

Luke 22:47-62

*Remember, God is in Control!*

What in the world is going on? Do you ever wonder that? What's going on? We send our nation's military to fight for freedom in Iraq. Some paid the ultimate price, others are wounded, all are away from family and loved ones. They fought for truth, justice, and the American way but they come back to a confused misdirected society.

This past week Colorado judge John J. Vigil, overturned the death sentence of Robert Harlan who was convicted of kidnapping, raping and murdering a 25-year-old woman and shooting another woman passer-by who tried to help, leaving her paralyzed.

The reason the judge gave was because some jurors discussed Bible verses during deliberation and were improperly influenced by the Bible.

A month ago Rev. David Hughes attempted to deliver a prayer before the Maryland state Senate, but he was blocked from praying because it concluded with this phrase: "In Jesus' name, Amen."

Bob Foor has a repair shop in the historic district of Bedford PA. He erected a large, lighted sign, that says Jesus is Lord. The town said he violated a town ordinance. He's facing a \$1000 a day fine and 30 days in jail if he doesn't remove it.

Two weeks ago a teacher's aide in PA was suspended for refusing to remove a cross pendant she regularly wore to work.

Last year, the US Supreme Court held unconstitutional The Child Pornography Prevention Act, which banned the distribution and possession of pornography depicting computer-generated children engaged in sexual activity.

In the case: Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe the U.S. Supreme Court, struck down a school board policy which allowed for student messages, including invocations, before football games. The Court held that the policy of allowing such invocations constituted an impermissible government endorsement of religion in violation of the Establishment Clause.

What in the world is going on? Why is it that the forces of darkness seem to be making so many inroads in our country that has such strong Christian foundations?

Actually, we shouldn't be surprised at all. Not that we should just give up and resign ourselves to the triumph of evil, but in a real sense, it's always been this way. Men love darkness rather than light, so the darkness seems to prevail.

At times we might ask, "Where is God when all this is going on? This can't be part of God's plan. Why doesn't God do something?"

Here's an amazing Biblical truth that we need to grab a hold of: *God's plan sometimes allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail*

God hasn't ceased to be Lord. God hasn't abdicated His throne. In fact, God is in complete control.

**For the ultimate example turn to Luke 22:47 pg 934**

Jesus, who has spent hours in prayer, has just been speaking to his disciples, about preparing for the hour of temptation: "*Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.*" (22:46). But now it is too late for them to pray and prepare. The hour of his crisis -- and theirs -- has arrived.

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, led by Judas.

His hour had come. Judas had made arrangements with Israel's leaders to lead them to Jesus when there were no crowds around.

Each night Jesus had gone to the Mt. of Olives to pray and so that's where Judas leads them. Judas was one of the 12 disciples and he knew exactly where Jesus would be.

This was all part of God's plan, so Jesus doesn't try to hide or change his itinerary.

The scandalous part of the story is that Judas was one of the 12. We looked at Judas' motives for betraying Jesus a few weeks ago. What we saw then was, we could guess about what was driving him: disappointment, frustration because Jesus didn't lead a revolt against the Roman oppressors, but the only thing we knew for sure... the only thing the Bible clearly tells us is, Judas loved money.

So for 30 pieces of silver, Judas betrayed his master.

As he came into the garden where Jesus had been praying, Judas was leading what Luke calls "a multitude."

Matthew tells us this multitude had torches, swords and clubs. Torches to find the light of the world, and swords to capture the prince of peace! John explains they were made up of a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests.

Day and night the Jerusalem temple was guarded by Levites to prevent anything deemed unclean from entering. They also acted as the temple police. At night guards were placed in 24 stations around the gates and courts, each guard consisting of 10 men. In all, 240 Levite guards were on duty every night. The officers of the temple guard were in charge of these troops. It's ironic that the soldiers who took Jesus into custody were normally charged with protecting the Holy Place from uncleanness.

That's just the first of numerous contradictions were going to find as Jesus is arrested, tried, and crucified.

It's common for Middle Eastern men to greet each other with a kiss on the cheek. Judas has given the temple police the word. This was the high sign. Who ever he kissed would be the one they're looking for.

### **Read vs 48**

Matthew fills in some more details.

He explains: Immediately Judas went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?"

Judas could have just pointed to Jesus and said, He's the one. But right up to the end he feigned innocence. He said, "Greetings Rabbi" like he was overjoyed to see a long lost friend.

There are two Greek words translated "kiss" in the NT; *phileo* and *kataphileo*. A preposition on the front of a verb in Greek adds emphasis. Matthew and Mark both use the more intense word, *kataphileo*.

That means that Judas threw his arms around Jesus and kissed him repeatedly. It was prolonged so the soldiers wouldn't have any question about who it was they'd come to arrest.

Now I don't know about you, but if someone was betraying me with a phony kiss i'd probably want to haul off and belt the guy.

