

## John Chapter 18: v. 1-40 "The Hero and the Coward "

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. 2 And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. 3 Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. 6 Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." 10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" 12 Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. 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. 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. 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." 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. 19 The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. 21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said." 22 And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" 24 Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. 25 Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!" 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" 27 Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed. 28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. 29 Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" 30 They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." 31 Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," 32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. 33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all. 39 "But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you

the King of the Jews?" 40 Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

## Introduction

We are now back in John's Gospel in order to complete a series that I began 1 year ago.

You may remember that in my first sermon on John's Gospel we discovered the reason why John wrote his Gospel. If we turn to John chapter 20: v. 30-31 we will discover that reason.

(John 20: v. 30-31)

<sup>30</sup> And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

So believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God will give us a new life in His name. That life is eternal life. It is a life free from sin, sickness, death and all the negative things that we experience here on this earth. We don't experience all these wonderful things until we get to Heaven, but we can enter into a personal relationship with our creator God and experience a deep peace in our hearts.

The life that John promises begins here on this earth with a deposit. The Bible calls this deposit the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our future blessing in Heaven.( Ephesians 1: v.14 )

So the point of John writing his gospel was to encourage you to believe in Jesus and enjoy this "New Life", here and now its full abundance in the future when you get to Heaven.

So with this in mind we complete the last 4 chapters of John's gospel over the next 4 weeks.

Chapter 18 is quite a long chapter so I will concentrate on the three main things that John teaches us.

The first is the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the second is the 3 incidents in which Peter denies that he even knew Jesus, and finally the trial of Jesus before Pilate.

### 1. The arrest and betrayal of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. – v. 1-14.

In v. 1 it says "When Jesus had spoken these words. He went out with His disciples...."

It is important that we understand that Jesus had just spend some time in the upper room teaching his disciples in detail about his death and what it would mean and achieve for them. (Chapters 13-17) Now He goes out into the world to apply His teaching to the reality of the situation that He now faced.

Jesus not only knew and taught God's word to the disciples, but He applied it to His life.

There is a tendency in the lives of many Christian people to desire and appreciate the teaching of God's word, but not to practically apply it to their lives.

Q. Why is this the case?

The simple answer is that obedience to God's word, always involves a cost in our lives.

It will take us out of our comfort zone and into a new level of our Christian commitment.

It is like taking a Bungee jump, we know that we are safe, but it is quite frightening to take the initial jump.

You don't really trust God's word until you apply it to your life. Once you make the application and obey God's word, then God becomes more real to you in your personal life.

Your faith is strengthened and you are encouraged to continue in your obedience to God's word.

It is never easy to follow Jesus, but each step of obedience, produces a blessing, that more than compensates for any sacrifice on our behalf.

There is nothing more wonderful than to know the tangible presence of God in your life which is promised to those who obey Jesus.

(Psalm 16: v. 11 says "In your presence is fullness of joy..." and In John 14: v. 21 Jesus promises to manifest himself to those who keep his commandments.)

The key verse in our first section is v. 11.

11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Peter had just attacked the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. Jesus rebuked Peter for his actions and told him that he was now about to "drink the cup" which the Father has given Him.

Q. What did Jesus mean by this?

The idea of drinking from a cup given by the Father is one which has both positive and negative meanings from the Old Testament. In the Psalms it is used to refer to God's blessing and Salvation.

Psalm 23: v. 5

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

Psalm 116: v. 13

<sup>13</sup> I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD.

However there is also a strong emphasis, in the psalms and elsewhere on the cup given by God, being the cup of God's wrath.

Isaiah 51: v. 17

<sup>17</sup> Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD The cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, *And drained it out.*

Jeremiah 25: v. 15-16

<sup>15</sup> For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. <sup>16</sup> And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them."

Psalm 75: v. 8

<sup>8</sup> For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain *and* drink down.

It is in the context of the negative side of the cup given by God that we need to consider here.

The references stress what is significant about drinking from this cup.

The significance is that this cup contains the full measure of God's wrath, not just part of it.

It is a cup full to the brim and overflowing.

At this point in the story Jesus publically declared that He was willing to receive the full measure of the wrath of God, which the Father was preparing to give Him.

This is an amazing statement by Jesus and we need for a moment to meditate upon it.

Jesus was well aware of the cost in His own life that would result from His obedience.

He controlled the events in these chapters with complete submission to God's will.

