

189. The Gospel of John 18:12-17, 24-27

Jesus on Trial-Part 1

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(8-21-22)

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This morning in our study in the Gospel of John, we have entered into Chapter 18.

John 18 starts out with Jesus and His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is spending some time with His Father in prayer before His crucifixion.

The time is roughly 3:30 in the morning—5 ½ hours from the cross.

In our study last week, we saw how Judas showed up with over 600 Roman soldiers and temple police all carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons to arrest the '*dangerous criminal/ revolutionary*' known as Jesus of Nazareth—

John 18:10-12 (NKJV)

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.

This would be the first of two trials that Jesus would endure that morning before being crucified—the first would be a *religious* trial and the second a *civil* trial.

- The first one took place before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council—
- The second one before Pilate the Roman governor of the region.

If we combine the accounts from all four Gospels, we learn that each trial had three phases.

John's account of the religious portion of the trial shows that Jesus was first brought before Annas who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas—Annas was recognized by the Jewish people as the *rightful* high priest.

Matthew begins with the second phase of the religious trial at the home of Caiaphas, the *official* high priest who was appointed by the Roman government—the Sanhedrin was assembled there.

This was a kangaroo court—in other words, they broke almost every rule they had been established to provide a person a fair trial.

- *They didn't give Jesus an opportunity to prepare a defense but rushed Him through a mock trial having already determined He was guilty thus denying Him any semblance of justice*
- *They were not supposed to meet at night nor during any of the Jewish feasts.*

- *They were not supposed to bribe witnesses to commit perjury.*
- *A death verdict was not to be carried out until a night had elapsed.*
- *The accused was not to testify against himself—and on and on it went.*

1. The Religious Trial of Jesus—verses 13-24

A. Before Annas

John 18:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.**

John tells us that they first brought Jesus to Annas who was the legitimate high priest.

At this point, let me provide you with a little background so that you'll have a better grasp on what's going on here. Annas was the high priest from the year 6 to the year 15 AD—and a member of the sect of Judaism known as the *Sadducees*. The Sadducees were liberals and materialists who did not believe in angels, spirits, miracles, immortality, the resurrection of the dead, or anything else supernatural.

They were loyal to the Roman government and cared nothing for rabbinic tradition and had no problem making religious, cultural, or political compromises when it suited their purposes—which consisted primarily of lining their pockets.

It was Annas and the Sadducees that ran the very lucrative business of the Temple concessions in Jesus' day.

The Temple concessions consisted of the selling of animals for sacrifice and the changing of money—these concessions became a major source of revenue during the main Jewish feast days of the year, including and especially Passover—let me explain.

▪ Animal Sellers

At Passover time Jews from all over the known world would converge on the city of Jerusalem—upwards of 2 million pilgrims. Many of these Jews would want to offer an animal sacrifice there at the Temple for their sins—besides the lamb they would need to celebrate the Passover meal with.

So, the Jewish merchants in Jerusalem set up all kinds of shops or '*booths*' in the Court of the Gentiles in order to accommodate these Jewish pilgrims who wanted to purchase animals for sacrifice and celebration (Passover).

Now on the face of it that didn't sound so bad—and it could very well have started out as a legitimate service and ministry for those Jews coming from too far away to drag along animals with them for sacrifice. But unfortunately, over time this ministry turned into a business and then as greedy leaders like Annas and Caiaphas got their hands on it—a corrupt business.

The merchants working in cahoots with the priests began to rip the people off for their animals charging up to ten times the normal going rate.

Even if you brought your own animal, the priest would examine it until he found some flaw or defect in it and then he'd reject it—and you'd be forced to buy one of their pre-approved *kosher* animals at the hyper-inflated price.

It was a real hustle—a total rip-off, taking advantage of people who just wanted to worship God.

▪ **Money Changers**

You see every Jew, 19 years and older, was required by Jewish law to pay one half shekel every year as a Temple tax—but you had to pay the tax with the Temple Shekel—Roman currency was not accepted. So, the Sadducees and chief priests had set up money changing tables all over the Court of the Gentiles where Roman currency could be changed for Temple Shekels for those who wanted to pay their taxes or to give an offering to God.

But here again there was corruption as the money changers were charging exorbitant exchange rates to the people who wanted to give to God. So, wicked men had turned the worship of God into a corrupt business—making money off of the name of God and ripping people off who simply wanted to worship God.

No wonder the Holy Spirit refers to it as the '*Passover of the Jews*' (John 2:13; 11:55) and not the *Lord's Passover*. (Exodus 12:11) This was especially tragic in that—all of this corruption and merchandising was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles—the place where Gentile seekers were supposed to meet with the Jewish priests about converting to Judaism.