Jesus does just the opposite. Matthew tells us He said, *“Friend, why have you come?”*

It’s like up until the very last second Jesus gives Judas a chance for forgiveness; a chance to say, *“Lord forgive me for what I have done,”*

That’s the way grace operates. The worst, the vilest, most blasphemous person on the planet can come to Jesus and receive forgiveness, if he’ll only trust Christ for it. It’s been provided for all of us. Jesus’ invitation is, *Whosoever will may come, He that believes on me has everlasting life.*

The thing was, Judas didn’t want forgiveness, he wanted his money. So he kissed Jesus in mockery.

The height of stupidity is to think you can mock God and get away with it.

Now, while all this is taking place the rest of the disciples are clueless. **Read 49-50**

Again, John’s gospel fills in the details. *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.*

Before this Peter had pledged his loyalty to Christ. He said back in vs 33 *“Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”*

Jesus had answered *“you may think so, but actually you’ll end up denying you even know me.”*

Here was Peter’s big chance to prove his loyalty. The temple guard was moving in to grab Jesus so Peter acts. He draws his sword and “whack” cuts off a guy’s ear.

Malchus didn’t know it, but It was the power of God that kept Peter from splitting his head open. Before the cross no one ever died in the presents of Jesus. Malchus wasn’t going to be the first.

Notice how Jesus responds: **Read 51**

The last recorded miracle of Jesus Christ was the healing of His enemy to preserve the life of Peter.

In John we read, *So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”*

In the garden Jesus had prayed, *Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*"

The cup was the cup of God's judgment poured out on sin. I can just see Jesus turning to Peter and saying, "Oh Peter, do you really want to keep me from obeying the Father and drinking the cup of judgment for the sins of the world? The father's will is for me to drink. Put away your sword."

### **Read 52-53**

All though this narrative there's a theme that stands out. Jesus wasn't the victim of circumstances. He was in total and complete control. God's plan sometimes allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail.

To every one of Jesus' followers this looked like the end of all their hopes and dreams. Their leader that they loved was taken by evil men.

Their Jesus who had brought healing and grace to so many people was in mortal danger.

Their Messiah who was to rule and lead was carried off like a common criminal.

They didn't grasp it at that moment but as they would look back on all that happened in that garden, the disciples would realize that Jesus wasn't a victim. He wasn't a casualty.

Everything that happened was divinely orchestrated to fulfill God's plan of redemption.

We should be concerned about the truth of God's Word being proclaimed. We should care if our government limits the expression of Christians. Sometimes it seems like any religious idea is OK in our country no matter how wacko, but Biblical Christians are told to keep quiet.

We should vote wisely. We should be involved politically. We should pray earnestly for our government officials.

But when things look their bleakest, don't forget that we worship a sovereign God. We worship a God who is active in our world. And very often God's plan allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail.

In whatever happens, God is at work. He may be refining His people because they've grown apathetic about their spiritual life. He may be setting the powers of darkness up for a fall by giving them what appears to be success.

Ps 76:10 *Surely the wrath of man shall praise You God...* The wrath of evil men set about to destroy Jesus and in the process they ended up offering the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

The whole OT sacrificial system was a gigantic object lesson designed to teach Israel and anyone who would listen, that God would provide a sacrifice for sinners.

The offerings, the priesthood, the ceremonies all were a shadow of things to come. The Bible says, *...every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.*

Jesus Christ was the one perfect sacrifice for our sins.

*God's plan sometimes allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail*

So we need to be careful. *God's people can fail if they don't walk by faith*

### **Read vs 54**

This is fascinating. All of the 4 gospel writers include the account of Peter's denial. There's a lot of important material about Jesus that's omitted by one Gospel or the other, but not this section on Peter. If God's Word says something once, it's important. If it's repeated 4 times, it's ultra important. God's hammering home a point.

Matthew says: *Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.*

John adds: *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.*

Who was the "other disciple?" Some people have guessed it might have been Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea. We don't know for sure. But at least when the other disciples ran off in fear, Peter was willing to follow, even if it was at a distance.

Does this “following at a distance” sound familiar? Too many Christians do such a good job at blending into their surroundings that their co-workers and friends may not know that they are believers for months or years. They follow, but at a distance.

### **Read 55-57**

Try to put yourself in Peter’s place. Jesus has been taken by a multitude with torches and swords. Things look pretty bleak. Peter is sitting right in the middle of enemy territory. The other disciples have taken off. The situation is tense.

I’m sure at this point Peter was scared stiff. He was bracing himself for some kind of formidable confrontation.

Instead, something totally unexpected happens. A little, unpretentious slave girl seems to recognize him. She says out loud, *“This man was also with Him.”*

I believe that Peter was caught totally off guard. He wasn’t prepared for the servant girl so he blurts out, *“Woman, I do not know Him.”*

### **Read 58-60**

As usual, Peter isn’t easy to categorize. You might say he was fearful at this point, but if that were true why didn’t he just quietly slip out after the first or second time someone questioned him?

On the other hand, he doesn’t want to admit any association with Jesus.

There’s a pattern here that we can all learn from...

Three things:

1) Remember, Peter had come into this thing boasting in self confidence. He told Jesus *“Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”*

The Bible says: *...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* It talks about the frailty of the flesh. *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Until we learn what it means to walk close with God in complete dependence on

Him, we will be vulnerable. Especially when the powers of darkness to seem to prevail. Peter was vulnerable because of self-confidence.

