**Calvary Fellowship 3.5.2023 Matthew 26:57-75 “Rock Bottom”**

* **I did a poll on my Instagram account a while back that asked, “If U could have 1 superpower, what would it be?” - Here were the options I gave (pic)**
* Think about which U would answer - I admit, all of these are good
* 1 is best & that is, eat whatever U want & not gain weight - I recognize some of U already have that & U have no idea how amazing that is
* Your lack of recognition of that is why your friends secretly dislike U
* Like Pastor George, 1 time a church that I helped brought 3 dozen donuts to Calvary to say thank you for me helping them out
* Everyone was eating 1/2 a donut, watching their calories, trying not to go overboard - George ate 6 donuts & then ate lunch
* The next day we were all having a conversation about gaining a pound or 2 from the day before - George comes in & says, “Man, I lost 3 lbs yesterday.”
* Just saying, that statement triggers me
* Well anyway, the 1 that received the lowest score was unlimited knowledge
* I was surprised - being a human google has its advantages
* Telepathy was 3rd - the ability to make people do what U want - i.e. Professor X
* But the #1 answer was time travel so U could go back & fix your mistakes
* **B/c that’s what all of us want - all of us have decisions, moments, words that we wish were different & we’d do anything to go back & change it**
* Here’s what we say, “If I knew then, what I know now, things would be different”
* I wouldn’t have dated that person/ I wouldn’t have bought that stuff/ I wouldn’t have gone there/ I wouldn’t have said that/I wouldn’t have done that
* Here’s why we say that - b/c there’s an understanding that comes from being on the backend of an experience that U don’t have on the front end
* It’s why we do something & then later we see what we should have done w/ total clarity - we call it experience - we can it trial & error - but really, it’s wisdom
* Wisdom is the ability to not just have knowledge, but apply that knowledge to the right circumstance at the right time & know what to do
* **Here’s why I tell U this - b/c we’re in message #42 of our series the Gospel of Matthew & Jesus has just been betrayed & arrested**
* All of the disciples fled when Jesus was arrested, but Peter is still hanging around b/c he wants to see what’s going to happen
* Now, if you’re a Bible student, U know Peter ends up denying knowing Jesus
* But the real question we should be asking is, “How did Peter get there?”
* Remember, 3 hours before he said he’d be willing to die for Jesus - 1 hour ago, Peter tried to cut someone’s head off like he was a Highlander
* But somehow all of that devolved into Peter denying to even know Jesus
* And here’s why this is important for us personally, b/c no 1 sets out to sin or fail or fall - but it happens all the time b/c we aren’t being intentional about not sinning or failing or falling…

**———(v. 57-58)———**

**#1 - I Need to Know Where My Actions Lead**

* **Now, Jesus is on trial here, but U hav to understand that Jesus is going to undergo 6 trials before 9AM on Friday**
* In fact, what we’re reading is the 2nd trial that Jesus undergoes
* The 1st is found in John 18 where they take Jesus to Annas the high priest
* Now, we read that Caiaphas is the high priest & that’s true
* But Annas was the high priest before Caiaphas - in fact, Annas is Caiaphas’ father-in-law - Annas became high priest in 6AD
* Quirinius, governor of Syria appointed him to the position, but in 15 AD, the new governor wanted someone who was easier to manipulate
* 3 other high priests are appointed before we get to Caiaphas (who were all related to Annas) - so Annas is the power broker pulling the strings
* That’s why, when they arrest Jesus, they take Him to who’s really in charge
* Then they bring him to Caiaphas & they have to find 2 people to misrepresent Jesus’ words to get anything on Him that could stick
* **But Peter is following at a distance - here’s where the problem begins**
* Understand, the seeds to Peter’s denial happened hours before it happened
* It started when he was overconfident in his own strength, thinking nothing could faze him - that’s a dangerous place to live
* Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying - then he chopped off a guy’s ear when we should have been listening to what Jesus was saying
* And now he’s following at a distance - listen, most of us know where certain actions lead -wisdom is deciding to stop b/c U know it’s going in a bad direction
* **In 1995, I was driving to Illinois from Florida b/c my band was playing in a festival w/ about 25,000 people - it was huge gig for us**
* But I didn’t travel w/ my band - I stopped by Tallahassee & picked up Carey, her sister & a friend of ours & we started out 20 hour drive
* B/c of when we left, we couldn’t stop - we had to drive straight through so I could get to the festival on time
* We all took turns driving & I got the wheel around 1AM, just before we hit St. Louis & I was supposed to drive the last leg of the ride
* By 7AM, I was a zombie & everyone was asleep - in fact, we stopped at a stop sign & I fell asleep
* My friend John who was in the front seat, woke up to find me asleep & the car had rolled into the middle of the street
* He opened his eyes & there was an 18 wheeler honking as he nearly sent us all to heaven a little early - Needless to say, that woke me up
* I knew we were less than hour away - so I floored it to get there as fast as possible - I was exhausted & I figured the less time I was on the road the better - Even though, a 1/2 asleep guy doing 80 isn’t wise
* So we’re driving through this little town & Carey says, “Bob, maybe U should slow down.”
* I say, “Carey, there’s what, like 1 cop in this whole town? What are the chances that he’s going to see me & stop me?”
* No sooner did the words come out of my mouth, than the sirens went off behind me & the 1 cop in that town pulled me over
* **Now, I tell U that story & even w/o ever having heard it, U say, “Yeah, I know how this is going to end” - that’s b/c U have some wisdom**
* The key is to apply it to your own life & look at situations & say, “Let’s take this to its logical conclusion” - I tell my kids this all the time
* Why? B/c foolish people see what could happen, but they decide that it won’t happen to them - then they suffer the consequences
* “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” (Proverbs 27:12 NIV)
* If U don’t want to mess up your future, U need to start asking where your actions are leading U - and if they are aren’t leading were U want to go, change
* That’s what the word repentance means - it means to change your direction
* And wise is the person who looks down the road & when they decide they don’t like where it leads, changes to the road that God is calling U to

