

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 24

Hand on the Table

Luke 22:21 "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. ²² "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" ²³ And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.

Clearly, Judas Iscariot is at the first Lord's Supper. Nothing is more ordinary than for unholy people to press into a holy ordinance of God that which they have no right to inject. Yet, their presence pollutes the ordinance only for themselves. Judas is with the Lord, but he has not given himself to the Lord. The Lord says, "woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" It is the greatest praise of God's wisdom that He can turn the sins of a man into a deed for His own glory.

Regarded as Greatest

Luke 22:24 And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' ²⁶ "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷ "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves. ²⁸ "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; ²⁹ and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The most important event in human history is about to take place and the Apostles are still arguing about their prestige in the kingdom! Looking back, we say, it was no time to worry about status. But the Apostles, wrapped up in their own concerns, do not perceive what Jesus has been trying to tell them about His approaching death and resurrection. What are our major concerns today? Twenty years from now, as we look back, will these worries look petty and inappropriate? We must focus on ourselves and get ready for Christ's coming into human history for the second time.

The world's system of leadership is very different from the leaders in God's kingdom. Worldly leaders are often selfish and arrogant as they claw their way to the top. Some kings in the ancient world gave themselves the title Benefactor. But among Christians, the leaders are to be the ones who *serve* best. Different styles of leadership exist, some lead through public speaking, some through administering, some through relationships, but every Christian leader needs a servant's heart.

Peter's Pledge

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." ³³ But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" ³⁴ And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." ³⁵ And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." ³⁶ And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one." ³⁷ "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has *its* fulfillment." ³⁸ They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

In these verses, one great concept about a believer's perseverance in the faith is revealed. The Lord says to Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail". Peter does not completely fall away because of the Lord's intercession. Peter has given himself to the Lord. He belongs to the Lord. The Lord will protect him, even on His dying day. The continued existence of grace in a believer's heart is a great and constant miracle. His enemies are so mighty and his strength is so small; the world is so full of traps and his heart is so weak that it seems, at first sight, impossible for him to reach heaven. This passage explains how he is kept safe by the Lord. The believer has a mighty Friend at the right hand of God who always lives to intercede for him. He has a watchful Advocate who is daily pleading for him, seeing to all his daily necessities and obtaining daily supplies of mercy and grace for his soul. His grace never totally dies because Christ lives to intercede.

Prayer on the Mount of Olives

Luke 22:39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰ When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, ⁴² saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." ⁴³ Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. ⁴⁵ When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

These verses contain Luke's account of the Lord's agony in the garden. It is a passage of Scripture which we should always approach with special reverence. The event it records is one of the deep aspects of God.

Here is an example of what believers ought to do in times of trouble. The great Head of the church Himself supplies the pattern. We are told that when He arrived at the Mount of Olives the night before he was crucified, "He knelt down, and began to pray." It is a striking fact that both the Old and New Testaments give the same prescription for coping with

trouble. What do the Psalms say? Psalm 50:15 says, "And call up Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor me." What does the Apostle James say? **James 5:13** says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises."

Prayer is the prescription used by Jacob when he was frightened by his brother, Esau; prayer is the prescription used by Hezekiah when Sennacherib's threatening letter arrived; prayer is the prescription used by the Son of God Himself in the days of His flesh and He is not ashamed to do so. In the hour of His mysterious agony, He prayed.

We must use the Lord's remedy if we want comfort in affliction. Whatever other means of relief we use must be set aside and we must pray. The first Friend we must turn to is God. The first message we must send is to the throne of grace. Beware of the temptation to brood sullenly over wounds. If we can say nothing else, we can say like Isaiah 38:14, "Like a swallow, like a crane, so I twitter; I moan like a dove; My eyes look wistfully to the heights; O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security."

The Kiss

Luke 22:47 While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd *came*, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. **48** But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" **49** When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" **50** And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. **51** But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. **52** Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? **53** "While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."

A kiss was and still is the traditional greeting among men in certain parts of the world. In this case, it is also the agreed-upon signal to point out Jesus. It is ironic that a gesture of greeting will be the means of betrayal. It is a hollow gesture because of Judas's treachery. Have any of our religious practices become empty gestures? We still betray Christ when our acts of service or giving are insincere or carried out merely for show.

