

(Matthew) ch.26:33-27:31

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of brokenness, fellowship with God, and obedience to God's word, as exemplified by Jesus' life and teachings.

Duration: 59:15

Topics: "Temptation", "Spiritual Purity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of watching and praying to avoid falling into temptation. He highlights Jesus' example of purity and warns against the dangers of betrayal. The speaker discusses the incident in the garden of Gethsemane, where Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and Peter reacts by cutting off the ear of a slave. He emphasizes the need for believers to cleanse themselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit in order to respond to evil with a divine attitude, just as Jesus did.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Matthew 26 and verse 33. Jesus had just spoken to his disciples of how he was going to the cross and how they would all desert him in that moment of his being captured according to the prophecy in Zechariah chapter 13 verse 7 with Jesus quoted here in Matthew 26 31 and on hearing this Peter quickly replied to Jesus and said to him even though all may fall away because of you I will never fall away. Here was Peter comparing himself with the other disciples and saying I'm not like them.

It's the language of the Pharisee who looked at the tax collector praying in the temple. We read off in Luke 18 verse 8 onwards. I thank you father that I'm not like other men.

Adulterers, thieves are like this tax collector. That's the spirit that we see here. Well Lord even if these other ten forsake you I will not.

I'm better than them and it was that spirit which Jesus wanted to break because he knew that Peter would be useless until he was broken. Jesus said to him truly I say to you verse 34 this very night before a cock crows you shall deny me three times not just once and it's not going to take long within the next twelve hours you're going to deny me three times and that'll break you Peter. God allows us to be broken in the areas in which we are most boastful in the areas in which we think we are strong.

It's our strong points that God seeks to break otherwise we'll never be useful in his service. Judas Iscariot was an unbroken person. Peter denied the Lord as we know later on but he wept he was broken at the

end of it and that's why he became the mighty apostle that he became.

He could have also gone the way of Judas Iscariot. It's brokenness that makes the difference and God wants to break the strong points in your life so that as a broken man you might be able to serve him effectively and we read here it wasn't only Peter who said even if I die with you I will not deny you. We read in verse 35 Peter said to him even if I must die with you I will not deny you.

He said Lord you don't know what you're talking about. You think I'm gonna deny you three times I'm not going to and it says in the last part of verse 35 all the disciples said the same thing too. All 11 said to Jesus even if I must die with you I will not deny you but it was Peter alone who finally denied.

It was Peter alone who needed that brokenness more than the others because Peter said something more than the others. They all said we will not deny you even if we have to die but Peter said something more. He said Lord even if these other people fall away I will not.

He wasn't just making a statement of devotion. He was comparing himself with others and that was where he was in a more serious spiritual condition than the others. Even if all men deny you I will not and so he needed to be broken more than the others and then Jesus came with them verse 36 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.

This person who he knew was going to deny him three times within the next 12 hours. He says come and pray with me. He saw Peter's heart.

His heart was right. His heart was good. He was unaware of his own limitations.

He wasn't a Pharisee in the sense that Pharisee was like the one who prayed in the temple like I just mentioned. He spoke that language but deep down there was a heart that wanted the truth. A heart that wanted to be freed from that Phariseeism and he was freed later on and God saw that difference.

Jesus saw that difference. He calls Peter and he called James and John and these were the three closest to him with whom he could have the closest fellowship among the eleven. Jesus can have closer fellowship with some of his disciples than with others and he said to them he began to be grieved and distressed.

He said to them my soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. There was an honesty about Jesus. He was a human being at that time.

It was God manifest in the flesh and the weaknesses and limitations of our flesh were there very much so that he was distressed and grieved. God is never grieved or distressed but because Jesus had taken upon himself the limitations of man in his flesh he was grieved and distressed, grieved to the point of death and he was honest about it so that his disciples would know that he had come in their flesh and that he had overcome in their flesh too. Remain here and keep watch with me, he said.

Pray with me. We see something beautiful there. Even Jesus needed fellowship in prayer.

Sometimes we are too proud to acknowledge our need to others. Jesus said pray with me and he went a little beyond them and fell on his face and prayed. They couldn't go where he went.

He was praying concerning things which were far too deep for them to understand but he wanted them to be there and stand with him in prayer behind. He went a little beyond them because now he was preparing

to bear the sins of the world. He said my father if it is possible let this cup pass for me yet not as I will but as thou wilt.