If we go back to John 1: v. 29

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

To take away the sin of the world it was necessary for Jesus to experience the wrath of God for the sins of mankind.

In the past it only required the death of an innocent animal to be killed, and their blood acted as a covering for man's sins. The animal died in the place of the person who sinned.

Now the lamb of God, Jesus, was not only going to die a substitutionary death, but He was going to receive the full cup of God's wrath.

It is a horrible thing to contemplate God's wrath upon Jesus. It is even more awful to think that it was because of our sin, that it was necessary.

It is a wonderful thing to know that in spite of what was to come, the God man Jesus, willingly submitted to a punishment that was due to us.

Our Righteousness and forgiveness cost the full cup of God's wrath upon Jesus.

(2 Corinthians 5: v. 21)

<sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In v.9 Jesus says "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." Jesus willingly gave himself up to the Roman authorities in order to save those people who would benefit from His death.

Sadly we now move from the hero to the coward.

## 2. Peter denies Jesus – v. 15-18 & v. 25-27.

John divides up the story of the denial of Peter with the story of a conversation between Jesus and the "High Priest". Q. Why does he do this?

It is probably because John wants to point out that on a human level it seems that Jesus mission has failed. His most faithful follower is now denying that He knew Jesus.

The key is v. 14.

14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people

We need to go back to Chapter 11: v. 48.

<sup>48</sup> If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

The fear of the Jewish authorities was that Jesus would become so popular that their positions of authority and the Jewish nation would be destroyed. John wanted to point out the conversation with the “High Priest” in between the denial of Peter to affirm that on a human level the fears of the Jewish Leaders were now not of a concern.

It appeared that on a human level the mission of Jesus had failed.

As we know from our Bible and from personal experience that God has plans for human failures. God can change human situations by changing human hearts.

So what can we learn from the 3 denials of Peter?

Firstly we know from John 13: v. 36-38 that Jesus knew that Peter was going to deny Him.

(Quote John 13: v. 36-38)

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.” <sup>37</sup> Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.” <sup>38</sup> Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

It was not a surprise to Jesus that Peter denied Him.

On a human level Peter was a very loyal disciple. He loved Jesus and enthusiastically followed Him. However Jesus knew that Peter was powerless without the anointing and fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly we notice that the denials of Peter became stronger in their emphasis. This is not obvious in the English translation, but it is clear in the Greek translation.

In v. 17 the first time that Peter denied Jesus was to a servant girl.

A servant girl was the lowest in society. Peter wouldn't have been too threatened by this challenge. Nevertheless Peter denied Jesus. The servant girl would have accepted it.

In v. 25 the second time that Peter denied Jesus was in a crowd of people who were warming themselves around a coal fire. This second denial was more challenging. If Peter had said YES then, he faced hostility by a crowd of people. He needed to be more convincing and stronger in his statement.

In v. 26 the situation required the biggest challenge. A relative of the person whose ear Peter had cut off challenged him and said “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” (Jesus)

Each time Peter denied that He knew Jesus, he hardened his heart.

It is the same with us, each time we say no to Jesus or deny Him, or refuse to follow His clear commands, then we harden our hearts too.

It says in Hebrews 4: v. 7 “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” It is a quote from Psalm 95: v. 7-8.

If someone who was walking so closely with Jesus can harden their hearts, then we too need to be careful that the same does not happen to us.

Peter realized that Jesus knew more about him than he knew about himself. Peter must have realized that Jesus really was in full control of the situation, and although he did not plan to deny Jesus, nevertheless it happened just as Jesus said it would.

Jesus is the only one who knows the beginning and the end, therefore His words can be trusted. Jesus knows our beginning and our end, so we can trust Him too.

The third thing we know about the denial of Peter is that it was not permanent.

We need to turn to Matthew's gospel and chapter 26 v. 75 where it says

"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

Suddenly Peter's heart broke, it was no longer hardened, and He felt remorse and was repentant.

He knew that he had done wrong and he was sorry.

The Bible teaches that godly sorrow leads to repentance and Peter was truly repentant.

One great encouragement for all true believers is that "FAILURE" is never final in the life of a believer. Jesus is always willing to receive back those believers who have made mistakes and denied Him. The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke Chapter 15 is our top example.

### 3. Jesus in Pilate's Court – v. 28-40.

In the trial of Jesus there are two main things that emerge. Firstly there is the "Kingship of Jesus" and secondly there is the "exposure of the motives of the Jewish people."

