

Was Jesus an Open Theist? A Brief Examination of Greg Boyd's Exegesis of Jesus' Prayer in Gethsemane

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Of all the arguments marshaled in support of open theism, the most important for those of an evangelical mindset are the exegetical arguments. Those who affirm the inspiration of the Scriptures recognize that theology should not be the product of free and unbridled speculation; rather, theological formulation must occur within the parameters of the doctrinal framework revealed in the Bible. Given the noetic consequences of the fall, theological formulations that are grounded merely in human philosophy and rationality are suspect. Those who affirm that the Bible has “God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter” are compelled to test every theological affirmation in light of God’s word.¹

Greg Boyd recently argued that opponents of open theism have failed to respond to the arguments in favor of his views at this crucial point:

What is particularly sad about the current state of this debate is that Scripture seems to be playing a small role in it. Most of the published criticisms raised against the open view have largely ignored the biblical grounds on which open theists base their position. For example, in his recent book, *God the Father Almighty*, Millard Erickson devotes an entire chapter to refuting the open view, but he never once interacts with any of the biblical

arguments that support the open theist position. Unfortunately, this is typical of literature that critiques the open view.²

We who regard ourselves as “a people of the Book” should be stung by this criticism. I wish to respond to Boyd’s indictment by challenging his exegesis of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane.

Brief Summary of Boyd’s Open Theist Position

Boyd argues that if God foreknows all future events, the fulfillment of these future events is an established certainty. If all of the actions of a person are certain, individuals do not possess true libertarian freedom. Consequently, God is responsible for all tragedies that occur (including the damnation of the lost) since he foresaw these and did not act to avert the foreseen outcome (for example, by refusing to create an Adolf Hitler or a Charles Manson).³ Boyd concludes that a loving God could not possibly foreknow all events. This, he claims, does not limit divine omniscience. God knows all that is knowable. The future cannot be known since it does not belong to the realm of reality.⁴

In *God of the Possible*, Boyd sought to defend this theological position by numerous exegetical arguments. His strongest argument from New Testament

texts consists of an appeal to Jesus' petition in Gethsemane:

Yet another impressive example of the Lord speaking about the future in open terms is found in Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus "threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me'" (Matt. 26:39). As we saw in the previous chapter, if anything was fixed in the mind of God ahead of that time, it was that the Son of God was going to be crucified. Indeed, Jesus himself had been teaching this very truth to his disciples (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; John 2:19). This makes it all the more amazing that Jesus makes one last attempt to change his Father's plan "if it is possible."

The prayer reveals that in the mind of Jesus there was at least a theoretical chance that another course of action could be taken "at the eleventh hour." It was not possible, of course, so Jesus was crucified. Yet this doesn't negate the fact that Jesus' prayer presupposes that divine plans and possible future events are, in principle, alterable. In short, Jesus' prayer evidences the truth that the future is at least partly open, even if his own fate was not.⁵

While this argument initially seems compelling, closer examination demonstrates that Boyd's treatment is characterized by several methodological weaknesses. First, Boyd and other open theists appeal most frequently to narrative texts like this one to support their position. This is hermeneutically unsound. Biblical theologians should rely primarily on epistolary and didactic material in the formulation of doctrine. If one extrapolates a theological principle from narrative texts but finds little support for the principle in didactic texts, the text should be reexamined.⁶ Furthermore, when one does appeal to narrative texts in theological formulation, one must make

sure to utilize the account in a manner (a) that is consistent with the purpose of the narrative as a whole, (b) that is congruent with the author's theological purpose for the account as revealed by the emphases that appear in a careful comparison of Synoptic parallels, and (c) that is sensitive to the immediate context of the account.⁷ Furthermore, careful study of the grammar and syntax of the Greek text should precede extrapolation of theological principles from the text. Boyd did not follow the genre-specific interpretive guidelines for Gospel narratives or exercise proper care in his study of the syntax of the text.