Yet, when they got there and saw all the corruption and greed going on right there in the House of God.

- I wonder how many just turned around and went home?
- I wonder how many seekers who come to God's 'house' today and see all of the greed and emphasis on money simply leave and write Christianity off?

But this was a real problem back then—how could the Temple in Jesus' day, the 'House of God', be a place of worship and prayer with so much corruption and merchandising going on?

The answer of course was that it couldn't—*so the Lord had to clean house!*

So, Jesus took a whip and drove them all out of the Temple saying, "*It is written My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!*" (Isaiah 56:7) Because Jesus drove them out—Annas had it in for Jesus and determined that he was going to get Him and get rid of Him. But Annas had bigger problems than Jesus—and that was with the Roman government.

In about the Year 15, Annas fell out of favor with the Roman government. He had five sons and each took a turn (by bribing Roman officials) serving as high priest for a period of time. But over time, just like their father Annas, all five of his sons fell out of favor with the Roman government and were removed from the position of high priest.

But not to worry, Annas had a son-in-law named Caiaphas who he bribed the Roman officials to install as the new high priest. However, the Jews did not recognize Rome's appointments and they still considered Annas as the true high priest—why? Because the Law of Moses mandated that the high priest served for life.

So, they brought Jesus first to Annas where John tells us the religious trial of Jesus began.

John 18:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year....

John 18:19–24 (NLT)

¹⁹ Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰ Jesus replied, “Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. ²¹ Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said.” ²² Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. “Is that the way to answer the high priest?” he demanded. ²³ Jesus replied, “If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I’m speaking the truth, why are you beating me?” ²⁴ Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Now while Jesus was undergoing His religious trial before Annas and then Caiaphas—Peter was also undergoing a time of testing or trial of his own.

John 18:15–16 (NKJV)

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.

Some suggest that the unnamed disciple was Joseph of Arimathea or maybe Nicodemus. However I believe that the ‘**other disciple**’ with Peter was most likely John, who never names himself in his Gospel but instead simply refers to himself as ‘*the disciple whom Jesus loved*.’

There are those who have a problem believing that a simple Galilean fisherman such as John could have been ‘**known to the high priest**’ (the Greek word suggests more than a casual acquaintance).

One author comments on this by saying—

“It must be remembered that ‘fishermen were entrepreneurs, not common laborers at the bottom of the social spectrum.’ John’s father’s fishing business was large enough for him to have hired servants working for him (Mark 1:19–20). According to the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews, the apostle John used to deliver fish to the high priest’s house while he was still working for his father.

*Whatever the case may be, John was sufficiently well known that he was allowed to enter **with Jesus into the court of the high priest**. Peter, however, was not, and was left **standing at the door outside**. Realizing what had happened, **the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper** (the feminine form of the noun indicates that this was a woman, as verse 17 confirms. That a woman was on duty at the entrance indicates that this incident did not take place in the temple complex, where only men manned such posts.), **and brought Peter in**. That John was able to vouch for Peter shows again that he was well known in the high priest’s household. Peter’s desire to be with Jesus overcame his fear, and he entered the courtyard.”*

Now as I just said, while Jesus was undergoing His religious trial first before Annas and then before Caiaphas at his home—Peter was also undergoing a trial of his own.

John 18:16–17, 24-27 (NKJV)

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.” ...**

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.**

At this point, Matthew provides more detail into what happened—

Matthew 26:69-75 (NKJV)

⁶⁹ Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." ⁷⁰ But he denied it before *them* all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying." ⁷¹ And when he had gone out to the gateway, another *girl* saw him and said to those *who were* there, "This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷² But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!" ⁷³ And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are *one* of them, for your speech betrays you." ⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and swear, *saying*, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ 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.

The thing that must have really humiliated and devastated Peter was that after he had assured the Lord earlier in the evening that he would die before he would ever deny Him, he not only broke his promise—but the first two times he denied the Lord was to a couple of young servant girls!

With the third accusation, Peter began to call down *curses* on himself and he swore with an oath that he didn’t even know Jesus. (Matthew 26:74)

The calling of curses upon oneself in Jewish culture was a legal way of seeking to affirm one’s innocence—if no calamity followed, the person (in this case Peter) would be presumed innocent.

As Peter publicly denied the Lord for the third time—immediately a rooster crowed again.

That triggered in his mind the words of Jesus that—“*Before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied Me three times*”. (Mark 14:30)

At this point, Luke tells us something about that scene that no other Gospel writer records.

Luke tells us that immediately after Peter denied the Lord for the third time that from where He was standing in Caiaphas’s house—Jesus turned and looked out into the courtyard at Peter and I believe their eyes met.

➤ *What kind of a look did Jesus give Peter?*

We’re not told—we’re left to speculate.

