

Lessons From Gethsemane - Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 26:36-50

Preached on: Sunday, April 8, 2012

We return, once again, to a very solemn passage of Scripture that allows us access into the most intimate and private moments of the Savior's life as we look, again, at his agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane. So I would like to take you to Matthew chapter 26. We will look at verses 36 through 50. We began this last week. We will finish it up this week. And ultimately from the garden I will take you to the empty tomb.

Let me read the text for you this morning. Matthew chapter 26 beginning in verse 36.

Then Jesus *came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and *said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

Then He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

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? Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He *came to the disciples, and *said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him." And immediately he went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

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And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.¹

Here we see even more vividly the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as his deity. Here we see even more vividly the things that he suffered on our behalf. But also here we see Jesus modeling for us how to defeat Satan in times of temptation and how to find strength and joy in the midst of great sorrow of suffering, lessons that are even more pronounced when contrasted with the character and the conduct of the disciples.

I wish to draw your attention to three very important concepts. By way of review, last week we learned how Jesus taught us about, number one, the privilege of prayer. He said in verse 36:

“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”²

Prayer was the habit of Jesus’ life. And now in the garden as he anticipates the absolute horrors that await him, we read in verse 39 that he falls on his face and he prays saying:

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”³

My friends, it is not the pain of the cross that he fears. It is rather the bitter cup of divine wrath that he must drink to make atonement for our sins, a cup that will temporarily separate him from his father. So he is saying, “Father, if there is any other way to accomplish this great work, please let this cup pass from me.”

I might add that this is to be expected from our holy Savior. Jesus hated sin more than all else for it is sin that separates man from God. And as we all know it is sin that separates man from man, husband from wife, children from parents, parents from children. So to ask the Father that it might happen in another way, that somehow, Father, if you can appease your wrath through some other way is certainly another proof of the holiness of our Lord and Savior.

Bear in mind, my friends, that holiness is the all encompassing attribute of God. It is that attribute that really portrays his consummate perfection and eternal glory. In fact, it stands alone as the defining characteristic of his person. It is the summation of all of his attributes. But now our Redeemer anticipates bearing the curse of the law in our stead and the Father who cannot look upon sin must now turn his back upon the one who must be made to bear it.

¹ Matthew 26:36-50.

² Matthew 26:36.

³ Matthew 26:39.

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While the love of the Father for the Son never waned, we must understand that the expiation of sin required that sweet communion to be withdrawn temporarily. And this is what Jesus dreaded more than all else. The substitute for the guilty must now drink the cup of divine wrath to the very dregs. There on that tree the one who came to give his life a ransom for many must not only bear our sin, but think about it. He who knew no sin must become sin on our behalf as Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

In fact, in Galatians 3:13 we read that he became a curse for us. This is what Jesus dreaded. And to make matters worse, Satan and his minions are surrounding him now. They are tempting him in ways that we could never imagine. Certainly one of those ways would be to tempt him to abandon this plan. Don't taint your holiness with sin. Give up on this whole plan.

Of course, that is just a ruse. Satan doesn't want Jesus going to the cross because if Jesus goes to the cross he knows that Jesus will defeat sin and death and even Satan himself forever.

You will recall that in Matthew 16 Peter rebuked Jesus forbidding him from going to the cross. And what did Jesus say to him?

“Get behind Me, Satan!”⁴

So this is Satan's ploy all along.

So as we come to this amazing event, we see Jesus enduring Satan's diabolical temptations and also anticipating the immense pain of broken fellowship with the Father, a pain so great that he would soon lament on the cross:

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”⁵

So what does Jesus do in the midst of such anguish of soul? He does what we all should do. He falls on his face. He has already said that he is grieved to the point of death and his sweat has become like drops of blood falling down from the ground. His very life is at stake. In fact, the physical trauma of what is happening to him is so intense that the Father sends an angel down to minister to him, to help sustain him and keep him alive.

Think about this. He sends an angel to minister to the one who is above the angels, to the one whom the angels have worshipped, to the one who now has been made for a little while a little lower than the angels. And so Jesus cries out:

⁴ Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33.

