

John 18:10-18

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[0 : 00] And let's look at the section from verse 10 to verse 18. 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 Marcus. Jesus said to Peter, Put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?

And so on. The ongoing conflict between good and evil is very, very clearly highlighted here. Because you have this conflict between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. On the one hand, here's Jesus and his 11 followers. They have had a time of communion and fellowship, of intimacy, of prayer.

It's been a special time. Read about it in these chapters in John 14, 15, 16. In the high priestly prayer in 17.

[1 : 04] Beautiful time. And then on the other hand, you have this band that's coming against them. With evil in their heart. This group of men with evil in their heart and deceit in their tongues.

Bruce Milner's commentary on John's gospel. This is what he says. Here are the forces of evil in sinister confederacy.

Personal treason in the passion of Judas. Corrupt religion expressed by the temple police. Political ruthlessness embodied in the Roman soldiers.

And behind all, the malignant form of the prince of this world. And of course, that's Satan. So there's this, all these combined, as it were, forces coming against Jesus.

And we saw how Jesus had himself handed himself over after giving a little glimpse of his glory. Remember how they, when he asked, who do you want?

[2 : 08] And they said, Jesus. Remember how they fell back to the ground. It's an amazing moment. They just fell back. They fell before the authority, the glory, the majesty of Jesus.

And they must have wondered for a second, what on earth happened there? But that's, that's who Jesus is. And every knee will bow before him one day. And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But after that, we find that Jesus handed himself over. But we also saw that lovely verse, verse 4. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward.

See, there are people who think that Jesus was taken against his will. That Jesus was somehow overpowered by evil. And that there was nothing he could do about it.

We know that unless Jesus had handed himself over, they couldn't have lifted a hand against him. So, verse 4 is showing us so clearly that he knew everything.

[3 : 17] Jesus knew everything. Knowing all that would happen to him, came forward. And we have that. So, this is a moment when, in fulfillment of the prophecy, that Jesus is led like the lamb to the slaughter.

And then we find, after this, we find that Peter then comes into play. Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.

Now, I don't think, we don't know, but I don't think Peter was in the habit of carrying a sword. It doesn't really say to us. But there's no doubt at this particular occasion, Peter would have been taking some of the words of Jesus to heart.

And Peter realized there was a dangerous time ahead. And Jesus had given warnings to all the disciples, but particularly to Peter. So, it might be in light of that, that Peter thought, well, I'm going to take a sword with me.

Because Jesus is talking about death. And we've got to remember that Peter said to Jesus, I'm ready to die for you. So, there's no doubt, but that in Peter's mind somewhere, there's an idea of a fight, of conflict.

[4 : 35] So, no doubt, that's why he strapped a sword unto himself. And he says, well, if Jesus needs defending, I'm going to defend him. And when Peter said, Lord, I'm ready to die with you, he meant it.

It wasn't a proud or an idle boast. He really, really meant it. So, here's Peter. All of a sudden, he decides, right, that's it. And so, he hits out with a sword.

And it's a clumsy hit. Because as he swipes, he takes off the ear, the right ear, we're told, of the servant of the high priestess man, Marcus.

And, you know, that's one of the wonderful things about the Bible. You know, there are people who are very dismissive of the Bible. And they say, oh, the Bible. It's just stories are written.

You know, when we come to read the Bible, it's amazing the detail. Their incidents. Their actual experiences. It's reality. There's the detail that's given there.

[5 : 40] The name of the man, Marcus. That it was his right ear that was cut off. And so, we find that there are people who are dismissive. But they've never really studied just what the Bible is saying to us.

So, here's Peter striking out. Now, as we know, Peter was this kind of impetuous person. He was just one of these. He was always fired up about something.

But, you know, the funny thing is that, I'm sure we've all seen it. You can have somebody who's full of a sort of a fiery zeal for a while.

But, you know, sometimes that fiery zeal burns out. It's often the person who has a quieter, more steadfast way about them.

That sort of, they maintain that steadfast composure. John and Peter were so different. John doesn't strike out.

[6 : 40] But John is the one who stood with Jesus. He went in with Jesus when Jesus was captured. He went in. John had nailed the killers to the mast.

John stood below the cross. John was there to be given Mary by Jesus to take her home to look after. So, we see here that it's very often where there's this quiet composure, deep-rooted faith, rather than the impetuous zeal that people.

I'm not saying, but there are some people who display this zeal all their days. But you can have a fired up zeal for a wee while and then it kind of burns out. Well, that's kind of what Peter was here. But the amazing thing, although it doesn't tell us here, in Mark's Gospel, it tells us that Jesus healed Malchus.

He put the ear back on. And that actually was the last bodily miracle that Jesus performed. And isn't it amazing that the last bodily miracle that Jesus performs is against one of his enemies.

[7 : 54] Somebody who has come to take him, to put him to death. And Jesus heals him. And isn't that just displaying to us the incredible love in the heart of Jesus.