What was that cup? That cup could mean only one thing. It cannot refer to the physical suffering of the cross or physical death because Jesus was not afraid of that. There are disciples of Jesus who have gone singing to the stake and singing when they were thrown to the lions in the Roman arenas in the first century and second century.

They were not afraid of death. Jesus was certainly not afraid of physical death. There was only one thing that Jesus feared and longed to avoid and that was that break of fellowship with his father which he knew would come if he bore the sins of the world.

He knew it all along but as he approached that moment it was so terrible for him to contemplate that he who had such wonderful fellowship with the father for all eternity would have to lose that fellowship for three hours on the cross when he suffered hell and bore the sins of the world and the father would forsake him on the cross. We don't understand what suffering that is because we don't appreciate fellowship with God as much as Jesus did. Very often a person can have a grudge against another brother.

His fellowship with God is broken but it doesn't seem to bother him for days and months and sometimes years. Well obviously such people can't understand the suffering that Jesus was going through here. A person can have a dirty thought and it doesn't disturb him.

Fellowship with his father is broken and it doesn't disturb him. It can go on a whole day like that. Well such people can never understand the depth of suffering Jesus went through here.

He had had fellowship with the father from all eternity and he knew that that was the most glorious thing in the whole universe. There was nothing to equal it. Absolutely nothing created could equal the glory of fellowship with his father and now he was going to lose it.

Jesus shrank from that break of fellowship with the father. What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means to appreciate and value fellowship with the father in the same way so that we shrink from anything that breaks it. Shrink from sin or a break of fellowship with another brother or a grudge or an unforgiving attitude which breaks fellowship with the father.

This is to follow Jesus. And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He'd been praying for one hour concerning this one thing.

Lord father don't let my fellowship with you be broken. Is there some other way out of it? And he found them sleeping and he said you couldn't keep watch with me for one hour. Keep watching and praying he said that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. His flesh was weak too. That's why he needed to pray.

He had come in our flesh and he needed strength that would come only through prayer and he told them you've got the same flesh and you can have strength only if you pray. You can be willing. The spirit is willing.

You can say oh I'll never deny you but unless you pray and get strength you will deny me. And they slept but he didn't sleep. He went away a second time and prayed saying my father if this cannot pass away

unless I drink it I will be done.

He prayed a second time. He came back and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. He left them again and went away and prayed a third time saying the same thing once more.

This teaches us that there's nothing wrong in praying for the same thing with the same words three times or thirty times. If it comes from our heart, if it's not a meaningless repetition, if it's not mere words spoken without faith or without burden. He prayed three times.

The burden was so great and it was a long prayer meeting. The first time itself it was one hour and then he came to the disciples and said to them are you still sleeping? Take 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. The one who betrays me is at hand. He had warned them.

Be careful. Watch and pray. Temptation is going to come.

But they didn't take it seriously. Keep watching and praying he said in verse forty one that you may not enter into temptation, that you may not fall when temptation comes, but that you can be strong. He prayed and he became strong.

He prayed and he was willing to give up that most precious thing of fellowship with the Father in order to find a way by which he could save us and bring us into fellowship with the Father. Let's turn today to Matthew 26 and verse 47. This is in the garden of Gethsemane just after Jesus had finished his time of prayer and while he was still speaking to his disciples Peter James and John who were sleeping, waking them up, 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 came to Jesus and said, Hail Rabbi, and kissed him.

It's very interesting to note that these Roman soldiers needed somebody to identify Jesus at night. He was not easily identifiable. Of course in the daytime it would be different.

They could recognize Jesus' face, but they did not want to capture him during the daytime because the people would raise an uproar. They wanted to capture him at night, but he was not easily identifiable at night because he was just like other men. All these pictures of Jesus with a halo around his head are a deception.

If he had a halo around his head, those chief priests wouldn't have needed Judas Iscariot to identify him. Jesus became a man just like the rest of us, so completely identified with us that he was unrecognizable from other men in the darkness. His identification was so thorough and complete.

The purity he had was not seen in any halo around his head or in any glow in his body, but in his heart that was totally clean and good and pure. And that is where the real glory lay in him, and that is where the real glory lies even in his disciples today, those who follow him. And so Judas comes to Jesus and betrays him with a kiss.