⁵ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

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“Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done.”⁶

So, again, here we see Jesus finding comfort and strength in the only place that it could be found, in communion with his Father. My friends, this is the privilege that we all have of prayer, a privilege that I fear we all too often take for granted because, after all, we see ourselves as so spiritual, we really don't need that much help.

Earlier Jesus warned the disciples in verse 31 that they would fall away and be scattered. In verse 35 Peter said to him,

“‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.’ All the disciples said the same thing too.”⁷

And, again, like the disciples we are often smug with our spiritual overconfidence. Very seldom are we suspect of our spirituality, but we convince ourselves that we are far more spiritual than truly we are. And therefore we don't see the need to live in the presence of God in prayer and to feed upon his Word so that somehow we can have victory or triumph over temptation.

But Jesus warned the disciples in verse 41.

“Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”⁸

In other words he is saying, “Recognize the reality of your human limitations. You are not nearly as spiritually strong as you think you are and therefore cry out for divine assistance.”

Dear Christian, Satan knows our weaknesses so very well. And his fiendish forces are both brilliant as well as determined in luring us away from God's will for us. And unless we literally live in the presence of our Lord through prayer and through meditating upon his Word seeking his help so that we can know what his will is, that we will have the power to live it out, unless we do this, we will inevitably take Satan's bait. And once hooked, he will lead us to places we do not want to go.

And tragically more often than not, we will not even know we have been caught until it is too late, until great damage has been done to our life and to our testimony.

⁶ Luke 22:42.

⁷ Matthew 26:35.

⁸ Matthew 26:41.

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So instead of watching and praying, what do the frightened disciples do? Well, they collapse in defeat. They succumb to sleep. What a perfect illustration of what we all tend to do.

So the first lesson that Jesus teaches us is the profound importance of praying habitually and fervently, being vigilant in prayer. And, secondly, he taught us the lesson of the priority of submission. Again, by way of review in verse 39 he said:

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”⁹

Here we witness Jesus appealing to his Father’s omnipotence. He knows full well that his Father has the power to accomplish his purposes in another way. But Jesus also knows that not all things that are possible are part of the Father’s will. Above all else he wants to fully and joyfully comply with his Father’s will and not allow his own desires to take precedence.

So here we see that it is prayer that strengthens him to be submissive to the Father’s will. And as we proceed we are going to see that it is the combination of prayer and submission that unleashes supernatural power and joy in the life of the Christian.

Now join with me as we go back to this stunning scene. It is amazing. Jesus’ enemies are awake and his friends are asleep. Let’s pick up the narrative here this morning in verse 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? Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.¹⁰

My friends, their eyes were heavy from tears of sadness, from overwhelming fear and confusion. And what do they do? They fall asleep. In fact, Luke tells us in chapter 22 verse 45 that they were, quote, sleeping from sorrow.

I think we would all agree that sleep very often is the great anesthetic, especially when we are depressed, when we are afraid. It is certainly the great anesthetizer of those who

⁹ Matthew 26:39.

¹⁰ Matthew 26:40-43.

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are weak in the flesh, who are undisciplined in the habit of watchful, fervent prayer. I have worked with literally hundreds of people that are very depressed and I have yet to find one of them that has this habit.

Verse 44.

“And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He *came to the disciples, and *said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?’”¹¹

Obviously he is disappointed in them. They just don't see it. They are so overwhelmed. One of the symptoms of those who struggle with depression is that they try to escape life by sleeping all the time, but, of course, in our culture we have a myriad of things down at Walgreen's that will help accomplish that task. In fact, painkillers now are one of the most abused of all drugs because it helps people escape.

How different than King David, the man after God's own heart who said in Psalm 119:146 and following:

I cried to Thee; save me, And I shall keep Thy testimonies.

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Thy word.¹²

Well, obviously the disciples knew nothing of this. This was not their habit. So finally the third time Jesus returns from his place of seclusion and he finds Peter and James and John asleep after having awakened them two times before. No doubt the other eight disciples that had been stationed closer to the entry were asleep as well.