**———(v. 59-68)———**

**#2 - I Need to Rightly Remember What Happened**

* **Here’s what’s taking place - the religious leaders are looking for a reason to put Jesus to death - so understand, they arrested Him w/o any charges**
* Now that they have Him, they’re trying to come up w/ a charge that will stick
* So they find 2 people to say that Jesus said, “Destroy the temple of God & I will rebuild it in 3 days” - so did Jesus actually say that?
* “So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body." (John 2:18-21 NKJV)
* So did Jesus say what these false witnesses were alleging? Yes, but they were giving the right information w/ the wrong implication
* 1 of the 10 commandments is to not bear false witness - that’s command #9
* We think that this just means lying - it does mean lying - why? B/c if U can’t tell the truth to others U can’t have a relationship w/ anyone
* But it’s also means giving the technically correct information, but using that in the wrong way than it was originally meant
* **When Carey & I 1st met, I got her # & I was supposed to call her & I didn’t**
* I saw her a few days later & said, “Hey, I’m sorry I didn’t call. My friend was in the hospital & I had to visit.” She was understanding & accepted my apology
* The problem started when she found out “my friend” in the hospital was the girl I dated before I met her - right information w/ the wrong implication
* What I said was true, except it wasn’t - it was deceptive & I was using the truth to be deceptive - that’s exactly what’s happening here
* Jesus wasn’t talking about the temple in Jerusalem - He was talking about His body as the temple that would be destroyed & raise up in 3 days
* Why was this blasphemous? B/c to speak against the temple was to speak against God - even though the religious leaders would swear oaths by the temple & it didn’t means anything
* To them, it only means something if U swore by the gold of the temple
* **Now, here’s how this intersects w/ our lives - b/c we will rewrite history at times & modify what happened so we look better**
* Listen, there are people who will tell their sad, deranged version of reality so many times, that they start believing that’s what actually happened
* Listen, we will never learn from what happened if we won’t own what happened
* **Here's what that means for us - it means we have to take responsibility**
* It means that the relationship ended & we got into another relationship & U see some of the same issues coming up as last time
* That means it wasn’t all him or all her - it means we have to recognize that we played a part & we own it
* It means that he or she may be all of those things you're saying, but owning it is saying, "I was lonely. I knew better, but I didn't want to be alone."
* It means that we when we look at the debt that’s piled up on us, we own it & say, “I was jealous of what someone else & I tried to keep up.”
* It means looking at the marriage & saying, “I should have confronted him or her, but I was afraid.” - That’s owning it
* U don’t have to make everything that happened your fault - but we do have to own the piece that belongs to us b/c that’s when change can happen
* “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8)
* Listen to what Jesus is saying - He’s saying there's a connection between purity & clarity - what does this mean?
* It means the more we will own up to the mistakes, accept our share of the blame, to not to hide from the truth - the clearer we’ll see the future
* The other thing is, we need to start doing the things that bring the results we’re looking for -sometimes, we do nothing & then blame God nothing has happened
* Sometimes we just didn’t want to put forth the necessary effort to change
* If you’re a single guy & you’re praying for God to bring U a wife - buy yourself a new shirt & a new pair of jeans - that He-Man t-shirt isn’t going to cut it
* Bring your Bible to church - mark that thing up, so that when U open it, people see ink on those pages
* Then the kind of girl that you’d be interested in will look on & say, “This is a man of God. This guy loves the Lord. This is the kind of man I want to marry.”
* God is the 1 who’s going do it, but sitting in your room playing video games
* B/c I can promise U, there’s no girl who is impressed that you’re a level 90 garden troll - but she will be impressed if you’re committed to walking w/ God
* And while I’m on the subject - Listen, Carey & I have a friend who refused to wear make-up (it’s a girl, by the way) or dress nice
* her standard answer was, “I want a man who love me for me, not for what I wear or for my make-up.” - sounds good, but she’s still single
* It reminds me of what 1 of my professors in college said when a girl in my class asked him what he thought about girls wearing make-up
* He said, “If the barn needs painting, paint it.”
* Here’s the point - God wants to partner w/ us in change - so do the things God is calling U to do - right information w/ right implication & God will work in U

