

See the Son. Believe for Life.

Willingly Arrested, Thoroughly Rejected - John 18:1-27

Our family has really enjoyed a recent PBS series called *All Creatures Great and Small*. It tells the story of a Veterinarian who worked in 1930's rural England named James Herriot. It's based on a number of books that Herriot wrote that describe his experiences. In the series James joins the Veterinary practice of an older vet named Siegfried. Siegfried is a little grumpy and likes things done his way. He's essentially a control freak. As James gets more experience and becomes a very good vet, Siegfried has to wrestle with either giving up some of his control over the practice or risk James moving on.

My guess is that there are some (many?) in this room who often struggle with issues of control. We want things done our way on our timetable. It's a very common human desire to want power and control. The question is, if you had the ability to control circumstances as you saw fit according to your desires, what would you do with it? What would your priorities be?

There's only been one human being who had the type of control and power that many of us long for. And what did he do with it? Let me remind you of his goal. Look back to John 17:26. Jesus has used his authority to make God's name known to us and He promises to continue to make it known so that we can be immersed in the love of God. Jesus uses His control to make it absolutely clear to us that God loves us as His children. How does he do this? Romans 5:8.

I think it's no accident that Jesus's prayer ends this way and then we move immediately to the events that lead to His death. If His death puts God's love for us on display, then we need to truly understand what's happening as Jesus goes to the cross. So, today in John 18:1-27 we are going to see **2 Foundations to Solidify our Understanding of Christ's Death.**

1. Though Having All Authority, Jesus Laid Down His Life for His People (vv. 1-14)

Look with me at verse 1. What words? The words He gave to the disciples in the Upper Room in chapters 13-17. He told them about His death and promised to be with them through the Holy Spirit. He gave them these words somewhere in Jerusalem on Thursday night before Passover. Perhaps some of them had been

spoken while they walked but at this point they leave Jerusalem behind and cross the brook Kidron to go into the Garden of Gethsemane.

The fact that verse 1 tells us that He and his disciples entered the garden means that it was probably walled in and could possibly have been owned by a wealthy individual who let Jesus and his disciples use it. They had clearly used it before. Look at verse 2. The last time we saw Judas was in 13:26-30. Judas left the Passover meal to go do his evil work and now he re-enters the picture. Look at verse 3.

There are two groups of soldiers here. First, we have a tenth of a Roman cohort, which would have been anywhere between 200-600 Roman soldiers. Then, we have some officers from the chief priests and pharisees. These were Jewish soldiers under the authority of the chief priests, possibly temple guards. So, we have a group of Jewish soldiers and a group of Roman soldiers. The Romans came along because Jesus was clearly a popular and influential figure and Passover was a volatile time politically. They wanted to ensure there was no uprising from the people and that things went smoothly. They were well armed.

So, imagine Jesus and his disciples inside this walled olive grove when they begin to hear the sound of approaching soldiers and lots of them. They are carrying torches and weapons and they enter the garden. Look at what Jesus does in verse 4.

Jesus does not stumble into trouble with the authorities. He knows everything that will happen and that's because it's all been planned. Jesus was not caught up in a political struggle where He eventually lost out. They do not take him by force, He steps forward and initiates with authority by asking them who they are seeking. He's in charge here. They answer in verse 5.

Jesus's answer could be read simply "I Am." Notice what happens in verse 6. In the book of Isaiah, the only one to use this name for Himself is Yahweh, the only true God. Jesus has used this before in the Gospel of John to indicate His deity and it has the full effect of an encounter with Deity here. If Jesus can overpower this group of soldiers with a simple statement of his name, He can certainly defeat them and do whatever He wants. He can destroy them or run. But what does he do? Look at verses 7-9. He uses his power and authority to command that His

disciples be let go, just as He promised in John 17:12. One author said it this way, *“The King was not being captured; he was giving himself over to his enemies.”*

And yet, as so often happens with followers of Christ, we try to take things into our own hands. We ignore Jesus’s power and authority and think our methods are better and more productive. Look what Peter does in verse 10. This is probably just a small dagger and Peter is facing down hundreds of well-armed and well trained soldiers. Kudos for Bravado but he’s completely missing the point, which Jesus makes clear in verse 11.

Jesus uses the imagery of drinking a cup to describe His death here. He’s taking this from the OT. Let’s look at one place in particular, Isaiah 51:17, 22. Israel had drunk the cup of God’s wrath for their sins and ended up in exile. Jesus picks up this language and says that He will drink it for them. He will experience and absorb the wrath of God for sin on their behalf as their substitute. He will suffer as if he were an evildoer. One of my favorite hymns is the song *Before the Throne of God Above*. Here’s the second verse.

When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see him there
who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the just is satisfied
to look on him and pardon me,
to look on him and pardon me.

God’s righteous justice is satisfied because Jesus drank this cup willingly. Now, the Apostle John makes this point again in verse 14 as Jesus is arrested and taken to trial before the Jews. Begin in verse 12. It’s the Jewish soldiers who ultimately arrest Him and bind Him and take Him away. They take Him to Annas. Now, Caiaphas was actually the High priest at this time and Annas, his father-in-law had been the high priest but had been deposed by the Romans. But Annas was still like the Godfather of the High priests and He held the real power. So the Jews took Jesus to Annas first. But notice the comment John makes in verse 14.