And Jesus, his immediate reaction to this one who is betraying him, this one to whom he had been so good for three and a half years, this one whom he had not exposed for three and a half years, this one

concerning whom he had not backbitten to the other eleven in three and a half years, this one to whom he had been so faithful, this one who had cheated him of his money for so many years and concerning which he had never complained, this one to whom Jesus had been so good. And when he comes to betray Jesus, what is Jesus' spontaneous reaction? It is friend. And there we see the tremendous depth of love that there was in Jesus, even for Judas Iscariot.

Friend, do what you have come for. Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. The love of God is different from human love in this sense, that human love needs a response to continue loving.

Human love loves those who love in return. Human love wanes and disappears when it is confronted with evil and hatred in return. But God's love is unchanging.

It is not affected by the response. It does not matter how people behave towards God, God still continues to love them. And we cannot understand the depths of God's love until we see how He loves His enemies.

It was when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden and man became an enemy of God that we could see the greatest manifestation of God's love in that He sent His Son to die for us on the cross. While we were enemies, God reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son. That is divine love.

Anything less than this is human love. And very often when Christians speak about love, they are only referring to human love. When they say they love one another, what they mean is we love those who love us in return.

That's human. That's found even in human clubs, non-religious clubs. But divine love is seen here, that it can love when there is no love returned.

Not only that, it can love when hatred is returned for its love. And we can say that we see the greatness and the depth of Jesus' love in His attitude towards Judas Iscariot at this time, in His attitude to an enemy who was betraying Him after all the good that He had done to him. He calls him friend.

Jesus' attitude is still, You're my friend. You're welcome to come back, even though you betrayed me. The pity is that Judas didn't come back to Him.

And there's a lesson that we can learn, for we shall also face similar experiences on earth, people betraying us, denying us, returning our good with evil, being ungrateful for all the good that we've done to them and for them. And people can be evil to us without any cause at all. And having a flesh with lusts that seek for revenge, we all know what it feels like within, when people treat us like that.

And there we need to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and spirit if we want to perfect holiness in the fear of God and follow Jesus, so that in a moment of trial and temptation, when someone like that confronts us, our whole being will rise up with this attitude that Jesus had to call Him friend. And then we read further. One of those who were with Jesus, and we know that was Peter, reached and drew out his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Jesus had warned Peter to watch and pray, verse 41, otherwise he would fall in temptation. And now that temptation came and Peter fell. Instead of reacting in a divine way, he reacted in a human way.

That is to fall in temptation, that when you're tempted, you react like a child of Adam and not a child of God, then you have fallen. The children of Adam will hit back when they're hit, and that's exactly what

Peter did. He took out his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

But Jesus, with the same flesh that Peter had, had watched and prayed. And He said to Peter, Put your sword back into its place, for all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 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? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen this way? Jesus was saying, I don't need you to defend me.

There are seventy-two thousand angels in heaven whom the Father has put, that will put at my disposal. If I just ask Him, if I even now say, Father, save me from this, from these people, He will send seventy-two thousand angels to defend me and they'll wipe out these Roman soldiers. It's not because I'm not able to defend myself.

It's because I don't want to defend myself, Jesus said. I want to fulfill the Scriptures. It's more important for me to fulfill the word of God than it is to escape suffering.

Here's a little attitude that we see in Jesus, in verses fifty-three and fifty-four. It's more important for me to fulfill God's word than to escape suffering. We can examine ourselves and see if that's our attitude to the word of God.

Is it more important for us to obey God's word, or is it more important for us to escape personal discomfort and suffering? Here is the test of our discipleship, dear friends. When it comes to personal discomfort and personal inconvenience and personal suffering, are we still willing to follow God's word and obey it, whatever the cost? Or do we seek defense? Do we seek to defend ourselves? Do we pray that God will send His angels or the equivalent of that to protect us from people who hurt us? In the Old Testament, God sent angels to protect His people. We read one angel came and wiped out a whole army of Assyria in Hezekiah's time.

But in the New Covenant, those who follow Jesus are not protected from these enemies. God allows His children to be killed, because thereby He manifests a greater glory of those who are faithful unto death. Jesus says, Be faithful unto death, and I'll give you a crown of life.