Think about it. Think of all of the reasons they should have stayed awake. No doubt they knew that Jesus was about to be arrested, maybe them as well. Jesus had already told them that they were going to fall away because of him that very night, that they were going to be scattered in verse 31. They knew that Jesus was so grieved himself and so distressed that he was on the verge of death. He had told them that. And they obviously heard him crying out to the Father in a loud voice and tears since he was only a stone's throw away.

Moreover, can you imagine what it must have been like when he first came to them and awakened them and they looked up and they saw his skin and his clothes soaked with crimson? What a terrifying sight. You would think that you could never go back to sleep

¹¹ Matthew 26:44-45.

¹² Psalm 119:146-148.

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after that. Yet with all this, what do they do? They don't know what to do. They are not running to the Lord. They are running, once again, to the flesh and all they know to do is cry themselves to sleep with sorrow. What a picture of the lack of faith, the lack of discernment, the lack of strength, even a lack of sacrificial love for the Savior who needed their prayers, who needed them to watch with him. They had no power to endure. Just sniveling, whining, wimpy little men, proud, but powerless.

Can't we all identify with that? Yet they had walked with the incarnate Christ. It is amazing. They had been disciples by the Lord of glory and now in the hour of his greatest peril they are so spiritually weak they cry themselves to sleep.

We might ask: What is the Holy Spirit trying to communicate here to us? I believe what God wants us to see is a dramatic illustration of the consequences of spiritual overconfidence and disobedience. My friends, this is what happens when we ignore the Lord's warnings to keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. This is what happens. We become weak and cowardly, little men, little women asleep in the middle of a raging battle, controlled by the flesh, not by the spirit.

My what a picture of the church today. Oh, child of God, don't miss this. Don't you see yourself here? You may be theologically brilliant. You may be morally pure. You may be the greatest servant in all of the church, but hear me. Who you are in secret before almighty God is what determines your character. That and that alone. Who you are on your knees before him defines who you really are.

If you are a prayerless saint, your religious externals are nothing more than paint on rotten wood being eaten by termites. You may fool everyone around you, but you don't fool the omniscient God that you claim to serve.

Didn't Jesus teach us how to pray saying:

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil?”¹³

James 5:16:

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”¹⁴

My friends, it was for this reason the wicked monarch Mary, Queen of Scots, once said of the imprecatory prayers of the great Scottish reformer John Knox, quote, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe,” end quote.

¹³ Matthew 6:13.

¹⁴ James 5:16.

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So this is why the Holy Spirit underscores the sorrowful sleep of the disciples despite all of the terrifying motivations to keep watching and praying. I believe also he wants to underscore the need for the indwelling Holy Spirit who would continually pray on their behalf and on our behalf as Romans 8:26 through 27 tells us, a benefit they had not yet received.

And we might also ask: Why did Jesus have three seasons of prayer? Well, certainly part of it would be to plead three times of the cup to pass, but also to express three times that he wanted to do the will of the Father more than his own will. But also there must have been three specific waves of satanic temptation, satanic attack that came his way even as there were three waves of attack in his wilderness temptation.

But I believe there is one more reason. The Lord Jesus in his humanity knew where the power source was. It was in communion with his Father. That is the only way he would be able to do the will of the Father which he had come to do.

This so dramatically displays what God wants of each of us that we see this contrasted so vividly by the sleeping disciples. And this leads us to my third point that I want you to see, the third lesson that we learn from Jesus in the garden and that has to do with the power of obedience.

Now, my friends, here is where it really gets exciting. Notice again in verse 45.

“Then He *came to the disciples, and *said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.’”¹⁵

Let’s run for our lives. It doesn’t say that, does it? It doesn’t say that. Instead, verse 46 he says, “Arise,” literally, “Get up off the ground. Let’s be going,” he says. In other words, let’s move forward to meet the enemy. Beyond, the one who betrays me is at hand.