➤ *Was it a look of anger?*

➤ *Was it a look of disappointment?*

➤ *Was it a look of sadness.*

Let me ask you—

➤ *What kind of look do you think Jesus gave Peter?*

I'll say this to you—the look you think Jesus gave Peter in response to his failure reveals how you think Jesus looks at you when you fail as a Christian. Let me tell you what I believe about the way Jesus looked at Peter that day.

1. I don't believe that Jesus looked at Peter with a look of anger.

The Bible teaches that God's anger is reserved for those living in rebellion, those who refuse to repent for their sins and not for those who try to live for Him but sometimes fail.

2. I don't believe that Jesus looked at Peter with a look of disappointment.

You see for God to be '*disappointed*' with us it means that our actions took Him by *surprise*—that we acted in a way He didn't *expect*—that we let Him down and didn't live up to His expectations for us. However, that is impossible for God Who has all-knowledge and knew *every* sin we were going to commit before He ever made us!

We know that Peter's denial of Jesus didn't catch the Lord by surprise and disappoint Him because when Peter promised the Lord, he would never be stumbled because of Him—Jesus told Peter that before the night was out, he was going to deny Him 3 times.

I believe Jesus told Peter this in advance—not only to warn him not to put his trust in his own strength—but also to prepare him—to soften the blow of his failure by teaching Peter (and all of us) that our sins never surprise God—grieve Him yes, surprise Him no.

3. I don't believe the look Jesus gave Peter that day was a look of sadness.

The kind of look we might give a person who was a lost cause—a hopeless loser!

The kind of person we often feel like for blowing it as much as we do—which causes us to say, *"Lord, I'm hopeless, I'll never amount to anything as a Christian—why don't You just give up on me—I've given up on myself!"*

Forgetting that we are 'a work in progress' and as Paul wrote to the Philippians, *"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."* (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

You may say, *"Okay pastor, what kind of look do you think Jesus gave Peter?"*

I personally believe it was a look of loving compassion—the kind of look a parent would give a child who is learning how to walk but keeps falling.

Hosea 11:1-3, 8 (NLT2)

¹ "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. ² But the more I called to him, the farther he moved from me, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols. ³ I myself taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn't know or even care that it was I who

took care of him...⁸ “Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go?...My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows.

If the Lord can forgive Israel, *their* rebellion under law—don’t you think He will forgive *you* for *your* weaknesses and failings now that you’re His child under grace?

Look, God loves you. He’s not angry with you. He is not up in heaven condemning you for your failures—He knew all the times you were going to fail before He ever created you—and He still wanted you to be His child. Once you are His child, He’s not going to condemn you because you’re weak and sometimes fail and fall in your walk with Him.

Paul the apostle made this clear in Romans 8 when he asked the question, “*Why would God condemn the very people He sent His Son Jesus to die for—those who are now His children?*”

Look, God knows our weaknesses. He knows us better than we know ourselves—and He isn’t putting any confidence in our strength.

Psalm 103:8, 10-14 (NKJV)

⁸The Lord *is* merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy...¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹²As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father pities *his* children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. ¹⁴For He knows our frame; He remembers that we *are* dust.

Again, God knows that we are weak and prone to fail and He’s not condemning us for our failures because, as His children—He uses them to teach us how to walk with Him better in the future—

As someone has written—

“I went to the throne with a trembling heart the day was done. ‘Have you a new day for me dear Master I’ve spoiled this one? He took my day all spoiled and blotted and gave me a new one all unspotted and into my tired heart He cried, ‘Do better now My child.’”

Remember you and I are a work in progress—and He who has begun that work will see it all the way through to completion. So be encouraged and draw close to your loving Father in heaven every day for strength—and remember: “*If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.*” (1 John 3:20)

Our heart may condemn us when we fail—but God is bigger than our heart and knows that deep down in our heart we love Him and want to obey Him and please Him—He knows the truth! This was John’s way of comforting and encouraging us when we fail as children of God when he said—“*If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.*”

It’s John’s way of saying that—sometimes a child of God can be overly hard on themselves where they set the bar so high that they begin to have unrealistic expectations in their walk with the Lord.

Expectations so high that they border on *perfection* so that any sin, no matter how small and unintended, becomes the justification to condemn themselves as worthless failures. The difference between those God uses greatly and those He doesn’t use much isn’t their failures—again we’re all going to fail and sometimes the biggest failures have gone on to be some of the greatest champions of the faith.

The difference isn't the failures—it's that when one fails, they give up—whereas the other when they fall—get up, repent, learn from their mistakes and move forward in their walk and ministry for the Lord.
How about you?

Are you going to *give up* or *get up* and move forward?

At the moment of Peter's failure, he didn't realize that his greatest days of serving Jesus were yet ahead...

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