

John 18:15-40

“The Denial & The Trial”

As we enter into this portion of scripture it was only a few hours earlier that Jesus had shared the Last Supper w/His disciples. He had spoken to them of the bread, how it was an *illustration* of His body that was to be broken for them. He explained to them the cup; that it was a *representation* of the blood that He was about to shed for them, for you, & for me.

It was the new covenant between God & man. No longer predicated on *man's* faithfulness to *God*, because we can't be. No longer predicated on the blood of the sacrificial lambs slain from year to year which at best made a temporary *covering* for sin but could in no way do *away* w/sin. This covenant was predicated on *God's* faithfulness to *man*, because His faithfulness fails not. This covenant was predicated on the blood of J.C. the Lamb of God who would take away (*once for all*) the sin of the world.

Now that the sin situation has been dealt w/finality in totality, forgiveness of sin/atonement for sin is applied instantly to the one who places their trust & their faith in J.C. Though your sin be like scarlet, in Him you're white like snow, “*As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*” Ps 103:12 An incalculable/immeasurable distance; Micah tells us that He's cast our sins into the depths of the sea, or to understand that another way, they're gone!

In Christ He remembers our sin no more. Well, the bible tells us that after they had all drank from the cup (Judas having already left) they sang a hymn & started out of the room towards the Mt of Olives where Jesus would take them to a place He commonly frequented, the Garden of Gethsemane.

As they headed on their way Jesus said to them, “*All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And so said all the disciples.*” Matt 26:31-35

It amazes me how often we think we're an exception to the Word of God. Jesus told them straight out that they would all stumble *that* night, & He showed them the scriptural support for it & fulfillment of it. & Yet they all sought to defy the Word of God, “No way, it'll never happen, we're sticking w/You until the end.”

Peter even took it a step farther, “They *all* might stumble, I’ll *never* stumble, though none go w/me still *I* will follow, no turning back, no turning back.” *Sounds* good doesn’t it, someone should write a song like that. But Jesus reiterated & reemphasized Peter’s personal predicament. He said, “The fact is Peter that before the rooster crows *you’ll* deny Me 3 times, Satan has asked for you that he might sift you like wheat, but I’ve prayed for you that your faith should not fail. & When you have returned to Me, strengthen the brethren.” Peter says again, “Even if I have to die w/You, I *will not* deny You!”

He thought he was an exception to the Word of God, had self *confidence*, but he’d find Jesus’ Word *confirmed* in his life, & so to w/us all. The bible says, “*Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’*” 1 Cor 15:33 Yet how often we think we can hang in a certain group influencing them for the good only to find ourselves ultimately lowering *our* guard & allowing compromise into our lives? There are no exceptions to the Word of God.

Let’s take it a step farther, We read in the book of Galatians, “*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Gal 5:19-21

So that if adultery, fornication, self centeredness, drunkenness, partying, things of that nature are the pattern of your life, it doesn’t matter what you call yourself or what kind of lingo you can carry in the church, you aren’t making it into the Kingdom. 1st Cor 6 has a similar list, the point being that the Word of God is sure, & there are no exceptions. Jesus said that they’d *all* stumble that night, that Peter specifically would deny Him 3x. But just like us Peter thought, “That may be true for them, but it’ll never happen w/me.”

What’s the bible say? “*...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*” 1 Cor 10:12 Now Peter tried to hold to his word, took out a sword there in the garden, & w/all kinds of zeal & zero knowledge began defending his Lord. As if Jesus needs our defense, but all he did was damage to the cause of Christ, Jesus had to mend the situation, & how often we do damage to the cause of Christ because we wield the sword w/zeal but w/out knowledge & people get hurt. & Jesus has to come along after us & mend the situation so that people won’t be deaf to the gospel message but might be given an ear to hear once again. Well, the Lord rebuked Peter, told him to put away his sword, quit flailing it wildly out of control. Reminded him of the cup of the Father that He was to drink, & that this was all apart of the divine plan. So Jesus was arrested, led away to be examined & tried & vs 15 tells us.

