

Don't Go There (Part 1) – John 13:21-38

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John 13:21-38.

Having just celebrated Passion Week, we're going to be studying it for the next 7 ½ chapters. Almost through the end of the book. Studying what happened and especially what Jesus said in chapters 13-17. The night before his crucifixion.

He started, if you remember, with the famous foot-washing; at The Last Supper. To basically say, "Wear the towel!" Serve like I serve. That was v1-20 from a few weeks ago. And if you missed it, I'd encourage you to go online and check it out. It's a powerful text.

Then, in v21-38, he builds on that, and addresses three more issues. Two by example, and one by command. To basically say, "Don't go there." Don't go the way of Judas, don't go the way of Peter, and don't grow cold.

Stay *away* from the ways of the world. Stay *away* from the ways of Satan. Stay *away* from denying Christ. That's the overview.

John 13:21 – *After saying these things* [about one of them not being clean, v10; and one of them lifting his heel against him, v18], *Jesus was troubled in his spirit*. Unsettled to the core. Turbulent of soul. It's the same word that was used when he wept over the death of Lazarus. (11:33). And thought about the cross in chapter 12. (27) He was deeply troubled.

[21b] *And testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."* One of you will give me up. Let me down. Hand me over. Even though I just washed your feet.

Talk about awkward. [22] *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke*. We can only imagine some of their expressions. They didn't know.

Which means Judas was a good faker. Able to live a lie right in front of them. Acting like he was good when he was anything but.

Don't go there. Don't live a lie. And if you are, stop. Repent. Because you're not fooling God, and it only leads to worse. More lies. More sin. More trouble.

[23] *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, [24] so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking*. Based on all the evidence, that's John. The one *whom Jesus loved* is the Apostle John; the *author*. (John 21:24)

That's how he refers to himself four different times; between here and the *end* of his account. Most likely out of humility, and possibly out of caution; to avoid trouble. Trouble with the authorities who eventually exiled him to the island of Patmos for what he wrote and preached.

In any case, [24b] *Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking*. [25] *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?"* I always wondered about the *leaning back* part, until I found out that in those days, at formal

dinner, they would lay on the floor to eat, propped up on one side by their elbow, with their head *next* to the table and their feet away. Probably at a slight angle.

So if Jesus was right next to John, he could have easily leaned back and said, "*Lord, who is it?*"

[26] *Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."* Normally that was an offer of special friendship. Like when Boaz invited Ruth to eat with him in the Old Testament. Saying, "*Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.*" Ruth 2:14.

But here, it symbolized something else. First, his betrayer; and second, his body. His offer of bread and wine was part of the last supper, that became The Lord's Supper. *This is my body, which is given for you*. (Luke 22:19b) That particular piece of bread was *full* of meaning.

[26b] *So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas* [probably on the other side of him], *the son of Simon Iscariot*. [To distinguish him from the *other* Judas among the 12.] [27] *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."*

[28] *Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him*. [John may have had an idea, but it probably wasn't clear.] [29] *Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast [the Feast of Unleavened Bread the next 8 days],"* or *that he should give something to the poor*. "Do what you need to do."

[30] *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night*. Dark. No doubt a reference to the darkness of evil that encroached. Darkness that invaded his soul. *Satan entered into him* it says.

Which leads us to the first takeaway; the first warning.

Don't be complacent – resist the devil and stay true (v21-30)

You say, "Oh pastor, I'd never betray Jesus. I'd never let him down. I'd never leave him."

Really? Judas did. And he was with him in *person*. In the flesh. Walking with him and talking with him for over three years! Asking questions and getting answers. Seeing signs and experiencing miracles. If it can happen to him, it can happen to anybody.

Not that you can *lose* your salvation. Not that God would ever let you *go* if you're one of his own. Not that Satan could enter *you*. But that you could still turn your back on Jesus. And bring great shame to him. Great harm to the *Gospel*. Great damage to the *church*.

And if you're *not* really saved, Satan really *could* enter you. Just like Judas. And do even more damage. Even more harm. Hardening your heart, controlling your life, and numbing your soul.

So whatever you do, don't be complacent.

• If it can happen to Judas, it can happen to anybody

Nobody's exempt. Nobody's immune. And one of the worst things you can do is let down your guard and coast. Lower your defenses and relax. Step on the slippery slope of sin.

Think about it. Judas didn't start *out* bad. He didn't *start* with betrayal on his mind. He started with a seed of discontentment. Dissatisfied with what God provided, and wanting more. Like when he objected to Mary's expensive ointment for Jesus' feet. (John 12:4) He didn't want to sell it for the poor, he wanted it for himself.

And that seed of discontentment eventually turned into a weed of greed; *always* wanting more. And the greed into a thicket of thievery. Like it says in John 12:6 – *He was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.* He stole, to feed his desires.

And the more he fostered such desires, and acted on such impulses, the more he opened the door of his heart to *Satan's* influence. Like it says in John 13:2 – *the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas . . . to betray Jesus.* To give him up. Because Judas's ongoing unrepentant sin of greed and thievery *exposed* him to such influence.