We read from another scripture that Jesus healed the ear of this man whose ear was cut off by Peter. And there we see Jesus' attitude. To see the depth of His love, you had to become His enemy.

You had to become Jesus' enemy in order to see the depth of His love. And these people who hated Him and wanted to capture Him and destroy Him, they saw the greatness of His love, that He would heal that ear cut off in anger by one of His disciples. And then Jesus said to the multitudes, verse 55, Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

Why have you come out with swords and clubs as though I'm going to fight and defend myself against you? I'm not. They thought He was going to fight and His disciples would fight and defend Him against them, but He was not interested in that. We know that Jesus did tell the disciples in Luke chapter 22 to take a sword with them.

And that's where Peter misunderstood what the Lord meant. Jesus had told them in Luke 22, 36, after the Lord's table, the Last Supper, He who doesn't have a sword, let him sell his robe and buy one. And they said, Lord, there are two swords with us, verse 38 of Luke 22.

And He said, That's enough. But what were those swords for? Not to fight and hurt others. But if people come to hurt you to protect yourself, but not to hurt them in return.

Yes, we can protect ourselves if people come to hurt us, but we're not to hurt them in return. That's what we see here. We don't have to stand defenseless.

We can protect ourselves. It's a question of what the sword is used for. And then Jesus said to the multitudes, I'm not going to defend myself, neither are my disciples.

All these things are taking place, verse 56, that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. And the disciples left Him and fled. And there too, the scripture was fulfilled.

Let's turn today to Matthew 26 and verse 57. And those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter also followed him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest and entered in and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

Now the chief priest and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order that they might put Him to death. Here we see the depth of evil to which religious people can sink. We can understand godless atheists, immoral people who do not know God, who do not have the scriptures, seeking to obtain false testimony to condemn a righteous man.

But can we believe that people who hold the Bible in their hands and who teach from the Bible would do such a thing? But that is exactly what we see here. Who are the chief priests? They were the ones who were teaching Israel God's law. They were the ones who had the Bible, Genesis to Malachi, with them.

They were the ones who were the leaders of the people and leading people to God in prayer and praise and in sacrifice. And the council, the Sanhedrin, were supposed to be the elders of God's people. And there we see the depth of evil to which these men had sunk, that when they knew they could not condemn Jesus any other way, they were willing to get false witnesses against Him in order that they might put Him to death.

And they did not find it. We read in verse 60, even though many false witnesses came forward, but later on two came forward and said, this man stated, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. And the high priest stood up and said to him, Do you make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you? The high priest knew very well that these people were all telling lies.

But here he is standing in the name of God condemning an innocent, righteous man. These things are written for our instruction and our warning. Man has not changed in these 2,000 years.

He's become worse. It's possible even today for people to hold the Bible, to be elders and leaders among God's people, and to do things more unrighteous and more shameful and more sinful than the atheists and the worst heathen in the world would ever do. To seek to condemn the righteous, that is happening even today in Christendom.

For remember, the people who wanted Jesus to be crucified, when he came to earth, were the leaders of the one nation on earth that had the true scriptures, the Jews. It was not the Roman soldiers who wanted Jesus to be crucified. It was the leaders who had the Bible in their hands, who had the true religion, but who didn't have the life, who had the true scriptures in their hands, but who didn't have the life.

And that's a serious and a severe warning to all who call themselves Christians today, who thump their Bibles and proclaim at the top of their voices that they believe in the Bible. Do you realize that? You can have the Bible in your hand and you may not have life. It's possible to have the Bible in your hand and to be as evil and as criminal as those people who crucified Jesus.

It's very easy to say, like the Pharisees said, oh, we wouldn't have done that if it were us. Matthew 23, verse 30, Jesus said, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, you say, if we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. But they didn't realize that they were doing it in their day.

They shed the blood of the one prophet of God that was in their midst, and yet they said we wouldn't have acted like our fathers. Don't be so quick to say that if you were there, you would not have crucified Jesus. If you're not walking in humility and brokenness and purity and that divine love that shows goodness to people who are evil, then we're walking in the footsteps of those chief priests and scribes who crucified Jesus.

Oh, what a need there is among Christians, among those who hold the Bible and who preach most loudly from the Bible, to walk in brokenness and humility and divine love. That's what we learn from here. The depth of evil to which people can sink holding a Bible in their hand is a warning, and the history of Christendom in the last 20 centuries is another warning.