2) Peter seemed to be unprepared for the pressure of the crowd. He pulled out his sword when he was confronted by troops, but he folded in the presence of a crowd of servants.

Peter underestimated the power of accusation. He underestimated how much pressure could be applied through the crowd that stood around the fire in the courtyard.

And that happens to the best of us. We think we will stand for Christ in any circumstance but we underestimate the power that comes when the approval of the crowd is at stake; in the locker-room, in the dorm, in the office, on the job site, when we are with those we admire, when we are on a date. The crowd is powerful . . . we have to prepared a head of time.

3) Peter slipped a little more with each denial. Matthew shows us how the denials build. The first time Peter is accused of being one of Jesus disciples *he denied it before them all.*

The second time *denied with an oath.* The third time, Matthew says, *he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!"*

The first time Peter denied the Lord I believe he felt it "really wasn't a denial". He might have said he was being clever. Maybe he would say, he was just trying to avoid trouble. He could rationalize the first denial. But, once the door to compromise and denial had been opened, the second and third denials were a whole lot easier.

That's how sin works. We are tempted to make a small compromise. Once we compromise a little we are tempted to compromise "just a little more". Before long we have strayed from the path of holiness.

We look at our life and say, "That's not that important. I don't want to get hung up on the small stuff. I'll just let that area of my life go and not worry about it. God knows my heart."

You know what, God does know your heart. That's why he says, *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*



Jesus had warned Peter: *the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.*"

What a piercing sound that rooster must have made. I have to believe that rooster crowing resonated in the depths of Peter's heart.

But the emotion generated by that sound was nothing compared to what Peter experienced next: **Read vs 61 & 62**

At that moment, as Jesus was being led away to the next trial, Peter's eyes and Jesus' eyes meet. For an instant their eyes lock. Peter is face to face with the Savior, and he's just blown it big time.

Everyone else in the court yard continued staring while Jesus was being led away. While they were distracted Peter slipped out. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Peter hadn't realized that sometimes God allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail. He hadn't considered that God's people can fail if they don't walk by faith. Now he knew first hand.

Peter failed. He denied his Lord. But you know what's really telling? It only took one look from Jesus to bring him to the place of repentance.

Warren Wiersbe writes, *"For one rooster to crow at the right time while all the other birds in the city remained silent was certainly a miracle. (If you grew up on a farm, or if you've been to a place like Nicaragua or Peru, you know when one rooster starts, they all chime in!) But the crowing of the rooster was much more than a miracle that fulfilled the Lord's words; it was also a special message to Peter, a message that helped to restore him to fellowship again."*

Think about it. Here's Peter completely blown away by his own failure. What did he need right then?

1) He needed to know that God was in control. Even though Jesus was a prisoner, the other disciples had taken off, and Peter had denied his Lord, God was still in control.

Jesus said the rooster would crow and that's exactly what happened the moment Peter denied Jesus for the third time. There's an object lesson there: No matter how dark things looked God was in complete control.

2) The second thing Peter needed was a reminder of God's forgiveness. When Jesus had predicted Peter's failure He also predicted his restoration. Jesus had said: *when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*"

In other words just as sure as Peter was going to fail, he was going to be restored and used in God's kingdom.

You know, the truth is that every one of us will fail the Lord at times. Everyone of us will blow it. Satan will tell us, "It's over. We're failures. We're finished and we have no future." But that's not *God's* message to us.

God had a plan for Peter. Peter denied his Lord three times so after the resurrection Jesus came to Peter and asked him three times, "Do you love me?"

Each time Peter answered "Yes." and Jesus said, "then go feed my sheep."

"Peter, go teach others about me. Go, and let Me even use what you learned through failure to help others."

Maybe you've failed God miserably . . . I have done so - more often than I care to admit. But I have learned that God's love is greater than our weakness. Is it time for you to turn back to the Savior? If you come, He promises to receive you and change you.

Last week we took a look at the spiritual sufferings of Christ on the cross. We tried to imagine the horror of the sinless Son of God bearing the filth of our sin.

Maybe it's time for you to do what Peter did. Look into the face of Jesus.

God's plan sometimes allows the powers of darkness to seem to prevail. Sometimes we can get so discouraged with life that we get distracted. We think God's forgotten about us, or God's not there.

The reality is, He's always there working out His plans and purposes. Sometimes His plan makes no sense to us. We're like the disciples thinking we have life figured out, and then when our way isn't working, we scatter.

We can know all kinds of facts about the Bible. We can be like Peter, a person other people look to for spiritual leadership.

But if we're not walking by faith, we can fail big time.

The Bible says: *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Faith means we look to God's demonstrated faithfulness in the past, and say, on the basis of God's promises for me now, I trust Him even though everything around me looks pretty bleak.

Peter was taken down by his sin. He was humiliated and ashamed. But God led on the path to restoration. Are you ready to walk down that path with God?

Jesus said: *the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

Come in faith believing that Christ died for you and He'll make you a child of God.

Christian, come confessing your failure and he'll cleanse you and restore you today.