After the high priest had questioned Jesus, He was led to the house of Pilate.

The Roman governor always stayed in a house in Jerusalem at Passover time. This was to ensure that he was on hand to deal with any problems that might occur.

Passover was a key time in the Jewish calendar and if a revolt was going to happen against Rome then this would be the perfect time for it to happen.

The Jewish leaders handed Jesus over to Pilate but they didn't want to enter into the trial in case they would be barred from taking the Passover due to being defiled by mixing with a Gentile.

The first thing that Pilate wanted to know was "what was the crime that Jesus was accused of?"

In v. 30 we discover that they didn't answer. They just said He was a criminal.

In v. 31 we are told that Pilate tried to persuade the Jewish leaders to judge Jesus themselves.

It was at this point that the Jewish leaders demanded the Roman death penalty for Jesus.

After this Pilate entered into a conversation with Jesus and this is where we discuss the first of the two main themes of the trial. The Kingship of Jesus.

In v. 33 Pilate asked Jesus directly, "are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus did not reply directly to that question. His reply suggested that Jesus was trying to discover exactly what Pilate was aiming at. Was Pilate just repeating the allegations from the Jewish authorities or was Pilate interested in the situation for himself.

In other words, was there any personal threat to Pilate or was it just a Jewish matter?

Jesus was forcing Pilate to clarify the matter for his own sake.

If Pilate had a Roman King in mind, then Jesus could be counted as a "Rebel". If Pilate had a Jewish King in mind then that was another matter.

From the answer Pilate gave in v. 35 it is clear that Pilate regarded Jesus as a Jewish King.

In v. v.36-37 Jesus seeks to explain to Pilate that He is a King, but not an earthly King of this world, but a “Spiritual King”.

Jesus explained that if His Kingdom was of this world, then his followers would fight to defend him. Jesus goes on to explain that for the purpose of His kingdom, He was born, and for this cause He came into this world.

In this explanation Jesus not only reveals His humanity but also His Divine nature. He was born reveals His humanity, He came into the world, reveals His Divine nature.

Jesus told Pilate that He had come into the world to bear witness to the “TRUTH”.

He also told Pilate that everybody who is of the truth, hears the voice of Jesus the King.

What Jesus was telling Pilate was that He had come into the world to witness to the truth.

Jesus came into this world to tell us the truth about God. Jesus also came into the world to tell us the truth about ourselves and the truth about life.

The Bible is a very honest book. It tells us the truth from Genesis to revelation.

After Pilate asked Jesus “What is truth?” he went out to the Jews and said to them “I find no fault in Him at all”

As far as Pilate was concerned, Jesus was the “TRUTH”. He had told the “TRUTH” about Himself and His “Spiritual Kingdom”.

In v. 39-40 we discover that Pilate was determined to have Jesus released. It was the custom at the Jewish Passover to have one prisoner released. Pilate offered to release Jesus, the King of the Jews.

However the crowd refused his advice and asked for a common criminal called Barabbas to be released instead.

This takes us to our second and final point and that is, the “MOTIVES” by the Jews for wanting to put Jesus to death.

By Pilate declaring Jesus to be innocent, it draws out the real motives for wanting Jesus to be put to death.

The Jewish leaders chose a common criminal to be set free, who was guilty of a crime, and instead chose Jesus to be put to death who was declared innocent of any crime.

It was very clear that the crowd was NOT on the side of truth and that they did NOT want to be part of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus.

The people rejected the “Heavenly Rule” of Jesus.

#### Application

There is a very clear application for everybody here. It is a question of “TRUTH” and “KINGDOMS”.

You have a very clear choice in life and it is one or the other. You can either choose to believe the message about JESUS as TRUTH and following HIM now and His SPIRITUAL KINGDOM, or you can reject JESUS and His SPIRITUAL KINGDOM and follow the ever changing rules of this life and whoever rules on this earth is your king.

You then will give allegiance to earthly masters and follow them.

You will trust the politicians and their promises and reject Jesus and His promises.

My responsibility is to urge you to trust in JESUS and His HEAVENLY KINGDOM.

Jesus said “I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE, no one comes to the Father except through Me.

If you want to follow the right WAY and to know the TRUTH about LIFE, then you need to put your faith and trust in Jesus. Who are you trusting today? JESUS or somebody else?