Isn’t this glorious. There is no retreat here. There is no more tears, just a resolute determination to meet the enemy knowing full well that even though the battle was just beginning, the victory had already been won, empowered by the Spirit.

Dear friends, join me for a moment. Look upon the Savior in your mind’s eye. Though soaked in crimson and swept, he sets his face towards the cross and he prepares himself to be arrested by sinners and deserted by saints. This its he divine power that comes, my friends, from fervent prayer and perfect submission to the will of the Father.

¹⁵ Matthew 26:45.

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And what a blessed truth to know that God will never ask us to do what he will not empower us to accomplish, to know that he will never give us more than we can bear. So Jesus here has triumphed over temptation and yet the disciples are operating still in the weakness of their own flesh while at the same time Jesus is operating in the power of the Spirit.

I would ask you on which basis do you operate, the power of the flesh or of the Spirit? So Jesus is now ready to face the enemy and notice this fascinating narrative beginning in verse 46.

"Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people.¹⁶

My friends, this means that in verse 45 when Jesus confronted the disciples the third time and said, "Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners,"¹⁷ this massive mob was already upon them. Can you imagine that?

Well, let's look at this more closely. Verse 47 we see that Judas is accompanied by a great multitude. Now, well, what would this be? Who were all these people? In order to understand this we have to piece together passages from the other four gospels. I should say from all four gospels. For example, in Luke 22 verse 52 Jesus speaks we see to the chief priest and officers of the temple and elders who had come against him. So we have some people here who were the chief priests. Well, they were the Sadducees. I like to think of them as the temple mafia that operated all of the temple enterprises to make a profit. And then he mentions the officers of the temple. Well, that would have been the temple police that provided security for the Sadducees. This would have been a very large force necessary to keep order especially in light of the fact that there were literally tens of thousands of people that would come in the morning and even at night for the sacrifices. So this would have been a large force. We don't really know how many. Luke also speaks of the elders. That would have been the Sanhedrin. There were 70 of them and they were basically the judges of Israel, leaders of Israel, somewhat like our Supreme Court. And if we go to Mark's gospel in Mark 14:43 we see that the scribes were also in the group. Moreover, in John 18 we read that all of the Pharisees are there, too. I mean, you have got the whole shooting match there, ok? Furthermore, John tells us in chapter

¹⁶ Matthew 26:46-47.

¹⁷ Matthew 26:45.

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18 that they were accompanied by a Roman cohort, that is, one tenth of a legion. A legion is 6000 men, therefore, a cohort would have been 600 men.

So obviously this was a well organized arrest in the middle of the night. The Jew and their temple police had no jurisdiction outside the temple and they could not execute anyone so Pilate had to have been involved with all of this to give his soldiers permission and, of course, the Jews had trumped up charges against Jesus that he was a traitor to Caesar. After all, he said he was King of the Jews and so he was an insurrectionist and he was threatening Caesar and all you have to do is look at the triumphal entry when all the people were hailing him as King of the Jews and you can see that this guy is bad news.

So all totaled there would have been around 1000 men in this mob, most of them armed to the teeth.

Now you might ask why? It is just a band of 11 guys. Well, part of it was because they knew the people. They knew the people loved Jesus even though it was in the middle of the night. They might not want to take any chances here. But I think even more importantly they knew that Jesus had miracle powers. So they had to be prepared.

What a great example of man's foolish pride to assume that he could somehow do battle against God and prevail.

And in John 18 verse three we read that they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. And in Matthew 26:47 we see that Judas was accompanied here by a great multitude with swords and clubs. The swords, the μαχαίρα (makh'-ahee-rah) were the short swords that the Roman soldiers used. They were designed to inflict deadly injury to an opponent's neck and to a person's heart. And the clubs, the ξύλον (xoo'-lon) that they used would be tantamount to ... it is actually a wooden stick. It would be like our Billy club or what we might call a nightstick. This is what the temple police would have had. Can you imagine the fear that must have gripped the hearts of the disciples when Jesus said in verse 46:

“Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand?”¹⁸

And they look up and they see all of these torches and lanterns and this mob of 1000 people at least upon them.