**———(v. 69-75)———**

**#3 - I Need to Believe that God can Transform Me**

* **Before we get into Peter’s denial, I want to talk about the trial itself that we just read - there’s an ancient Jewish document calle the Mishna**
* The Mishna is the written version of the oral law - according to Jewish tradition, this is the interpretations of the Torah that God gave Moses
* What’s important for our purposes is there is a section called Sanhedrin - this was 18 rules for the ruling Jewish council on death penalty cases
* #1 - a trial could not be held at night
* #2 - U could not question the accused directly - it was protection against self-incrimination (a prelude to our 5th amendment)
* #3 - Trials could not be held on the Sabbath or feast days
* #4 - The offender was to be verbally warned by 2 witnesses that the deed he was about to commit was a crime for which he could stand trial - so at most, the Sanhedrin should have issued Jesus a warning
* #5 - conflicting testimony is cause for a case dismissal - but here it goes on
* #6 - The Sanhedrin couldn’t try a capital case outside of their regular meeting place - here, it happens in someone’s private home
* #7 - a verdict could not be declared the same day as the trial
* #8 - the verdict of blasphemy was bogus
* U could only be found guilty of blasphemy if U invoked the name of YHWH
* Jesus doesn’t do that - He says “the power” or literally “The Mighty One”
* Now, there is a problem - they just sentenced Jesus to death, but according Roman law, they don’t have the authority to execute capital punishment
* That’s why next time we’re going to meet Pontus Pilate - a guy who is powerful, but on thin ice w/ Rome & 1 more problem w/ the Jews & he’s out of a job
* And the Jewish leaders are going to be able to leverage him for their purposes in his weakened political state
* **So what does this have to do w/ Peter? Everything**
* If the religious leaders were illegally sentencing Jesus to death, what do U think that meant for His disciples? It meant, they were next
* So as Peter is watching this, someone asks if he’s 1 of Jesus’ disciples
* Peter says no - another girl sees him & says, “This guy was w/ Jesus” & Peter denies it - then a group say, “You’re 1 of His disciples. Your speech betrays U”
* What does that mean? It means he spoke w/ a certain accent
* “And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, ‘Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.’” (Mark 14:70 NKJV)
* People from Galilee had a certain accent - they were considered country people - they weren’t big city people like those in Jerusalem
* **A couple of years ago, our family was driving in the South & we stopped for lunch - everyone was ordering & I ordered a bottle of water to drink**
* The girls says in the thickest southern accent I’d ever heard, “We don’t have bottle of water, but we have Sweet tea”
* I’m thinking, “That’s not anywhere near the same thing, but ok.”
* But we recognize people’s geography based on their accent
* Listen, I grew up in Boston - I know all about local accents
* I preached at a church in NE 1 time & afterwards a guy walks up to me & says, “Praise the Lord Pastor. What U said about Jesus was wicked awesome.”
* But Jesus spent most of his time in Galilee & was considered a Galilean preacher & almost all of his disciples were from Galilee
* But Peter denies it & every time is gets more intense, until we read that he curses & swears that he doesn’t who Jesus is
* Understand, when it says “curses & swears”, he’s not talking about 4-letter words - it’s much worse than that
* The word “curse” is katanathemazo - it means to be cursed to the lowest hell
* To “swear” is to take an solemn oath that he’s telling the truth
* Listen, this was Peter’s darkest moment - but I’m grateful it wasn’t his final moment - this was rock bottom for Peter - a place he never wanted to return
* But it would only be about 50 days from this day - very close to the same place where he denied Jesus where Peter gave his 1st public sermon about Jesus
* He gave that sermon & at the end, 3,000 people were saved
* A few weeks later, Peter & John heal a man at the temple & the Sanhedrin are furious that they are praying in the name of Jesus
* And Peter is now forced to stand before the same people who sentenced Jesus to death - but Peter is a changed men b/c he’s experience ether grace of God
* “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.’” (Acts 4:8-10 NKJV)
* “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13 NKJV)
* Here’s the point - your future doesn’t have to be a repeat of the past
* U can experience the grace & forgiveness of God & be transformed by Him
* **So here’s my question to U - do U want to be free?**
* U can let the past own U & past mistakes can become your prison, or U can be like Peter & let the failure be the moment where U experience God’s grace
* And that becomes the beginning of your comeback
* God wants to set U free from the things that are holding U back & holding U down - He wants to change your life starting right now
* All it takes is for U to open up your heart to Him
* U might be saying to yourself, “I’m not into God” - well, guess what? He’s into U
* I can tell U that b/v that was my story - I wasn’t looking for God - but I’m so grateful He was looking for me
* **Listen - Jesus rose from the dead so your life could be forgiven & changed - So maybe it’s time for U to rise**
* Rise above your past - rise above your failures - rise above your pain
* Rise above your guilt - rise above your fear - rise above your doubt
* It’s time to rise from who U used to be & enter into the life God has for U
* God wants to take your life & transform it - and that begins w/ forgiveness
* So I’m going to invite U to rise & meet me at the front of this stage as U take a step in God’s direction…