People have fought with one another in the name of Christ. They've gone on crusades, killing people in the Middle Ages in the name of Christ, and unimaginable evils in the times of the Inquisition in the name of Christ, people being tortured and killed in the name of Christ, and even today in the name of Christ, perhaps not killing, but other things equally evil, condemning, backbiting, so many things done in the name of Christ. All these are the followers of the high priests and the scribes and the Pharisees holding a Bible in their hand and condemning the righteous.

And the high priest stood up and said to him, Do you make no answer? What is it these men are testifying against you? Verse 63, But Jesus kept silent. Jesus was silent, and that's a lesson for us. When we are accused falsely, it's no use defending ourselves, because they'll produce other false witnesses.

Jesus kept silent. It's no use arguing with people who have no ear for the truth. There are times, perhaps, when we need to clear our name, but the Bible says two things in Proverbs 26, verses 4 and 5. They are put together, and it's very interesting.

It looks like a contradiction, but it isn't. Proverbs 26, verse 4 says, Don't answer a fool according to his folly. The high priest here was a fool, and Jesus would not answer him according to his folly.

Don't answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. But then it says in verse 5 quite the opposite. Answer a fool, it says, as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Is that a contradiction? No, it isn't. There are situations where we need to be silent, and there are other situations where we need to speak. And the Holy Spirit alone can give us that discernment as to which situation is which.

We can't live by the law, but if we are led by the Spirit, we'll know when to speak and when to be silent. And here was the time to be silent. When all these people accused him and said all types of things wrongly against him, he just kept quiet.

And then the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God, Matthew 26, verse 63, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. And now it was time to answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. And Jesus spoke and said to him, You have said that yourself.

That's right. Nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter I'll tell you something more, he said. You'll see the Son of Man sitting in the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

And the high priest couldn't believe that. They couldn't believe that this simple carpenter from Nazareth, as they thought he was, was the Son of God. People can't recognize the true servants of God because they are so simple and so unimpressive in their appearance.

And the high priest tore his robes, signifying disgust. He said, He has blasphemed. What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have heard the blasphemy yourselves.

What do you think? He was determined to condemn him. And when a man's determined to condemn you, he has no ear for the truth. He'll pick on anything you say in order to find fault with you.

We can learn things from here. And what was Jesus' reaction? He said nothing more. He spoke the truth and left it there.

He didn't argue. He didn't defend himself. He testified as to who he was and the hope for the future.

And that's what we also testify to with meekness, what we are, children of God, the hope we have in the future. Beyond that, we do not argue or reason. And then the high priest asked the Sanhedrin, What do you think he deserves? And they are determined to kill him.

So they said he is deserving of death. And then we read, They spat in his face and beat him with their fists, and others slapped him. And what was Jesus' reaction to all this? He just kept quiet.

He was silent. He had power, but he would not use it. When it concerned the glory of God and the temple being defiled by people making money in the name of religion, he was fiery and bold to make a whip and chase them out.

But when people hurt his body and his dignity and his reputation and anything concerning himself, he never defended himself. Learn from this, child of God. Learn from this, dear friends.

What is it that should concern us and stir us to anger? When God's house is defiled, when people make money or a name for themselves in the name of Jesus Christ, that should infuriate us. But when we are hurt ourselves, it is time for us to keep quiet and to bear it silently. Then we follow Jesus.

And they said to him, Prophesy to us, you Christ, who is the one who will hit you. They despise spiritual gifts. And we are surrounded by people who despise the gift of prophecy and the other gifts that God gives us.

But do we prove to them that we are right? No. We manifest the glory of God in silent endurance. And thus Jesus Christ is glorified through us, and his glory is manifested through us to them, and that will be their condemnation better than if we could ever say anything to them with our lips.

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter twenty-six, and verse sixty-nine. This is referring to the time when Jesus was being tried in the high priest's court, and Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a

certain servant girl came to him and said, You too were with Jesus, the Galilean.

But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about. What do we learn from this? The truth of what we heard from Jesus earlier in verse forty-one. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

When Peter testified boldly to Jesus, Even if all men deny you, I will not, he was sincere. He really meant it. He really believed it with all his heart, and he really desired to stand true to the Lord.