You might ask, well, were the disciples armed? Yes, they were. In Luke 22:38 they said:

“Lord, look, here are two swords.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Matthew 26:46.

¹⁹ Luke 22:38.

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They had two swords. Sounds like a fair fight to me as long as Jesus is on my side.

Now, they wouldn't have used these for offensive or even defensive weapons, necessarily. Swords would be used for other things to live a life in that day and age. But, you know, the whole scene just transcends reason, doesn't it? It is just staggering. Here you have the innocent, humble, unarmed Son of God, the Son of Man along with a bunch of unarmed fishermen and a former tax collector against this massive mob of armed villains. And what is the goal? We have to arrest this Jesus of Nazareth. After all, he has wiped out virtually all of the disease in Palestine. He has caused the blind to see. He has caused the deaf to hear. He has caused the lame to walk. He has cast out demons. He has even raised the dead. We have got to get this guy. The Lamb of God who came to seek and to save the lost, who came to give his life a ransom for all who trust in him, he must be arrested.

This has Satan's fingerprints all over it, doesn't it?

And fully empowered by the Holy Spirit our precious Savior, soaked with crimson sweat steps forward knowing full well all that is about to happen.

If you like, keep your finger there in Matthew and turn to John 18 and we will pick up what else was going on there. In John 18 beginning in verse four we read:

Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and *said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He *said to them, "I am He." And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, "I am He," they drew back, and fell to the ground.²⁰

Here, dear friends, the Lord Jesus uttered the name of God which mirrors God's self disclosure, you will recall, to Moses in Exodus 3:14 when God said to Moses:

"I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"²¹

But will you notice the impact of his self disclosure as almighty God? They drew back and fell to the ground. This is just absolutely stunning. My friends, here we see the glorious effulgence of the majesty of Christ forcing sinful man to the ground in utter

²⁰ John 18:4-6.

²¹ Exodus 3:14.

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obedience to his deity. What a foretaste of that day that will come upon us eventually when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And there he stands, covered in crimson sweat, the Lamb of God ready to be slaughtered in our stead.

Dear friends, don't miss this. Here we see the infinite power of deity over his enemies which, frankly, even further underscores the fact that he voluntarily surrendered himself to them on our behalf.

Now, join me again in the garden. Imagine the scene in your mind. Can you smell the torches? Can you see them? Can you see the smoke coming up from the torches? Can you see the lights of the lantern? Can you see Judas standing in the front? Can you see his eyes? Look at the eyes of the soldiers, the Sanhedrin and all of leaders? The whole scene is tense. Look at the disciples cowering behind the Lord. And then look at the flaming eyes of the omniscient Savior peering without fear into the eyes of his enemies, especially Satan himself who had fully possessed Judas.

And Jesus said, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." And he says, "I am he," and instantly 1000 men draw back and fall to the ground. Literally the text helps us understand that this entire contingency is forced backward and forced to the ground when Jesus said, "I am the self-existent eternal I am."

My friends, can you hear them fall? Listen. You can hear them. You can hear them fall on top of each other. You can hear the swords clanging on the ground. You can hear the collective gasps of 1000 men. Can you see the torches and the lanterns singing some of the people on the ground? Can you see those torches now dislodged from the trembling hands? Can you see it? Can you hear it? Can you smell it?

Now I ask you. What would any person do in such a situation? Having just been forced backwards against your power and thrown to the ground, miraculously overpowered by the name of this bloody looking man who calls himself the Son of God, this Jesus of Nazareth. What would you do? Well, you would think that any reasonable person would never come back to his feet, but rather he would roll over and he would fall on his face and he would worship him and he would beg him to forgive them that he would plead for mercy and undeserved grace and repent and believe in him and serve him as Lord. But, no. My friends, you must understand the spiritually dead have no capacity to exercise their wills to repent. God must initiate salvation and give men eyes to see. So instead of being consumed with contrition and pleading for undeserved mercy they just get up off the ground and dust themselves off, get themselves together and proceed with the plan. After all, they serve their father the devil and Satan now is fully in charge.