Purpose of the Account

Matthew used the Gethsemane account to demonstrate the importance of prayer for a proper response to temptation.⁸ Jesus commanded his disciples to "pray so that you will not enter into temptation." Jesus prayed faithfully and rejected the temptation to defy the Father's will by evading the cross. Peter failed to pray and was thus vulnerable to the temptation to deny Christ under pressure. Matthew highlighted the connection between Peter's failure to pray and his denial by emphasizing that Peter failed to pray three times and denied Christ three times.⁹

Matthew recorded the first Gethsemane petition, the only petition which Boyd cites, in order to display the intensity of Jesus' grief and distress in anticipation of the agonies of crucifixion. The introduction to the account stresses this repeatedly: "he [Jesus] began to be grieved and distressed" (Matt 26:37) and "My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death" (Matt 26:38). Jesus' initial plea depicts the severity of the suffering that he would endure to ransom sinners (Matt 20:28).

This Matthean emphasis serves to highlight the real and forceful nature of the temptation to evade the cross. Marshall's comments on the Lukan parallel aptly describe Matthew's account also:

The effect of the saying is that Jesus, facing the temptation to avoid the path of suffering appointed by God, nevertheless accepts the will of God despite his own desire that it might be otherwise. He does not seek to disobey the will of God, but longs that God's will might be different.¹⁰

Gethsemane's first plea demonstrates that Christ was no stoic who marched unflinchingly to the cross. Jesus initially cowered in the face of earth's worst tortures and heaven's fiercest wrath but ultimately embraced both in prayerful submission to the Father.¹¹ The one who taught his disciples to pray, "Your will be done," modeled this surrender to God's will in the grueling Gethsemane conflict. An understanding of the purpose of this account prompts the interpreter to see Jesus' initial petition regarding the revision of the divine plan as more of a wistful hope for which he grasped while under great duress than an expression of Jesus' careful theological reflection. The following sections will demonstrate that Jesus quickly abandoned this elusive hope for obedience to the Father's will regardless of the cost.

The Syntax of the Sentence

Boyd seems to make the mistake of equating a first class conditional protasis ("if" clause) with an affirmation—"since it is possible" rather than "if it is possible." Recent grammars have demonstrated that this is simply incorrect.¹² The nuance is "if,—and let us assume that this is true for the sake of argument—then."¹³ The words

"if it is possible" constitute a true condition, not a cause. Jesus desired to avoid the sufferings of the cross only if it were possible to do so. The text should not be read as an *assertion* of the possibility that God might change his plan of redemption. Boyd himself admits that Jesus knew his evasion of the cross was not possible, but insists Jesus assumed that other changes in the divine plan are possible. This argument is logically awkward. If the condition of Jesus' request was indeed an impossibility as Boyd admits, one has no grounds to deduce that other alterations in the plan are possible. Furthermore, Boyd's view of the reference to possibility is overly simplistic. He seems to overlook that different categories of possibility exist. What may be possible in view of God's power may in fact be impossible in light of God's plan. As we will see, Jesus himself will define these two categories of "possibility" in a discussion that follows on the heels of the Gethsemane prayer.

A Comparison of Synoptic Parallels¹⁴

A comparison of the Gethsemane accounts in the Synoptic Gospels suggests that the evangelists Matthew and Luke phrased their accounts in a conscious effort to avoid giving readers the impression that it was possible to change the divine plan.¹⁵ Notice in the following table that in the Markan form, Jesus' prayer contains the assertion, "All things are possible for you." Boyd might argue that this indicative statement renders invalid the earlier objection to his treatment of the first class condition. He could regret that he appealed to Matthew's text rather than to Mark's since Mark better makes his point. However, Mark's indicative statement relates to God's power and control

<p>39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying,</p> <p>“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”</p> <p>40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” 43 Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.</p>	<p>35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying,</p> <p>“Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”</p> <p>37 And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”</p> <p>39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words.</p>	<p>41 And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying,</p> <p>“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”</p> <p>43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. 45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”</p>
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as exercised according to his divine plan, not the possibility of revising his plan. The assertion expresses that God in his omnipotence had the power to protect Jesus from arrest by the Jewish authorities and from the crucifixion that would follow. Jesus' prayer assumed that God had the power to do all that was necessary to deliver Jesus from the cross. But Jesus wanted the Father to express his power only in accordance with his plan. Thus he prayed, "Yet not what I will, but what You will."¹⁶ The affirmation of divine omnipotence in the Gethsemane prayer did not imply that the divine plan was subject to revision or could be changed at the eleventh hour as Boyd argues. On the contrary, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus had previously insisted that his death was necessary. Mark 8:31 states, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." The word translated "must" is the Greek word *dei* which expresses "divine destiny or unavoidable fate."¹⁷