That even those who are out to destroy, those who are out to do their very worst, that Jesus is there still looking out, reaching out, stretching out, touching, healing, helping.

You know, there are people who say, you know, if I saw a miracle, I'd become a Christian. I've heard people have said it to me. You know, they'll say, if I saw something really, really dramatic, I'd believe.

No, you wouldn't. It's not through miracles. What was happening, the whole life of Jesus was a miraculous life. And yet the vast majority didn't believe.

These temple guards and these soldiers, they had been thrown to the ground in the presence of Jesus. In front of his glory. It didn't make them believe.

[9 : 01] The ear had been struck off. A swipe. Ears on the ground. Pouring blood. Jesus touches. Heels. Did they believe?

Not a bit of it. You see, miracles. Miracles. Well, miracles facing or miracles in front of a hard heart. Only make the heart harder. Fear was an example of that. There was one miracle after another in Egypt. Did his heart soften?

No. It just became harder and harder and harder. There's nothing but God's grace that will soften a heart. But what Peter did was also very dangerous.

Because, you see what, when Jesus was taken by the men. See, back in verse 8, Jesus answered, I told you that I am he.

[9 : 59] So, if you seek me, let these men go. That was, we saw that before. This is a picture.

That verse sums up all that Jesus did. Jesus is saying, you've got me. Let the others go. Really, that's what Jesus is all about. That's why he came into the world.

Take me. Put me to death. Make me the sacrifice. But let the others go. And, of course, he was saying this about his disciples.

And the Jewish leaders were ready to do that. They were saying, oh yeah, we've got Jesus. That's all who we want. Peter, at this point, was ready to muck all that up.

Peter, by his wrath, his rash action, could have jeopardized all the disciples' lives. Because the leaders would say, hey, look at what he's saying.

[10:55] He's got the sword out. All the disciples could have been killed at that moment. That's why Jesus said to Peter, put the sword away. Put it back into the sheath.

This is not how it's going to be. Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?

In Matthew's Gospel, Matthew adds also to that, all that live or all that take the sword shall perish by the sword.

And Jesus is making the point. Yes, we are in a conflict. We are in a war. But the weapons, remember how it says in the New Testament, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

They're spiritual. It's a spiritual battle. The Gospel, the kingdom's warfare is one on our knees. And we've got to remember that.

[11:52] It's spiritual. There are times, but they're not often. There are times when the sword is justified. There are times in the history of this world when evil has had to be stood up against.

And we can understand that. You look at, for instance, the Second World War. And you see the absolute evil of Hitler and what he was doing.

His whole aim was to take the world. And he was somebody who was propelled by the powers of darkness. And so, although it's a fearful war, you can understand why he had to be resisted and why that war came.

But there are many wars that are not justified. Many, many. And far too often the sword is picked up for no reason other than about power and sort of human lust and all that.

But then we find Jesus as we said, Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? And of course this is really the words of Jesus in the garden.

[13:09] Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass. But not my will but thine be done. You see, in the Old Testament there were various cups spoken about.

Cup of God's wrath. The cup of the wine of his astonishment. And these cups are always speaking about the fury and the wrath of God against sin.

And Jesus at that moment is looking into that cup. And he's seeing the Father's wrath against sin. And his judgment against sin. And he says, I've got to drink it. Not just put it to my lips and take a sip. But I've got to drink every single drop of it in there.

And that is the amazing thing that the Father made the Son do. And the Son did willingly before the Father. Because this cup of God's wrath and the wine of astonishment.

[14:12] He didn't give it to his enemies. He gave it to his beloved Son. And he said, drink it. Drink every drop. And that is the gospel. That's the amazing substitutionary work of Jesus.

So then we read that the band of soldiers and their captain and their officers or the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. You would think Jesus was the most dangerous man in the world.

Here is Jesus who has never done anything but good to anybody. And they get him and they bind him up like he's the worst criminal on the go. And then when you read through the subsequent parts here, you find that there's a real urgency about it.

And the reason is that time is not on their side. You see, the Passover is just coming. And then following on is the week of unleavened bread.

And they couldn't put Jesus to death during the Passover or on that week. Or they would, you just couldn't do it. They would have been defiled by it.

[15:22] So on that particular week, they've got to leave everything aside. So many suggest that it was the arrival of Judas where Judas went all of a sudden and said, Look, I can get Jesus for you.

That the leaders said, although they were closing in on Jesus, I think they would probably be planning to leave it later. But God's plan, God's timetable was different.

It had to be at the time of the Passover. Because that's what the Passover was pointing to.

Everything was coming together. Everything was dovetailing perfectly in the beautiful plan of God.

And so we find that Judas says, Look, I can get him for you. So the deal was struck. So they were in a real wish. They had to have him tried and found guilty overnight.

Then they had to have the chief priests ratifying that. But they still couldn't put him to death. They had to get the Roman authority to ratify their decision.

[16:34] So that was vital. That Pilate would give the rubber stamp, as it were, to the death of Jesus. Then they had to have him on the cross by Friday morning so that he would be dead by sundown.

