

Our Messiah: Abused!
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John 18:1-27

As we get back into our study of the Gospel of John this morning, we come to the first twenty seven verses of John Chapter 18. Here John recounts for us Judas' betrayal of Jesus; Jesus' arrest; the beginning of the bogus trials the Jews staged against Jesus; and Peter's denial of Jesus.

The real lesson of this chain of events in the first part of John 18 isn't about betrayal, abuse, or brutality, as terrible as those things are. It's about the "darkness" of the human heart. It's about the players in this drama: Those who HATE Jesus; those who PRETEND to love Him; those who love Him but FOLD under pressure; and Jesus himself who DID THE WILL of the Father, no matter the cost.

John 18:1–27 (ESV)

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

- John doesn't give us the name of the garden, but Matthew and Mark do. Gethsemane.
- **Verse 2: Knowing what Judas would do, why would Jesus go to this spot where he "often met" with his disciples?**

3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6 When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

- Verse 3: A "band" of soldiers; a detachment; a cohort; **any guess how many Roman soldiers?**
- **Why would they send soldiers with torches and weapons? What were they expecting?**
- "Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him," **what is John really saying about Jesus?**
- **Verse 4: What does Jesus' response to his captors tell you?**
- Verse 5 says it plainly: "Judas, who betrayed him, was standing -- WITH THEM."
- How many PRETEND to be followers of Christ, until following interferes with their own agenda? Then they show their true colors.
- Verse 6: We don't know exactly why these trained soldiers "drew back and fell to the ground." **Any theories? What is significant about the words Jesus used to identify Himself?**

7 So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”
8 Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.” 9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”

- Verse 8 is a picture of the cross.
- Jesus was prepared to sacrifice himself to save his disciples.

10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) 11 So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

- In typical fashion, Peter takes action. Luke, the physician, reported in his gospel that Jesus healed the ear. Then Jesus rebukes Peter. Put that sword away!

Matthew reports that Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 26:53–54 (ESV)

53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

- We might feel like cheering for Peter. **But how was his reaction actually REBELLION to God?**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

Peter’s sword symbolizes rebellion against the will of God. Peter should have known that Jesus would be arrested and that He would willingly surrender to His enemies (Matt. 16:21ff; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). Peter made every mistake possible! He fought the wrong enemy, used the wrong weapon, had the wrong motive, and accomplished the wrong result! He was openly resisting the will of God and hindering the work that Jesus came to accomplish! While we admire his courage and sincerity, it was certainly a demonstration of zeal without knowledge.

- Peter will further demonstrate how even a TRUE BELIEVER can fall short.
- These verses say Jesus “came forward” and identified Himself. When He spoke, the soldiers fell to the ground. He healed the ear of the high priest’s servant. He rebuked Peter saying “put away that sword.”
- **What does all this say about Jesus in this situation?**

John 10:17–18 (ESV)

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Though He struggled in His humanity, Jesus didn't run and hide. He submitted and died...for us.

12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. 13 First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. 17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18 Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

- John writes this account like the scenes of a great drama. We shift from one part of the action to another. Here we begin to track Peter's reaction to Jesus arrest.
- **Verse 17: Do you find anything interesting about how the servant girl worded her question?**
- **In chapter 13 what did Jesus predict about how Peter would react under pressure?**

John 13:37–38 (ESV)

37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." 22 When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" 24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

- Verse 19 reveals the Jews real fear of Jesus: "his disciples and his teaching"...His claim of being the Son of God.
- What jumps out at me is this officer that slapped Jesus and said, "*Is that how you answer the high priest?*" **What was this officer really saying to Jesus?**
- "How dare you!" How dare you...challenge the establishment! How dare you say our behavior is sinful! How dare you disrupt our power structure!
- People are still saying "How dare you!" to Jesus today.
- How dare you tell me I can't live anyway I want and do anything I want!
- How dare you make me feel bad about the sin in my life!

- How dare you be so intolerant! How dare you claim I will have to answer to God!
- WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
- Jesus could say, “No, the important question is who do YOU think I AM?”
- Meanwhile Peter is out by the fire...verse 25:

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” 27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

Matthew says Peter was so frightened and frustrated he began to “curse” and “swear.” Luke gives us the most TOUCHING and POIGNANT account:

Luke 22:61–62 (ESV)

61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

How often do we deny our connection to Jesus? Yet, He patiently looks on as we do?

R.C. Sproul, writing about Peter, cites BAD NEWS and GOOD NEWS. First the bad: *He (Peter) betrayed his Lord with curses. And as soon as the third denial was out of his mouth, the rooster crowed, fulfilling the prediction of Christ. What does this teach us? I think it teaches us something hideous, something we don't want to see... the darkness of the human heart. This shows us what people are capable of doing. Even after making a glorious confession, even after swearing allegiance to Jesus "I will lay down my life for Your sake" (13:37b) Peter failed at the moment of truth. Such is the fallen human nature.*

Then, R.C. gives us the GOOD NEWS about Peter’s example:

The passage also teaches us, especially in light of Peter's later restoration, what kind of people Jesus died to save. He had no need to die for people who are sinless, for there are no such people. He gave Himself for people who have it in them to betray Him, people like you and me. However, He will never betray those on whom He sets His love, but will love them faithfully for all time.

R. C. Sproul. John (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 4546-4548). Kindle Edition.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

In this account we see that a after more than two thousand years, some things have not changed. The “characters” in this drama still exist today:

- We see an “establishment” that wants to destroy Christ and His message. “How dare He call them and their way of living sinful!” He’s not only an irritant but a threat.
- We see a FALSE follower who portrays himself as a disciple, though his real allegiance is to money and his own agenda.

- We see a TRUE follower who vows his loyalty to Christ in private; but denies him in public when the cost seems too great.
- And the most unchanging personality of them all: A SUFFERING Savior who willingly stepped forward accepting horrible betrayal, abuse, and death; forgiving His murderers while saving a sinful world.
- Which example will we follow? Those who REJECT? Those who PRETEND? Those who FOLD? Or the example of Jesus who FOLLOWED the will of the Heavenly Father?