Boyd fails to account for this distinction between divine omnipotence and the necessity of the fulfillment of the divine plan. This failure becomes even more problematic in light of the tendencies of the revision of Mark's account by Matthew and Luke as seen above.

Apparently, Matthew and Luke were concerned that some readers might interpret the affirmation of divine omnipotence without reference to Mark 8:31 as implying that Jesus' sacrificial death was unnecessary or that the divine plan could be altered. Consequently, Luke avoided the possible misunderstanding by eliminating all language of possibility: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from

Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."¹⁸ In Luke's version, the issue becomes entirely one of the divine will without any reference to possibilities. Although others have suggested that Luke made this change merely for stylistic purposes, the emphasis in the preceding context (Luke 22:37) on the necessity of the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament (in this case, Isa 53:12) suggests that Luke edited Mark's account so as to avoid misunderstandings of the prayer which might bring the first petition into tension with the preceding discussion. Several commentators recognize that "the sovereign rule of God over history" is a primary theological emphasis of Luke's two-volume work.¹⁹ Texts such as Luke 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26-27, 44; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; and 20:27 confirm this. The suggestion that Luke's revision was theologically motivated is strengthened by the consideration that the revision dovetails with a major theological theme of his work.

Matthew, on the other hand, eliminated the assertion "All things are possible for You" and used only the conditional "if it is possible" taken from the Markan introduction to the Gethsemane struggle in the preceding verse.²⁰ Clues from the larger context suggest that Matthew revised Mark out of a concern similar to Luke's, that is, in order to avoid the risk that readers might interpret the text to suggest that the divine plan for Jesus' sacrificial death was "open."

Larger Literary Context

The purpose of Matthew's revision suggested above is supported by Matthew's inclusion of Jesus' words in Matthew 26:53-54, words which have no parallel in the other Synoptic Gospels. The words

clearly distinguish between divine ability and divine necessity and demonstrate that while God had the power to deliver Jesus from the cross, Jesus' death on the cross was necessary as part of a foreordained and unalterable plan. Jesus said, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" This demonstrates that deliverance from the cross was within God's power. Jesus immediately added, "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" This demonstrates that Jesus' death was necessary as part of God's inalterable plan. Matthew reiterated the necessity of Jesus' death in v. 56, "But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Matthew's revision of the Markan form of the first petition eliminates any potential tension between the petition and Jesus' affirmation of the necessity of the crucifixion. The unique saying in Matthew 26:53-54 shows that divine necessity does not negate divine omnipotence, but that the former directs the latter.

The Movement and Climax of the Account

Boyd has conveniently ignored the larger context of the Matthean form of the Gethsemane prayer. Actually, one might more correctly refer to the Matthean forms (plural) of the prayer since Jesus' second petition is significantly different from the first at a crucial point. The second petition negates the first class condition, "If it is *not* possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." The shift to the negative condition suggests that as Jesus struggled with the temptation to evade the cross as exhibited in the initial petition, his communion with

the Father assured him that his sufferings on the cross were necessary. Although it was possible, given the Father's omnipotence, to protect Christ from arrest, trial, and execution, it was impossible, given the Father's sovereign will, to deliver Jesus from arrest, trial, and execution.²¹ Lane eloquently describes the final resolution of Jesus' struggle: "Fully conscious that his mission entailed submission to the horror of the holy wrath of God against human sin and rebellion, the will of Jesus clasped the transcendently lofty and sacred will of God."²²

The Theological Milieu of the Synoptic Writers

Open theists may object that Matthew and Luke did not shape their narratives to thwart misinterpretations of the events that would lead to views like open theism since open theism did not exist in the first century. This knife, of course, cuts both ways. If a view like open theism did not exist in the first century, it cannot be the perspective of any of the New Testament writers, and claims that open theism is "the biblical view" immediately collapse. On the other hand, while I am convinced that open theism was not the view of the New Testament writers, a position similar in some ways to contemporary open theism was espoused by some first-century Jews. Josephus wrote a detailed description of the positions of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes on the issue of "fate," by which he meant "divine sovereignty." The Essenes were divine determinists. The Sadducees affirmed libertarian free will and denied divine sovereignty. The Pharisees held a mediating position affirming both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, a position similar to that of modern-day compatibilists.