Vs15

It would seem obvious that the other disciple is John himself. & Tradition holds that the way he was known to the high priest is that his dad (Zebedee) was a very successful business man in the fishing trade. & Since they didn't have refrigeration the way they would transport the fish inland was through salting it, but salted fish was very expensive. It was a delicacy, the point being only wealthy people could really afford it, Annas was filthy stinking rich because of his merchandising the people of God by selling acceptable sacrifices in the temple. Rejecting what you would bring, selling at exorbitant pre-approved sacrifices and getting rich off the people who were seeking to be made right w/God.

That's why Jesus overturned the money tables & drove them out w/whips & all saying, "It's written My house shall be called a house of prayer but you've made it a den of thieves." But the point is that as a boy John would deliver the fish, tend the market & all, & that's how he came to know Annas. Now whether that's exactly true or not, I don't know, but that's the basic gist of what's said.

But what I want to draw your attention to primarily is the statement, "And Simon Peter followed Jesus" the other 3 accounts tell us that he followed, *at a distance*. Now we're seeing an application develop there no doubt, but truth be known Peter shouldn't have been anywhere around, he should've scattered voluntarily when Jesus made the officers let them go. But because of his personal fortitude & confidence in his flesh he tried to hang around, & he's already beginning to fluctuate because he's following the Lord *at a distance*.

Now I'm sure that somewhere in his mind he's thinking at this point that he's still showing himself faithful to the Lord. But you can't hope to maintain any real faithfulness to the Lord when you're following him at a distance. You're only setting yourself up for a fall, because inevitably throughout your life the heat will kick on, & kick up, & if you're not drawing near to the Lord, making your refuge in the Lord, invariably you'll get burned.

David wrote in the Ps, "*Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings, From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me.*" Ps 17:8-9 & Again, "*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until these calamities have passed by.*" Ps 57:1 & The point there is that to have shelter and security in the time of storm, you've got to be tucked up nice & tight in the Lord. If you're blown out at a distance, you're nowhere near the shelter, an easy target.

So when someone begins to follow the Lord peripherally, from a distance, unless that situation is remedied quickly, there's a stumble coming quickly. You know, "What kind of things can I do & still be a Christian? Is it ok to do this, can me & my friend go there?" & The question that they're asking is, "What's the outer edge, what's a *safe* distance to follow from?"

Let me tell you something, when it comes to your relationship w/the Lord, there's no such thing as distance from Him that's *safe*. You just stay as close to Jesus as you possibly can, & if you have to question something, it's more than likely because it's questionable, so avoid it & there's no issue. Erring to the side of caution so as not to violate your relationship w/the Lord is a wise thing.

So they take Jesus to Annas, John is able to go right in, however vs 16 tell us.

Vs16-17

Strike one, awfully bold when he was by the Lord in the garden even though he was out of line. But now he can't even make his stand before a servant girl, but these are the fingerprints of following from a distance, following from afar makes for a fall. What's happening here? Peter is *entering in* to temptation.

We're all going to be *encountered* by temptation, but it's all together different to *enter into* the temptation. Remember what we saw last week, Peter was sleeping when he should've been praying. Jesus said less than an hour or 2 ago to Peter there in the garden, "*Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Mark 14:37-38 But Peter caught a few *winks* rather than *watch*, decided to *enter sleep* rather than *intercede*.

Perhaps you can relate, Peter knew 1st hand what he was talking about when he said to be vigilant, (which means watchful) because your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Looking for those sheep who are on the outer edges following at a distance, weak, weary, lagging behind. Peter wasn't watchful that night, wasn't prayed up, or following the Lord's instructions, & now he's paying for it.

Vs18

Trouble sign #2, it's heating up around Peter, literally. & He's being drawn right into the fire where he's about to get burned, couple of quick side notes; don't forget this fire of coals because Peter will be drawn to another one here in a few days where the Lord restore him. & 2^{ndly} we see here that it was cold, but just to inform you a bit more about the stress load that Jesus was bearing in regards to being made sin & being separated from the Father you recall that in the garden He was sweating. But what's Peter doing now? He *was* following from a distance, & *now* he's seeking warmth, comfort & camaraderie in the circle of the Lord's enemies, he *was* fighting *against* them, *now* he's standing *w/*them.

Again evil company corrupts good habits, what fellowship has light w/darkness? When you're trying to buddy up w/the Lord's enemies "warming up to them" that you might stand w/them... Huge red lights, he's not seeking to witness *to* them, he's trying to slip in unnoticed w/them, sin is lying at the door, danger is on the trail, this is not a good thing. Steer clear from the warmth of the fires of the Lord's enemies, there's no need to go gather in their circles when you're hurting or confused, or feeling alone in a matter. Remember we're to find our shelter in the shadow of His wings, in the refuge of His Word, in the place of prayer, not in the gathering circles of the world.

