

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Gospel of John 18

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the Gospel of John

And we currently find ourselves in the portion of John's Gospel where Jesus and His disciples are going to experience the worst night of their lives.

It is after midnight -

Jesus has just been betrayed by one of His closest friends.

He is about to be arrested

And it is over the next few hours that we will see Jesus be taken from trial to trial and pronounced guilty – and yet, He was totally innocent

It is at the end of those trials that He is going to be beaten and sentenced to die a criminal's death by being nailed to a Roman cross.

The disciples could say that this was the worst night of their lives -as we have seen over the last few months – they are already totally confused – their hearts were already troubled when Jesus had announced to them that He was leaving –

Certainly Peter could make the claim that it was the worst night of his life –

He said that he would never deny Jesus –

And we know that he denied Jesus 3 times (just like Jesus had said) and the scriptures tell us that Peter wept bitterly.

Here is thing to consider –

Jesus worst night is our best night

And even for Peter and the rest of the disciples, their worst night will be eclipsed by their best days that were before them as they would continue – through the empowering of the Holy Spirit – the work that God called them to do.

John uses a lot of contrast

Death and life

Light and darkness

And for the past few weeks – John had made it emphasis to show us of the darkness that night

When Judas left the Upperroom – John makes the point that Judas - Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

Judas showed up to betray Jesus with the soldiers equipped with lanterns and torches

However, from the beginning – John has emphasized that Jesus is Light

[Jhn 1:4-5 NKJV] 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

[Jhn 8:12 NKJV] 12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

And so one of the themes of the Gospel of John is that as believers in Jesus Christ – we never have to be afraid of the dark

Because darkness – ultimately, will never be able to out shadow the Light of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's pray...

Read text

John is giving us two stories –

We see what is happening with Jesus

And what is happening with Peter

[Jhn 18:12-18 NKJV] 12 Then the detachment [of troops] and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.

From our study last week –

You might remember that I made the point that Judas shows up with over 600 Roman soldiers – fully armed to arrest Jesus

On top of the 600 Roman soldiers – you had the temple guards that came along to arrest Him.

Now, it seems comical to me that they bound Jesus –

Because from our study last week – we clearly see that Jesus turned Himself in – willfully.

He didn't put up a fight -

He said to them (twice) – whom are you seeking?

[Jhn 18:8 NKJV] 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am [He]. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

What good was binding Jesus going to do –

Jesus had knocked all of them over by just saying, "I AM"

Do you think that they would have been able to bind Jesus if He had not submitted to the Father's will?

Of course not -

But, they came and bound Him like a common criminal

13 And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. 14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

The office of high priest was a life-long appointment; it was one ordained by God.

The high priests were supposed to be of the lineage of Aaron, Moses' brother.

And when that individual died – then it was his oldest son that would take his place.

That's the way it was supposed to be; but by Jesus' day, that was not the case.

During Jesus' day – the office of the High Priest was appointed by Rome

So as long as one was loyal to Rome and had the financial ability to bribe Rome – they were given the office of High Priest

Annas served as High Priest -

His family was from the priestly line, but he wasn't a part of the high priesthood –

He'd bribed his way into office.

He had four of his sons that also served as high priest and they were so corrupt that the governor would have to appoint a new one – so people would not catch on.

When all of Annas' sons had been run through, the selection moved on to his son in law.

But make no mistake, the real power behind all these guys was Annas.

He was the one who ran the money changing tables at the temple

He was the one who was giving the orders to the priests to tell the people that were bringing their animals to be sacrificed that their animals had blemishes and they had to buy one from their vendors and pay a premium for them.

This is why Jesus was brought first to Annas.

The Jewish police knew who the real power was.

Jesus had attacked Annas' financial interest twice when He cleared the temple at the beginning & end of His public ministry.

Jesus had uncovered their motives – their status quo was threatened - so they wanted to kill Him.

And you may remember that this came to a tipping point when Jesus resuscitated Lazarus.

Many believed in Him –

And therefore the religious rulers said, “We got to kill this guy”

Jesus is going to take the fall – so that we don't lose our status quo – so that Rome and us can continue to live in harmony.

Caiaphas was right -

Jesus would die for the nation, not only for one nation but for all mankind –

He would die so we didn't maintain our status quo –

He would die for our sins.

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so [did] another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. 16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.

Now, when we last left Peter – at the end of our study last week

He was swinging his sword – driven by zeal and emotion

And we saw that Jesus had to come in and clean up Peter's mess – as He healed Malchus

As they bound Jesus - and as they take Him to stand trial at Annas' house and then to Caiaphas' house – one of the things that we see is Peter going through his own trial.

John tells us in verse 15 - that Simon Peter followed Jesus

However, Luke tells us in his gospel that Peter, as all of this is going on - he followed from a distance.

And so what we have here in the life of Peter is the perfect illustration of what we refer today as someone who is a backslider from their relationship with Christ.

Write these verses down

[Pro 14:14 NKJV] 14 The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man [will be satisfied] from above.

[Jer 3:22 NKJV] 22 "Return, you backsliding children, [And] I will heal your backslidings." "Indeed we do come to You, For You are the LORD our God.

[Psa 44:17-18 NKJV] 17 All this has come upon us; But we have not forgotten You, Nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant. 18 Our heart has not turned back, Nor have our steps departed from Your way;

[Heb 3:12-13 NKJV] 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Be careful of departing

Be careful of sliding away

Exhort one another daily –

that is what the writer of Hebrews was telling the group of Jewish believers in his letter.