Josephus wrote,

But the Sadducees are those of the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please.²³

He later clarified,

And for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the cause of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly.²⁴

Although the view of the Sadducees was not identical to contemporary open theism, both approach the issue of divine sovereignty with an emphasis on libertarian freedom that dismisses the concept of an inalterable divine plan. The Sadducean view of human freedom was probably known to Matthew and Luke. Their awareness of the Sadducean view could explain their care in describing the prayer of Gethsemane and the events surrounding Jesus' arrest.

Conclusion

Jesus' Gethsemane experience does not demonstrate that "divine plans and possible future events are, in principle, alterable." On the contrary, when examined in context, harmonized with Jesus' teaching elsewhere, viewed in light of the theological emphases of the Gospels, and interpreted with regard to the insights gleaned from a comparison of Gospel parallels, the Gethsemane experience confirms the classical view of divine

foreknowledge and of God's inalterable plan. Admittedly, the Gethsemane experience demonstrates only that Jesus' sacrificial death was an unalterable aspect of the divine plan. It does not prove that no aspect of the divine plan is subject to revision. Boyd's claim, however, that the Gethsemane experience proves that the divine plan is alterable grossly distorts the evidence of the text. The argument that if one aspect of the divine plan is fixed and inalterable, then other (perhaps all) aspects of the divine plan are fixed and inalterable is more plausible than the argument that Jesus could not possibly revise the Father's plan regarding the crucifixion while other aspects of the divine plan are subject to revision. Boyd's exegetical argument unravels since he ignores the purpose of the account, misunderstands the Greek syntax of the text, overlooks the theological emphasis of the accounts as seen through a cautious comparison and contrast of Gospel parallels, ignores the context of the first Gethsemane petition, and overlooks the narrative flow, particularly the movement from the positive "if it is possible" to the negative "if it is not possible."

Open theists may argue that Matthew and Luke's theological concern was to preserve an understanding of the necessity of the cross rather than to insist that the divine plan is inalterable. However, the narratives are shaped in such a way as to express both concerns. The narratives do not argue that the cross was necessary because salvation could not be granted any other way. They argue that the cross was necessary because it was part of the divine plan foretold by the infallible Scriptures (Matt 26:54). The arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection had to occur because God had said in Scripture

that they would, and Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). This suggests that in the mind of the Evangelists, definite divine foreknowledge, the infallibility of God's plans, and the reliability of biblical prophecy were mutually dependent. Thus acceptance of open theism and full adherence to biblical inerrancy seem mutually exclusive.

While Boyd is correct that opponents to open theism have not offered sufficient response to his exegetical arguments, those who espouse classical theism need not fear to do so. This essay demonstrates that even the strongest exegetical arguments of open theists do not bear up under close scrutiny. Evangelicals should shift their focus from mere philosophical and theological challenges to open theism and offer a careful exegetical response. They may discover that opening the Book closes the book on open theism.

ENDNOTES

¹*The Baptist Faith and Message*, a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, 14 June 2000, Article I. Those who truly affirm the primacy of biblical revelation in theology will likewise be wary of theological positions that are formed independently of biblical teaching, after which the theologian turns to the Bible to seek biblical support for the idea. In the effort to offer a biblical defense for a preconceived notion, the interpreter easily mishandles Scripture by imposing ideas foreign to the text upon the text and then calling his personal theology "biblical theology."

²Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 12.

³See the initial objections to the classical view of divine foreknowledge in *ibid.*, 10-11.