The spirit was willing. There was absolutely no lack of willingness there. The spirit was one hundred percent willing.

But what Peter did not realize was the truth of those other words that Jesus spoke. The flesh is weak. And that's the truth we don't realize either.

Our spirit is willing. Our spirit is willing to pray, but the flesh is weak. Our spirit is willing to sacrifice and deny ourselves and do many things for the Lord, but the flesh is weak.

It's not enough that we recognize that the spirit is willing. We need to recognize that the flesh is weak. And that's why we need the Holy Spirit's strength.

That's why we need to seek God for power, that we might have strength to stand true to our convictions, so that that which the spirit is willing for will be manifested in the flesh. We read about Jesus in John chapter 1 that the word became flesh, John 1, 14, and we beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth in that flesh. In that weak flesh which you and I have, Jesus came, and what was manifested was not human weakness for the glory of the Father, but that was because Jesus recognized the weakness of the flesh and sought for the power of the Holy Spirit in human weakness.

He leaned upon His Father. That was the secret of His life. But the disciples did not know that.

Peter did not recognize it. And that is why in the moment of temptation, when a servant girl, this is not a high priest, this is just an ordinary servant girl, identifies him as a follower of Jesus, and he is immediately, his immediate response is, no, I don't know what you're talking about. And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter was scared for his life. He was scared that he'd be killed. Just like Satan said to God in Job chapter 2, he said, skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life.

All that a man has will he give for his life. Job 2 verse 4. He didn't give up his convictions unless he's filled with the Holy Spirit. And Peter wasn't at that stage.

So he was willing to give up his convictions. He was willing to give up his devotion to Jesus and his loyalty and everything because he was scared for his life. And again he denied it with an oath, this time with an oath.

He swears in the name of God, he says, I don't know the man. It's amazing how weak the flesh is, however willing the spirit may be. And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, surely you too are one of them, for the way you talk gives you away.

You're speaking in a similar way. And he began to curse. He uses stronger language now.

He begins to curse them. Filthy language and swears. He's so desirous to save his own life from death.

I don't know the man, he says. And immediately the cock crowed. And suddenly Peter realizes that what Jesus said was true.

He remembered the word which Jesus had said. Before a cock crows, you'll deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.

That was the thing that changed him. In those few moments, Peter recognized that the flesh was weak. Never again would he boast like that.

He was a broken man. Dear friends, that is what you and I need more. To recognize our weakness.

The weakness of our flesh. So that all our boastfulness disappears. So that we are broken.

Like Peter, he went out and he wept bitterly. Yeah, it's good for us to weep. Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn.

They will be comforted. And the word comfort is an old English word from which, which contains the little word fort in it at the end of it. And the fort speaks of that military fort and strength.

That was the way people defended themselves in ancient days. Comforted, strengthened. Blessed are those who mourn.

They will be strengthened by the comforter, the Holy Spirit. And that's exactly what happened to Peter. He didn't go the way of Judas Iscariot because he went out and he wept bitterly.

And we see the contrast between him and Judas Iscariot in the following verses. When morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him up to Pilate the governor.

And then when Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that he had been condemned, he felt remorse. He didn't go out and weep bitterly and go to the Lord and say, Lord, forgive me. No, he felt remorse.

He just felt bad about it. Even murderers feel bad when they see their victim groaning out in pain in the last moments before they die. He felt bad.

And he returned. He felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. There was a repentance that was false.

It was not a turning from sin. It was a feeling bad about the consequences of sin. When you feel bad because of the consequences of your sin, that's not repentance.

Repentance is a turning about, a loathing of oneself, a turning about completely from our old way. He even returned the thirty pieces of silver. You can even make restitution and not repent.

You can even return money that's not yours and still not repent. And that's what we learned from Judas Iscariot. His repentance was incomplete because he hadn't allowed his will to be broken.

He even said, I have sinned. Even those words, I have sinned, do not constitute repentance, for they can be empty words. He said, I've sinned by betraying innocent blood.

But they said, what's that to us? See to that yourself. That's none of our business. They were not concerned.

Judas Iscariot went to the priests to confess his sin. There are people who do that today. He should have gone to the Lord.