Peter strikes the soldier and cuts off his ear but Jesus touches his ear and heals him. There are several remarkable things about this miracle. It is the only instance in the Gospels of the Lord's healing a fresh wound which is caused by external violence. It is a striking instance of a miracle being performed on an enemy, unasked for, without faith on his part by the Person doing the healing and without any apparent thankfulness for the cure. It is an extraordinary proof of the wickedness and hardness of the Lord's enemies that a wonderful miracle as this can be wrought without any effect on the one being healed or the onlookers. Some think that in the darkness, the miracle is not seen by anyone except those immediately around the soldier whose name is Malchus.

To the High Priest

Luke 22:54 Having arrested Him, they led Him *away* and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. **55** After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. **56** And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." **57** But he denied *it*, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." **58** A little later, another saw him and said, "You are *one* of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" **59** After about an hour had passed, another man *began* to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." **60** But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. **61** The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." **62** And he went out and wept bitterly.

These verses describe the fall of the Apostle Peter. It is a passage which is deeply humbling to a man's pride and singularly instructive to true Christians. The fall of Peter has been a beacon to the church and has probably preserved countless numbers of souls from destruction. It is a passage which supplies strong proof that the Bible is inspired and Christianity is from God. If Christianity had been the invention of uninspired men, its first historians would never have told that one of its leading Apostles denied his master three times.

The story of Peter's fall teaches how small and gradual are the steps by which people may enter into great sins. The various steps in Peter's fall are clearly noted by the Gospel writers. They should always be noted when reading this part of the Apostle's life.

The first step is his arrogance. Though everyone denies Christ at some point, Peter insists he never will. He is ready to go with Christ both to prison and to death.

The second step is slothful neglect of prayer. When his Master tells him to pray so that he will not enter into temptation, he gives way to drowsiness and is found asleep.

The third step is vacillating indecision. When Christ's enemies come to him, Peter fights and then runs away, then turns again, and finally follows at a distance.

The fourth step is mingling with bad company. He arrives at the high priest's house and sits among the servants by the fire, trying to conceal his religion and hearing and seeing all kinds of evil.

The fifth and last step is the natural result of the first four steps. He is overwhelmed with fear when he is suddenly asked if he is a disciple of Christ. Figuratively, the rope is around his neck. He cannot escape. He plunges deeper into his error more than ever. He denies his blessed Master three times. We must remember that the seed for this act has been sown hours before. The denial is only the disease coming to a head.

Beware of the beginning of backsliding however small. We never know what we may come to if we leave the King's highway. The professing Christian who says about any sin or evil habit, "It's only a small one," is in imminent danger. He is sowing seeds in his heart which will one day spring up and bear bitter fruit. A British idiom says, "if you take care of the pence the pounds will take care of themselves." We may apply this idea to create a spiritual lesson by saying, the Christian who keeps his heart diligently in little things will be kept from great falls.

Mocking Jesus

Luke 22:63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, **64** and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?" **65** And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming. **66** When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, **67** "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; **68** and if I ask a question, you will not answer. **69** "But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD." **70** And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." **71** Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

Jesus says, "The Son of Man will be seated at the right hand" It is a reference to the famous prophecy of Daniel 7:9,14. The Lord states that He is the person spoken about in that prophecy and that, although condemned by the Jews, He will soon be exalted to the highest position of dignity in heaven. The Jews see it at once and proceed to put forth the question in the next verse. There, it should be noted, is the last occasion during which our Lord ever calls Himself the "Son of Man."

The religious leaders ask, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" In the previous verse the Lord had called himself the "Son of Man". His enemies ask him if He is the "**Son of God.**" They do so because His solemn statement about sitting at God's right hand shows them that He claims to be the Messiah and God.

Those who condemn Jesus for blasphemy are the vilest blasphemers. He refers the religious leaders to His Second Coming for the full proof of His being Christ because they will not personally admit it as proof. He identifies Himself as the Son of God though He knows He will suffer for it. At this point, they pronounce His condemnation. Their eyes being blinded, they rush on.