⁴*Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁵*Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁶This is not to say that narrative texts are of no value in theological formulation. I concur with Grant Osborne's observation: "I also oppose the current tendency to deny the theological dimension [of narrative texts] on the grounds that narrative is indirect rather than direct. This ignores the results of redaction criticism, which has demonstrated that biblical narrative is indeed theological at the core Narrative is not as direct as didactic material, but it does have a theological point and expects the reader to interact with that message" (*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991], 172).

⁷See William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 327-330; Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 121-130; William Warren, "Interpreting New Testament Narrative," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, 2nd ed., ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 322-323. For a helpful discussion of the appropriate exercise of redaction criticism by a trusted evangelical, see D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," in *Scripture and Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 119-142.

⁸Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 271.

⁹Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary*

on *His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 535.

¹⁰I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 831.

¹¹Although modern Christians may be hesitant to accept the Synoptic description of Jesus' Gethsemane struggle, such hesitancy tends to confirm the historical reliability of the account. Form critics formulated several "criteria of authenticity" which may be used to determine whether a saying or act ascribed to Jesus actually occurred. One criterion, an extension of the criterion of dissimilarity, suggests that material recorded to the potential embarrassment of the church is authentic and may be traced to the historical Jesus. This account seems to satisfy that criterion since many early Christians would have been uncomfortable with Jesus' struggle with the temptation to evade the cross. See Gundry, 533. While such criteria are helpful, an approach which disputes texts until they are "proven innocent" is misguided. See Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1987), 246-254.

¹²See Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 690-691. If one were to insist that first class conditions affirm the reality of the protasis, 1 Cor 15:13 denies the doctrine of the resurrection and Matt 12:27 teaches that Jesus cast out demons

in the power of Beelzebul! For a helpful discussion see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 81.

¹³Wallace, 690-691.

¹⁴Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.

¹⁵The comments below assume that Mark wrote his Gospel first and that Matthew and Luke had access to the Markan account in the composition of their Gospels. Scholars refer to this hypothesis as "Markan priority." Although the issue of the sources used in the composition of the Synoptic Gospels is admittedly complex, the "two document hypothesis" is the present consensus among New Testament scholars. This hypothesis requires Markan priority.

¹⁶For a good discussion of the relationship of Jesus' will to the Father's will, see G. Schrenk, "thelema," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 3:49.

¹⁷See "dei," in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, eds. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 172.

¹⁸I. H. Marshall also notes the change and suggests that the redaction served to make Jesus' prayer more personal (Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 831).

¹⁹"For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors'; for what is written about me has

its fulfillment" (RSV). Robert Stein comments, "Once again the divine 'must' (*dei*) appears. Jesus' forthcoming death had been foretold in Scripture, so that it was not fate or tragedy that awaited him but fulfillment of the divine will and plan. . . . The divine passive is present in the infinitive 'be fulfilled,' i.e., *God will fulfill it in me*" (Luke [New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 555, see also 45-46). See I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1970), 103-107; and John Polhill, *Acts* (New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 63-64.

²⁰Robert Gundry also observed this important Matthean revision (though he offers no comment on the theological purpose of the revision) in *Matthew*, 533.

²¹D. A. Carson has suggested that no progression exists in the Gethsemane petitions in Matthew's Gospel and that the variations are "incidental" since v. 44 says that Jesus prayed the "same thing." See Carson, *Matthew* (Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 545. However, the words "same thing" mean only that the third prayer was essentially the same as the second prayer and not that all three petitions were identical. The petitions show progressive surrender to the Father's will, Jesus' victory over temptation to evade the cross (Matt 4:1-11; 16:21-23), and his growing conviction of the absolute necessity of the crucifixion in the Father's plan. Craig Blomberg is more on target when he comments,

“This time he uses the negative adverb with the first-class condition (“if it is *not* possible,” v. 42). He has come to believe that it is not within God’s will that he avoid the suffering mapped out for him, but he reaffirms his desire to carry out that will irrespective of the cost.” See Blomberg, *Matthew* (New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 396. For a similar view from a nonevangelical perspective, see Schnackenburg, 271.

²²William Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 518-519.

²³*The Jewish War* 2.8.14.

²⁴*Antiquities of the Jews* 13.5.9.