We should go to the Lord to confess our sin, not to man, not to the priests, not to the leaders, but to God. Where did Peter confess his sin? He didn't go to any priest. He was broken before the Lord, and that's why he was a changed man.

And there we see the beautiful contrast between Peter and the unfortunate contrast of Judas. Two people were in the same group for three and a half years, listening to the same message, messages, walking with the same Lord, failing the Lord in the same way. And yet, when they turned back, one turned back to the Lord and the other turned to the priests, and they went two different ways.

And Judas threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed, and he went away and hanged himself. What a tragic end. It was better for that man if he had not been born, Jesus said.

And the chief priest took the pieces of silver and said, It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood. And they counseled together, and with the money bought the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the field of blood to this day.

Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me. Everything that happened to Jesus was in fulfillment of Scripture. And even when other people betrayed him, that was also in fulfillment of Scripture.

And even the things that happened to the people who betrayed him, that was also in fulfillment of Scripture. And there we find something very wonderful, that when we live in the will of God, like Jesus, everything that happens to us works together for our good. God's purposes are fulfilled, whether people do good to us or whether they accuse us falsely, whether they deny us or betray us, whether they turn against us or support us.

Everything, Romans 8.28 tells us, will work together for good, if we love God, and we are called according to His purpose. Everything will be for the fulfillment of Scripture. This is one of the wonderful things that we can see through the gospel of Matthew.

Many, many times we find this little expression, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. We see that right in the beginning in Matthew chapter 1, Matthew chapter 2, and we see that right at the end of Matthew as well, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And this is something very wonderful that we can take heart to, that God has a predetermined plan.

He had one for Jesus, and everything that people did only fulfilled that predetermined plan, as Peter said in Acts 2.23. And God has a predetermined plan for your life and mine too. And if we humble ourselves and walk in brokenness in the footsteps of Jesus, the Scripture will be fulfilled, and everything will be according to God's plan, irrespective of whether people do good or evil to us. Let's turn today to Matthew's

gospel, chapter 27, and verse 11.

This is speaking about the time when Jesus, having stood before the high priest and been falsely accused and ill-treated there, is now sent to the governor, Pilate. Verse 11. Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned him, saying, Are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus said to him, It is as you say.

And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Do you not hear how many things they testify against you? And he did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed. Here we see something very wonderful about Jesus.

He refused to defend himself, even though, if he wanted to, he could have defended himself very ably, and confounded those chief priests before the governor and made fools of them and shown their accusations to be silly and foolish and false. But he did not defend himself, because he had no leading from the Spirit. We are told in 1 Peter chapter 2 that Jesus Christ suffered unjustly, leaving us an example to follow in His steps.

In 1 Peter 2.20, it says, What credit is there, if when you sin and you are harshly treated, you endure that with patience? But when you do what is right, and then you suffer for it, and you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. Because you have been called for this purpose, our calling as Christians is to suffer unjustly. That is what it says here.

Since Christ also suffered for you in this way, unjustly, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, when He was unjustly accused and condemned, He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. It was true all through His life, and it was particularly true at that time. And while being reviled, He did not revile in return.

In 1 Peter 2.23, while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. What did Jesus do during all that time when He was being falsely accused? He kept entrusting Himself to the Father who judges righteously. In His heart, and this is not written in Matthew 27, but we read it in 1 Peter 2.23, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as to what Jesus was doing during that time when He stood before the High Priest, when He stood before Pilate.

He kept entrusting Himself to the Father. He said, Father, You know the truth. You judge righteously.

I don't want to judge anyone here. I don't want to answer any charges. I don't want to revile in return when these people are reviling Me.

And I will not threaten them, saying, One day I will come and judge you. He did not utter any threats. And Peter says, that is an example for us to follow.

Peter had stood in the courtyard and heard and seen how Jesus conducted Himself. And he saw that was an example for him to follow. And he writes in his letter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that that's an example for all of us to follow.

Pilate, the governor, had had many people stand before him and been accused. But he'd never seen a prisoner like this. He'd never seen one who would not defend himself at all.

And that is the mark of the sons of God. He was amazed. But he knew that this man was guilty, that this man was not guilty, because there was something about the Spirit of Christ that even a heathen person like Pilate could sense, which religious people like Caiaphas and high priests and others could not sense.