Now there's a cut scene & John shifts us back to the "meanwhile" w/Jesus' trial, & we read in vs 19-21.

Vs19-21

So Annas is searching Him out, looking for incriminating evidence. & He asks Jesus about 2 things, His disciples & His doctrine. How many followers He had, should they expect resistance from them etc. & He asked about His doctrine, trying to find some loop hole in something Jesus would say in order to find fault w/Him.

But notice Jesus doesn't respond w/regard to His disciples, He's continuing to protect them, to be a shield about them. Concerning His doctrine He says, "Why are you asking Me?" & What's going on here is that Jesus is drawing attention to the illegal proceedings which the high priest is sanctioning. #1 It was against the law to try a capital case at night, #2 the law clearly stated that matters were to be established by the mouths of 2 or 3 witnesses. The high priest is erring on both points, further more it wasn't proper protocol to seek to get the one on trial to testify against himself. They had something similar to our 5th amendment.

So there's all kinds of wrong that's happening here. & Jesus is saying, "Why are you talking to Me about this, that's not proper protocol, where are your witnesses? Ask them, it's no secret what I've said, why conduct this hearing in a shady way?" & Believe me when I tell you that the people there knew what Jesus was getting at, that's why we read in vs 22.

Vs22-24

So Jesus challenges the integrity of the high priest & then He reprimands the officer who struck Him. & W/that they send Him to Caiaphas, the high priest of the people appointed by Rome. & It's during this time that all the physical pummeling of Jesus really begins to take place, Matt & Luke tell us that they blindfolded Him, began to spit on Him & strike Him in the face saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?" & They were mocking Him & beating Him so that we read in Isaiah "*His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;*" Isa 52:14 & this is the point when it all begins to get brutal. Now, flash back to Peter who's seeing all this.

Vs25

Strike two, his confidence is caving under the pressure, notice it's not one person asking him here, it says, "*They* said to him." Meaning that it was kinda going around the circle, they were all kinda badgering him w/it, & he's denying it to the full.

Vs26

Now it's an eyewitness account, "Didn't I see you in the garden? I was standing right by Malchus when you cut his ear off!" Notice what he did in the flesh is coming back as a snare to him, & such is always the case.

Vs27

Luke's gospel tells us that as soon as the rooster crowed Jesus looked at Peter, & their eyes locked from across the way, & Peter remembered what Jesus said & went out & wept bitterly. How many times have we felt that sting of having turned our back on the Lord when the pressure was on, & it's like the Lord looks at you, & you know you've blown it.

But the crowing of this rooster signaled a # of things. Obviously it was a *confirmation* of the Lord's Word, but it wasn't meant to be the signal of *condemnation* towards Peter, rather it was an *invitation* to repentance. & That's exactly what Peter did, Judas regretted, but never repented, but Peter repented, went on to be restored by the Lord into the ministry. When Judas left the upper room you remember that we read, "it was night." But when Peter went out to weep bitterly it was the dawning of a new day, & such is the contrast in the two, night & day. That's the difference between sorrow that's godly vs sorrow that's worldly. Paul the apostle told the Corinthians, "*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*" 2 Cor 7:10 (So that's Peter's denial, now we flashback to Jesus' trial)

Vs28

Now this is the epitome of religious hypocrisy, they couldn't care less about murdering an innocent man unjustly, but they didn't want to enter into Gentile quarters lest they defile themselves ceremonially because they want to take part in the feast of Passover.

The very embodiment of the fulfillment of Passover is the One they're seeking to murder & they can't even see it. They were so conscientious about their interpretations of the outward things of the law, yet they failed to see the One in whom the law was fulfilled & pointing them to right in front of them.

Vs29-30

Translation; "We don't really have a viable accusation, just take our word for it!" Pilate wasn't liked too much by the Jews, he really didn't care about their religious customs, it didn't bother him to insult them in violating their laws or offend them in some way. So they had sort of a mutual dislike for one another, & he's not going to give them the upper hand in a situation like that so he says, "Judge Him by your own laws then & don't bother me w/it."