It's like Paul says in Ephesians 4:27 – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.* Another sin. Don't continue in *any* sin and thereby give Satan the opportunity to influence you. The opportunity to plant sinful thoughts in *your* heart, like he did Judas. Inciting him to approach the chief priests for *payment* if he betrayed Jesus. (Matthew 26:14-16)

The ongoing *sin* of Judas exposed him to the ongoing influence of Satan. Just like your ongoing, unrepentant sin will expose you to his influence.

Then, to make matters worse, Judas sinned at The Last Supper. Spurning Jesus' offer of friendship, and eating the bread that represented him. As if he believed in him and followed him.

At which point Satan *entered* Judas. (27) He didn't just influence him from the outside, he got inside. Indwelling his soul. Exercising even more control. More power.

The point being, if it can happen to Judas it can happen to anybody. *Anyone* can start strong and finish poorly. Anyone can indulge in sin and open the door. Whether it's opening the door to his *flaming darts*, if you're a believer (Ephesians 6:16); or his evil presence if you're not; if you're faking it.

Either way you'll betray him, and bring shame to the name and hardness to your heart. Don't go there.

Several years ago, I added a prayer to my prayer list to that end. It comes from **John Piper** in a 2005 sermon, and I can't say it better. Speaking to the Lord, it says: "Keep me! Preserve me! Defeat every rising rebellion! Overcome every niggling doubt! Deliver from every destructive temptation! Nullify every fatal allurements! Expose every demonic deception! Tear down every arrogant argument! Shape me! Incline me! Hold me! Master me! Do whatever you must do to keep me trusting you and fearing you till Jesus comes or calls." (John Piper, *Sustained By Sovereign Grace: The Ground Of Assurance*, 2005)

One of the best ways to remain vigilant, is to ask God for help; every single day. One of the best ways to avoid complacency, is to draw near and lean in. Lean back. Because if Judas could grow complacent, anybody can. It's a slippery slope.

Plus, we tend to overestimate *our* strength and resolve, and underestimate Satan's. In fact, in *our* corner of evangelical church-world, we don't give Satan a second thought.

Meanwhile, the Bible tells us to resist him. Put on the armor of God, and in the strength of God *resist* the devil. Which implies that he's active. Prowling. Devouring. Deceiving. Destroying. He's not to be feared, but neither is he to be taken lightly.

I'm reading a biography about **Jonathan Edwards** these days, a pastor and theologian from the 1700's, that reminded me of this in no uncertain terms. Listen to how they summed up his thoughts on Satan.

"Though he is bounded by the will of God (see Job 1), Satan roams over all the earth, observing it, and roaring with bloodlust. He zeroes in on those who give themselves over to sin, feeding their hunger for evil until he secures their damnation.

As they suffer his torments, he watches over them, gleeful, victorious, roaring with pride, hungry for more. His thirst for souls is never sated, and until Christ returns to earth and defeats him in the last battle, he will not cease to destroy men, women, and children from every corner of the world."

(*The Essential Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to the Life and Teaching of America's Greatest Theologian* by Owen Strachan, Douglas Sweeney, 75)

Satan's no joke. So whatever you do, resist him. Just say no. It's that simple. *Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7b) Resist his influence, resist his temptations, his accusations, his doubts, everything.

Do you not have enough of your *own* doubts? Your own temptations? Your own rationalizations? I think so. So why *add* to your woes? Why add to your problems? Resist the devil and stay true. True to the Lord, true to his Word, true to his ways, and true to his church.

And do so especially when things are hard. When things don't go your way. When problems arise and you're tired. When attacks mount and you're thin. Stay true even then. Even when you lack something you need or want. The first of 5 situations in which to stay true.

- **Stay true even when you lack**

When you lack enough money to go on vacation. Or fix your car. Or buy a house. Stay true. Even when the bills exceed your income. And there are more days left in the month than money left for the days. Stay true. Don't cut corners, don't cheat, and don't lose faith.

Second . . .

- **Stay true even when you suffer**

There's nothing like pain to wear you down and make you want to throw in the towel. Whether physical suffering from disease or injury, or emotional suffering from betrayal and loss. Or just the exhaustion of pouring yourself out day in and day out.

Don't succumb. Don't let down. Don't get complacent. Stay true.

Third . . .

• **Stay true even when you're self-sufficient**

When your freezer's full and you don't *need* God; you don't *need* to pray for your daily bread. Your cars are new, your house is good, and your cup "runneth" over. And with it, a massive amount of time and effort to hold it all together. And keep the distractions to a dull roar.

Don't get sucked in. Don't lose focus. Stay true and draw near even when you're self-sufficient.

Fourth . . .

• **Stay true even when you're persecuted**

When your friends are no longer friends because you no longer party. When your promotion doesn't happen because "you're not a good fit." When you don't get the business because of what you stand for.

Don't let it matter. Resist the devil and stay true.

And last . . .

• **Stay true even when you wait**

Especially when you wait. When all you hear from God is silence. When all you feel is uncertainty. When all you need is direction. When the thing you most hope for is nowhere to be found.

Stay true even when you wait. Because waiting is often God's greatest catalyst to do his greatest work. In you, around you, and for you. Stay true even when.

That's the first takeaway. Don't go the way of Judas. Don't be complacent. Resist the devil and stay true.

Prayer – Father, keep us faithful or take us home. Do whatever it takes. Increase our vigilance and remove our complacency. Fortify our heart and steel our resolve. For your glory and our joy.

You Are Loved