The Christian life is one of progression – it is one of making progress

The bible describes our life in Christ as a walk and sometimes as a run

And that always implies forward motion, progression and spiritual growth

It is the same thing when we look at our children or grandchildren

There is an expectation that they grow and make progress

The same is true for our spiritual walk

We are either moving forward or we are moving backwards

We are either gaining ground or losing ground

If we are not moving forward – then we are moving backwards

There is always a progression in the Christian life – even if it is small

It doesn't matter how long we have been a believer or how long we have been going to church or how much of the bible we have memorized or how God has used us in the past – anyone is capable of backsliding.

I can backslide and so can you.

Anyone can fall away and the moment we begin to doubt whether we can – it is the moment we begin to take the initial step in doing it.

And so, we have the example of Peter –

Peter didn't think he could backslide

He was overconfident in his own flesh

Turn to Luke 22

[Luk 22:31-34 NKJV] 31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift [you] as wheat. 32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to [Me], strengthen your brethren." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." 34 Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

Think about what Jesus is telling Peter here – "The devil is asking for you – give me the fisherman so that I can sift him like wheat"

When we hear the term sifting – we think of baking – and we may use it to get the lumps or impurities out of the flour – that is not what Satan was planning to do with Peter

Sifting the wheat back then meant that you would lay the wheat on the floor and then – you would beat on the wheat with sticks or whips in order to separate the grain from the chaff

That is what Satan wanted to do with Peter –

But noticed, Jesus says – I have prayed for you and then He tells Peter – “You are going to backslide” -that is what Jesus means when He says - *when you have returned to [Me], strengthen your brethren.*”

Peter’s response – “no way Lord not me.”

He is boasting about his commitment

In fact in Matthew’s gospel – Peter throws the other disciples under the bus - “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”

I am better than them -

Church –

What was Peter’s mistake?

He was being self-confident instead of being selfless.

In the Garden of Gethsemane we also find Peter sleeping during a time when he should have been praying.

[Luk 22:40 NKJV] 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

In the Garden we also find being impulsive as he resorted back to the flesh – we covered this last week as he pulled out his sword and started swinging and he cuts Malchus’ ear off.

He relied on his zeal and emotion instead of God's truth as his foundation.

We find something else that contributed to Peter's backsliding –

Turn to Mark 14

[Mar 14:48-50 NKJV] 48 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? 49 “I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” 50 Then they all forsook Him and fled.

They all forsook Jesus – including Peter

Peter ran away –

He didn't run away very far – but he did take off

The backslider is often found running away from God

Not just in huge ways – but more often in a bunch of small ways.

A compromise here, a compromise there and when you add those compromises up – the direction is one of moving backwards.

Which brings us to verse 15 where Peter followed Jesus at a distance instead of being close.

There are many people who chose to follow Jesus at a distance

They have one foot in world and one foot in the church

Remember what Peter had promised the Lord?

[Jhn 13:37 NKJV] 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

Yet here, he doesn't even follow Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

Peter stood outside the door

Jesus went through the door.

John went through the door (he is most likely the one that John is referring to here as the other disciple)

But, Peter stopped at it.

Peter didn't want to go through it.

And it there may be times in our lives where the Lord is leading us to do something and we are reluctant to follow – just like Peter.

It was the other disciple – John

Who had to go out and talk to the doorkeeper and let her know that it was ok for Peter to come in.

17 Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also [one] of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

This is one of the reasons that Peter waited outside –

He didn't want to disclose that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ

And many times it is this reason that we fail to enter through the door that Jesus wants us to follow –

We don't want the world to find out that we are a disciple of Jesus

We don't want the world to hate us

18 Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

Here is one more thing that Peter was doing that resulted in him backsliding – he warmed himself up at the enemy's fire.

Some of the same guys that were there in Gethsemane to arrest Jesus –

These are the guys that Peter has decided to cozy up to warm himself up.

Church –

If we are in the wrong place, there is a good chance that we will be surrounded by wrong people and being surrounded by wrong people will put us in a position where we will be getting wrong council and end up doing the wrong thing.

So we need to be very careful

Peter is already down – Jesus already rebuked him at the Garden of Gethsemane –
put away your sword Peter

He is already vulnerable

His heart is in turmoil

Things are moving very fast

His world is being turned upside down

And he is warming himself up at the enemies fire???

Can you imagine the conversations that were taking place around the fire that early morning –

The mockery that was reserved for Jesus

What a liar that Jesus was?

What a phony Jesus is

Who does He think He is?

This is the wrong place for someone who was already discouraged to be in – surrounded by individuals that hate God and demean Him.

Paul writes -

[1Co 15:33-34 NKJV] 33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." 34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak [this] to your shame.

We need to give a lot of thought to who we spend the bulk of our time with

We think we are influencing them but the real question is, are they influencing us away from our relationship with Jesus

We need to be very careful church especially during times when we are vulnerable

You see church,

It is not God's heart for us that we backslide

It is not God's heart for us that we would be asleep instead of spending time with Him in prayer

It is not God's heart for us that we make decisions based upon our own emotions or that we run away or that we follow from Him distance or that we warm up at the fire of the enemy.

It is not God's heart that our Christian walk is stagnant.

God's heart for us is that we continue to grow in His grace as we abide in Him.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

In the Book of Revelation –

We find that the church of Ephesus had backslidden

So not only can an individual backslide – like Peter, Ephesus had as well

Jesus announces to them – you have left your first love (that is what backsliding is)

And Jesus gives them the remedy -

[Rev 2:5 NKJV] 5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

Forsake your sinful ways and come back to the Lord and serve the Lord

Remember, repent and repeat

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'