It shows how religious people with a Bible in their hand can sometimes be blinder than the heathen who don't have a Bible. Pilate knew clearly that Jesus was innocent. Verse 15.

At the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they were holding at that time a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. When, therefore, they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ? For he knew that they had delivered Jesus up out of envy.

Pilate was a discerning man in this sense. He knew that these chief priests were just religious people, but powerless and empty. He had no respect for their religion.

And he also recognized that Jesus was superior to them, and they recognized it too, and they were jealous. And he knew that they were jealous of him. And he knew that they were just trying to get rid of him because he was superior to them morally, spiritually, in terms of spiritual gifts and in every way.

And they were jealous of that, and they wanted to get rid of him. We find the same spirit, unfortunately, in Christendom today, an envy of those who are spiritually superior, morally superior, having more spiritual gifts, greater abilities, and a holier life. And when people recognize someone like that, they are envious, and they want to somehow or the other get him out of the way.

Even heathen people recognize that. And while Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of him. Heathen people having dreams proving the righteousness of Jesus.

But the blindness of the chief priests and the elders was so great. It says in verse 20, But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. And so when the governor answered and said to them, Which of the two do you want me to release for you? They said, Barabbas.

The leaders had such power to sway the multitudes. The Bible speaks in Ephesians 4 about being swayed by every wind of doctrine. We are not to allow religious leaders to sway us.

We must have our own convictions. And if those religious leaders are wrong, like we see here, if those people thumping their Bible and standing up in front are wrong, we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by them or to be led astray by them. This is one of the messages that comes through very clearly in this passage.

The multitudes were swayed by their leaders, and so they went astray too. And if you allow religious leaders to influence you in a direction contrary to scripture, you'll go astray too. Pilate said to them, What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? And these people, this multitude that were just puppets in the hands of their religious leaders, they said, Let him be crucified.

And he said, Why? Why should he be crucified? What evil has he done? But he just kept on shouting, saying, Let him be crucified. And Pilate, he had discernment, but he didn't have courage of his convictions. He didn't have the courage to stand up for what he knew was the truth.

He saw that he was accomplishing nothing but rather that a riot was starting, and he was more interested in preserving his own position as governor of that district. He didn't want a bad report to go about him to Caesar that a riot had started in his district. He was more concerned about that, his own honor, than about a righteous man, about setting a righteous man free.

And so we see that Pilate was in the same category as the high priests, seeking their own. He sought his own too. He took water and washed his hands symbolically in front of the multitude, saying, I am innocent of this man's blood.

He had a conscience, but he still went against it. You can't cleanse your conscience by washing water, washing your hands in water. He said, See to that yourselves.

And all the people answered and said, In foolishness, they said, His blood be on us and on our children. And the blood of Jesus was upon them. Forty years later, the Jews were scattered across the face of the earth in 70 A.D., when the Roman general came and destroyed the temple and ransacked Jerusalem.

And for nearly 1900 years, the Jews and their children were scattered across the face of the earth. The blood of Jesus did come on them and on their children. And verse 26, Pilate, weak-minded, without any courage of conviction, released Barabbas for them.

But Jesus, he scourged. Imagine, he washes his hands and then orders Jesus to be scourged. Hypocrisy.

And he delivered Jesus over to be crucified. And so we see that the religious leaders were against the Lord, and the secular leaders also were against the Lord. Jesus said to his disciples, You shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

When we follow Jesus, that's going to be our fate too. Religious people can turn against us, secular people can turn against us. But Jesus had the satisfaction that he was doing the will of the Father, and that should be our satisfaction too in the moment when we are condemned by such people.

And then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around him. They stripped him, put a scarlet robe on him to mock him, and after weaving a crown of thorns, imagine that they could be so cruel. It's not easy to take a bunch of thorns and weave a crown with it, but they were so evil that they wanted to trouble him so much that they weaved a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they kneeled down before him, mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

And they also spat on him, just like the religious people, and took the reed and began to beat him. And after they had mocked him, they took his robe off and put his garments on him and led him away to crucify him. And there we see what Jesus went through.

We don't know all the details. The Holy Spirit doesn't give all the details of that scourging. That's not important.

The important thing is he suffered, and he's given us an example for us to follow. How, when we are unjustly treated and condemned, how we are to react in goodness and in love, not defending ourselves, but committing our cause to our Father, who judges all things righteously.

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