Because he had to be off the cross before the Sabbath. Otherwise, they'd be all defiled with the Passover. And they couldn't partake of the Passover. So you can see there's an incredible urgency. That's why everything is rushing all of a sudden. So he's taken first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Now, Annas had been the high priest.

And Pilate's predecessor had stripped him of that. And, of course, the Jews were up in arms over that. Because a high priest was supposed to be a high priest for life. But now it was Caiaphas. So Annas was still the power behind. And so we find that they take Jesus. And, as we say, they're pulling out all the stops in order to have him on the cross.

[17:38] Now, there are many things that we could see in here. But we find that John, verse 15, Simon Peter followed Jesus. And so did another disciple.

Now, that's John. John doesn't name himself. We find that all the way through he talks about the other disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest.

Now, some people wonder, how was John known by the high priest? Well, I think it's been suggested. There's many suggestions.

But, first, John was a devout believer. And he would have been at all the feasts in Jerusalem. He was also, remember, a disciple of John the Baptist.

And in the early days of John's ministry, it tells us that the whole of Judea and Jerusalem went out after John. John was a sensation to begin with.

[18:38] And everybody, including all the religious leaders, were out listening to John. John the Baptist. So, John, being a disciple of John the Baptist, would have been known.

And it's also, they reckon, as you study the book of Revelation, it would appear that John was a Levite by birth. So, that would have been immediately with a link to the priesthood.

So, if you marry all these things together, you can understand how John would have been known to the high priest. So, John enters in as well. But we find that Peter is beginning to waver.

Peter stood outside at the door. Here's poor Peter. Peter. And Peter's world is crumbling.

Peter, who was at the forefront. Peter had pulled out the sword to defend Jesus. Peter, who had promised that he would go to prison and to death with Jesus. He's standing outside in the cold.

[19:46] But we find that John goes to the door to vouch for Peter. So, verse 16, but Peter stood outside at the door. So, the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door and brought Peter in.

In other words, he went out and he says, look, I know, I know this man. So, Peter got in. But it's now when Peter is seeing the situation.

And the fires of passion that were in Peter had subsided. And the zeal has now turned to fear.

And Peter's in a bad place. In Mark's Gospel, it tells us that Peter followed Jesus afar off.

That is a dangerous way to follow Jesus. Because when you follow, yes, it's good you're following Jesus. But the further away you are from Jesus, the more you allow to come between yourself and Jesus.

[20:59] Make sure it's the same today. You can be a Christian, but you can be following Jesus far off. You've never stopped following.

But your commitment isn't there the way it used to be. Your zeal isn't there the way it used to be. It's just not how it used to be. It's far off.

You're kind of going through the motions. You know, that's dangerous. Because it allows for things to come in between yourself and Jesus. And the further away you go, the more likely is calamity and falls.

And that's exactly what happened with Peter. He was following afar off. And we find that, in fact, if you'll notice in verse 18, The servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold.

And they were standing and warming themselves. Where's Peter standing? Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. It doesn't tell us John is there.

[22 : 08] But Peter is now with the enemies of Jesus round the fire. And Peter is now saying to the enemies of Jesus, Jesus doesn't mean anything to me.

That's where Peter has arrived. And you know, we've always got to be careful. Not trying to make too spiritualized too much. But you know, yes, we have to, we mingle with the world.

We mingle with those who are opposed to Jesus Christ. But if we spend all our time, if we make them our friend, Don't get me wrong here.

I'm not saying, I'm not talking in any way that we've got to live sort of in a, sort of secluded and we're not to interact with other people. Of course we are. We engage with everybody.

But we've got to be careful. Because if you spend all your time with the enemies of Jesus, you know it's going to have an effect upon you. It will have its own impact.

[23 : 12] And that's what happened to Peter. He became crippled by them. He wasn't able to stand up for Jesus. When push came to shove, he couldn't nail his colors to the mast.

Because he was warming himself round the fire with the enemies of Jesus. Jesus, Peter at that moment looked like one of them. But of course, we know what happened.

Poor Peter. When Jesus turned and looked at him, he went out a broken man, out into the darkness, out into the cold. But we know that wasn't the end of Peter.

But it was, you know this, Peter would never, ever, ever, in all his life, have forgotten that. And we must guard against arriving where Peter arrived.

But the great thing is, tonight, or today I should say, here is Jesus. Here is a Jesus who said, back there in verse 8, if you seek me, let these men go.

[24 : 19] Jesus today is saying, I've done it all for you. Will you give your life to me?

Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we give thanks for this gospel, a gospel we never tire of hearing. The marvel of your grace, the wonder of your love.

And we pray that our hearts may reflect upon the great things you have done for us. Oh, be merciful to us, Lord, and forgive us our sin, because we are sinners through and through.

But we give thanks that where sin did abound, grace doth much more abound. Be merciful to us, we pray. Cleanse us from our every sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.