Vs31-32

Because the Roman means of execution was the cross, the Jewish means was by stoning. But Jesus had spoken openly about the cross, being lifted up, taking up our cross & all of these things. When Rome conquered Israel they took away their rights of capital punishment, that was to be left up to Roman discretion. Now at this point they began to hurl various false charges according to the other gospel accounts. Telling him that Jesus forbade paying taxes to Caesar. Which was a lie, the fact is He said, “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*” Luke 20:25 & They said that He made Himself out to be a King (in reference to His claims of being Christ) which was a *total* twisting of His words. He *never* tried to be a political King, every time the crowds would seek to give Him that office He would leave the scene. But in placing Him at odds w/Caesar & accusing Him of saying He was a King in that sense of the word (as in as opposed to Caesar politically) Pilate had to interrogate Him farther.

Vs33-34

So Jesus is before Pilate, but in reality Pilate is before Jesus. & Jesus is forcing Pilate to make a decision here, “Why are you asking Me if I’m a King? Are you asking me for your sake personally, or are you just responding to hearsay peripherally?” It’s like, “Do you really want to know?” Some people ask you questions but they don’t really want to know the answers, all they want to do is argue, to the honest skeptic, Jesus would spend time w/them seek to reason w/them, but He was never into arguments for the sake of arguing. There’s no fruit in that.

Vs35-36

Jesus didn’t say that He wasn’t going to rule in this world, but that His kingdom wasn’t after the order of this world.

Vs37

I’m sure that Pilate was having his mind blown, he wasn’t tracking w/the Lord here. Jesus tells him of both His birth *into* this world, & of His existence *before* He was born into this world. He says, I was born for this reason, & this is why I’ve come from out of this world (meaning Heaven) into this world. To bear witness of the truth, the truth about God, the truth about man, the truth about sin, of our need for a redeemer, of what it means to reject Him, what it means to accept Him. & He says here that *everyone* who is of the truth, that is has a mind & a heart to honestly want to know the truth, will listen to what He says. Let that blow your mind for a while.

What He's saying in essence is that anyone, no matter who they are, where they've been or what they've done, who's truly seeking the truth in life, where we're from, why are we here, is there a God, etc. will eventually wind up at the feet of Jesus. Again there are a lot of people who only want to justify their own position but really aren't interested in the truth.

But to the one who really seeks, they'll find, if they ask, they'll receive, & if they knock it'll be opened to them & they'll come to J.C. *Everyone* who is of the truth, or it could've been translated, who is *after* the truth hears My voice. John picked up on this & shared it later as a means to discern the spirit of truth & error. He said, "*We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*" 1 John 4:6 The one who will hear the Word of God & submit their life to it's authority is desirous of the truth & seeking after truth. The one who refuses to hear God's Word, respond to & submit their lives to God's Word; spirit of error.

So both Jew & Gentile have inspected the Lamb of God, what's the verdict? No fault, He's perfect, w/out spot, & w/out blemish.

Vs38

What is truth? Was Pilate being a cynic, was his heart being probed? I don't know, but he didn't stick around for Jesus to respond, he went out and gave his no fault verdict. How sad to be standing before truth incarnate & just not see it. What *is* truth? Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" John 14:6

Vs39-40

They made a choice, "Not this Man, but Barabbas" what's your choice? Fill in the blank, what do you want to be given to you instead of Jesus. Not this Man, but a life of partying. Not this Man, but a good career, Not this Man, but internet pornography or some other form, or something else, fill in the blank.

We might talk a bit more about this next time, but for now lets just say that if anyone knew what it was to have Jesus die in their place it was Barabbas. A murderer, an insurrectionist & we read here, a thief, he was a sinner. & Jesus went to the cross in his place, just like He did for you, & just like He did for me.

If you've never given your life to Christ today you have a choice to make. Jesus shed His blood for the remission of your sin, His body was broken that you might be made whole, His life was poured *out*, that it might be poured *in* to you. & If it's your desire to be right in His sight, you really want to know the truth, then today is the day of salvation for you. So if God is dealing w/you & you know in your heart that you need to be made right, forgiven of sin, receiving salvation, then forgiveness is there for you today. Just ask Jesus to come into your heart & into your life, to fill you w/His Spirit & forgive you of your sin, & He'll change your life, & you'll be made brand new.