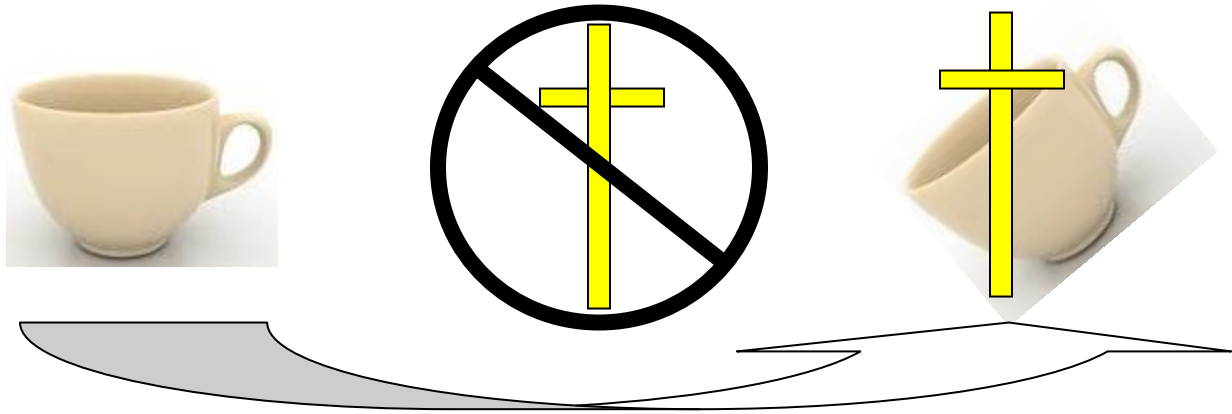
If it were possible to take the cup from Jesus, would not the cross become optional?

No, that is an imaginary conundrum.

¹ Placing // between two passages designates them as parallels.

Matt 26:42 shows that He asked not to avoid the cross, but to drink that cup SOONER rather than later.

*O My Father, **if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it**, Your will be done.*



Matthew 26:42 clarifies that Jesus expects the cup to be taken away after He drinks of it, not before. While Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was as if He were holding the cup, without yet drinking of it. When He went to the cross, He drank of it, as Matt 20:22-23 // Mark 10:38-39 use the imagery of drinking the cup for His crucifixion. Yes, it was the Father's will to take away the cup, after He went to the cross. In essence, we can understand the prayers in Gethsemane to say:

Father, please expedite the cross, so that cup can be quickly taken from Me, but do all things on Your timetable, not Mine.

This interpretation agrees with John 12:27-28a. Shortly before Gethsemane and shortly before His crucifixion (cf. John 12:1) Jesus refuses to ask the Father to spare Him from the hour [of crucifixion].

Now My soul is distressed, and what shall I say—"Father, save Me from this hour"? But for this reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!

The common understanding of Jesus' Gethsemane prayers disagrees with what He says in John 12:27-28a. We should, instead, understand Jesus to request that He be allowed to drink the cup as soon as possible. The sooner He would face the cross the sooner it would be over. As Hebrews 12:2 says: *for the joy that was set before Him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus willingly submitted to the Father and willingly put our interests ahead of His own. He submitted to the Father and submitted His interests to our own.

Please note how hollow an exhortation emerges from the typical interpretation of this passage:

Right before Jesus (supposedly) tries to escape the cross, He warns His disciples that they will stumble this very night (Matt 26:31 // Mark 14:27 // cf. Luke 22:31f) and urges them to pray that they might not yield to temptation (Matt 26:41 // Mark 14:38 // Luke 22:46. Yet, they slept (*katheudō*, not *koimaō*) in Matt 26:43 // Mark 14:37 // Luke 22:45f).

Instead, the same Jesus that willingly faced the cross urged His disciples to pray that they might not yield to temptation.