This scene reminds me of the homosexuals of Sodom. You remember that story in Genesis 19? They were so ruled by their lusts that even after the two angels had blinded

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them to prevent them from entering into Lot's house they text says that they still wearied themselves trying to find the doorway. Inconceivable. The power of sin.

My friend, unless God quickens a man's heart by his regenerating grace he will never bow the knee to Christ. So the vile mob gets back on their feet. Therefore, again, he again asks them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." I am sure he wanted to have them repeat their orders which he knew would not include arresting his disciples and therefore protecting them so they could go free.

Verse eight.

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way," that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one."²²

Now, obviously Peter, by this time, is emboldened by what he has just witnessed. He is also emboldened by all the miracles he has seen Jesus do. And, by the way, at this time Matthew indicates that they laid hands on Jesus and they seized him. Well, Peter wasn't going to have any of this, not after all that just happened. So in verse 10 of John's gospel we read that:

"Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus."²³

Obviously he was going for his throat, going for his head and the slave ducked and he hit the ear. It is also amazing to me that in Luke 22:51 Jesus said:

"Stop! No more of this."²⁴

And he reaches down and he touched the ear of Malchus and he healed him.

Boy, you would think after all of that everybody would be falling on their face in repentance. But not at all.

Verse 11.

"So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?'"²⁵

²² John 18:8-9.

²³ John 18:10.

²⁴ Luke 22:51.

²⁵ John 18:11.

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So once again Jesus is not going to allow Peter or anyone else that Satan might inspire to prevent him from doing what he came to do. What an amazing picture. Peter is still operating in the flesh, isn't he?

"I can take care of this, God. Give me a sword."

Operating in his own power as if Jesus needed him to protect him.

In Matthew 26 verse 53 you can turn back to Matthew now. Jesus said:

"Or 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?"²⁶

Friends, that is 72,000 angels. Remember in 2 Kings 19 how many angels did it take to kill 185,000 Assyrians? One. Can you imagine the power of 72,000? Jesus doesn't need Peter's help. He needs the help of his Father, the Spirit.

Back to Matthew 26 verse 48.

Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him." And immediately he went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.²⁷

Mark's gospel tells us in chapter 14 verse 45 that he kept kissing him. I mean, this is sickening. This is way beyond some peck on the cheek. The Greek term that issued for kiss here describes a fervent affectionate kiss with a full embrace. This was a sustained embrace where Judas presses Jesus against him and continues to kiss him repeatedly.

My friends, this is the fiendish wickedness of Satan who loves to appear as an angel of light. This is the picture also of what happens to a man who is self deceived who pretends to love Christ, but is only following him for what he can get out of it. He wants to cash in on Christ, story of 1000 false preachers in our day today. But ultimately he is serving his father the devil.

Yet will not you notice that Jesus endures the shame? Beloved, this is the power that he has prayed for. Verse 50:

"And Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him."²⁸

²⁶ Matthew 26:53.

²⁷ Matthew 26:48-49.

²⁸ Matthew 26:50.

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By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 26:36-50

Preached on: Sunday, April 8, 2012

John tells us in John 18:12:

“So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him.”²⁹

What inconceivable restraint of our Lord Jesus, what infinite power over temptation. What perfect submission to do the Father’s will and what a picture of how the world continues to treat Jesus with contempt, with disdain, unfairly, despite all that we know about him, all that he has done, all that he promises to do people still go along with the mindless masses and either treat him as if he doesn’t exist or treat him with disdain.

I ask you. How do you treat Jesus? What have you done with him?

Well, you may recall the rest of the story. It is one of the most appalling and yet one of the most blessed in all of history. They deliver the hated Messiah to the chambers of the Sanhedrin for a mock trial with the verdict of guilty really pronounced before it even began. What follows was a series of six hearings and trials. Three were Jewish. Three were Roman. Every conceivable canon of jurisprudence so cherished by the Jewish people was violated to accomplish their satanically inspired purposes. Eventually Jesus is sentenced to be executed.

From about six to 9 AM that morning on Friday morning Jesus was tortured by scourging. And while preparations were being made for his crucifixion, with his flesh ripped open by the whips, the Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns on his head and a purple robe upon him and mocked him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews.”

Around 9 AM Jesus was on his way to Golgotha, the place of the crucifixion. And though he was compelled to carry his own cross, he was so weakened by what had happened to him, by his sufferings that he had already endured that another had to be summoned to help him carry the cross. Peter now has already denied Jesus three times as predicted. And all the disciples had forsaken him and fled in fear. Yet many followed Jesus to Golgotha. Luke 23:27 says that a great company of people and of women bewailed and lamented him. Yet Jesus turned and warned them, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

During the first three hours on the cross, from about 9 AM to noon Jesus spoke three times. He spoke, first, a word of compassion for his enemies saying:

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”³⁰

²⁹ John 18:12.

³⁰ Luke 23:34.

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And secondly, he had a word of compassion for the repentant thief saying:

“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”³¹

And he also had a word of compassion for his mother.

“Woman, behold, your son!”³²

And then also to John:

“Behold your mother.”³³

And it was during this time that the Roman soldiers cast lots for his garments and the onlookers railed upon him and mocked him, spit at him. Then from noon to about 3 PM darkness covered the earth and Jesus spoke four more times. The first time was a cry of horror when he was made to drink the bitter cup. He said:

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”³⁴

And then, secondly, there was a cry of torment when he said:

“I thirst.”³⁵

And then, thirdly, a cry of victory when he said:

“It is finished.”³⁶

And then finally a cry of commitment when he said:

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”³⁷

And with that John said that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Friday before sundown the Romans came to break the legs of the victims to hasten death, but they discovered that Jesus was already dead so they pierced him in the side with a

³¹ Luke 23:43.

³² John 19:26.

³³ John 19:27.

³⁴ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

³⁵ John 19:28.

³⁶ John 19:30.

³⁷ Luke 23:46.

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sword to make sure. And then two courageous sanhderinists stepped forward, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea and they identified with Jesus and came to take his body for burial. They placed him in a tomb.

The next day on Saturday the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate to demand that that tomb be sealed. They said:

“...lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.”³⁸

Pilate complied. But some time before sunrise on Sunday morning the day that we celebrate today the man of sorrows acquainted with grief that died in our stead rose from the dead victorious over the grave. Having conquered Satan and sin and death on our behalf, a certain proof that his sacrifice was acceptable to the Father. And when the women came to the tomb that morning an angel appeared to them and the guards, we read, were so shaken by fear that they were like dead men. I guess so. And he said to the women some of the most precious words in all of Scripture in Matthew 28 verse five:

“Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.”³⁹

Dear sinner, I ask you. What have you done with Jesus? What will you do with Jesus? Will you treat him with contempt? Or will you worship him? And, dear Christian, what will you do with the lessons that Jesus has taught us? Will you get serious about the weakness of your own flesh, get serious about taking advantage of the privilege of prayer and submitting yourself wholly to all that the Lord has commanded us that you might enjoy power and joy even in temptation and sorrow? Or will you continue to operate in the flesh rather than in the Spirit and find yourselves defeated as the disciples?

Oh, how God longs for us to enjoy the power of obedience, amen? Well, may each one of us who know and love Christ rejoice in his saving graces today and live in the power of his resurrection that was so perfectly summarized by the hymnist he said:

Man of sorrows, what a name,
For the Son of God who came.
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Father, we thank you for these glorious truths and all that they represent. We thank you for saving us by your grace. May we live in such a way as to refract the glory of your

³⁸ Matthew 27:64.

³⁹ Matthew 28:5-6.

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name in this dark world that many will see the transforming power of the gospel and bow their knee to the living Christ. We ask all of these things in his precious name to the praise of his glory. Amen.

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