Remember this? John 11:45-53 which immediately follows the resurrection of Lazarus. And notice the comment John makes in verse 52. Combine this with John 18:14 and we understand that Jesus will drink the cup of God's just wrath for sin for people from every tribe, tongue, and nation so that they can enter eternal life. This has been His message all along and it has been consistently rejected. This brings us to our next foundation.

2. Though Rejected, Jesus Made the Purpose of His Ministry Clear (vv. 15-27)

Now, you need to understand how this entire section, verses 15-27 fit together to get the message John is sending. Jesus has been taken to the High Priest's house. In all likelihood, Annas and Caiaphas have two separate houses that share a courtyard. In verses 15-18 we find Peter and another disciple following Jesus to the courtyard. Let's read these verses.

The other disciple is John. Peter flat out denies here that he is one of Jesus's disciples. Of course, Jesus had predicted this in John 13:36-38 and it's beginning to come to pass. What happens to Peter? He's just been so bold and confident in the Upper Room and he's even gone after a guy with a dagger and cut his ear off. Why the deceit here in the face of pressure? We don't know for sure but there are lots of options. It could be self-preservation, fear of pain, shock at what has happened. But this won't be the only time Peter caves to pressure and denies the Lord.

But, before we get to the rest of Peter's denials in verses 25-27, John interrupts what's happening to Peter and moves the scene inside to Jesus and Annas. So, this passage is set up like a sandwich. Peter's story of being questioned and denying the truth on the outside and Jesus's questioning and response on the inside. John has set it up this way so that we read these two accounts together with the middle being the core. We are meant to contrast Peter's failing, deceit, and denial with Jesus's commitment to truth and clarity.

Let's look at what happens to Jesus. Begin in verse 19. Annas has two concerns, Jesus' followers, and his teaching. He wants to know if Jesus has amassed an army to revolt against Rome and yet, the core of his concerns is theological, or what He taught. Jesus responds in verse 20. Jesus has been the same in private as He has in public. He's made His teaching clear in the Temple and in Synagogues.

Thousands of people have heard it. Which is why Jesus says what He says in verse 21.

Now, you need to understand that according to Jewish tradition, a trial was focused on witnesses, not the testimony of the one accused. Annas really shouldn't have been asking Jesus anything but should have been providing witnesses to accuse Jesus of wrong done. This is an open rebuke from Jesus to Annas. Which is why the soldier responds like he does in verse 22. Jesus answers back and places the burden of proof on anyone who would accuse him of deceit. Look at verse 23.

It's interesting that Jesus tells this soldier to "bear witness". This is what Jesus has done throughout the Gospel through his words and works. Listen to John 5:36-39. Here's the point for us. Jesus was rejected throughout His ministry, but the purpose of his ministry is abundantly clear through the Gospels. The burden of proof is on those who deny Jesus as God or deny that He rose from the dead or performed miracles. You can read the Gospel accounts and have confidence that what Jesus said and did is true.

Annas is getting nowhere with this questioning. Verse 24. Now the scene shifts back to the courtyard and the contrast between Jesus and Peter. He gets asked two more times if He's with Jesus. Look at verses 25-27. The words of Jesus come to pass. 3 Denials from Peter.

Now, this is tragic. We hate to see Peter buckle under the pressure and deny His Lord. Yet, there's one important detail that we skipped over in verse 18 that I want to draw your attention to. John, who wrote this Gospel, was clearly an eyewitness of all of this because He notes that it was a charcoal fire. There's one other place in John's Gospel where he makes note of a charcoal fire. Any ideas as to where it is? In John 21 the resurrected Christ has just helped Peter and some of the other disciples catch a ton of fish. Peter realizes it's the Lord and jumps out of the boat and swims to shore. What does he find there? Look at verse 9.

I wonder if Peter remembered a night just a few days earlier when he had been at a charcoal fire. It's here that the Lord goes on to question him and by grace restore him. Imagine that. Denied, not once, but three times, and yet, restored to fellowship and service. This is what John 17:26 is talking about. Jesus will continually make his love for His people known through grace, forgiveness, and

restoration. All that's He's looking for is humble repentance of sin and a mustard seed of genuine trust and faith in Him. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions

1/22/23

- In what ways does the prayer of Jesus in John 17 connect to John 18:1-27?
- Romans 5:8 says that God “shows” or “demonstrates” His love for us through the death of Christ. What exactly does the death of Christ show us?
- Why does it matter that Jesus willingly gave Himself up to be arrested? What does this teach us about God’s purposes in Christ’s death?
- In what ways does Peter use his own methods and wisdom in verses 10-11? What would it have looked like for him to trust God here?
- Are there particular ways you are tempted to use your own wisdom rather than to trust God?
- Why does Jesus use the language of “drinking a cup” in verse 11? Where does this come from?
- Can you think of other passages of Scripture that speak of God’s wrath being satisfied on Jesus?
- What are some practical daily implications of the fact that God’s wrath has been spent on Jesus and we are now at peace with God?
- Explain the structure of verses 15-27. How does it effect our interpretation of this passage when we see the structure?
- What do verses 20-21 tell us about the life and ministry of Jesus?
- Have you ever interacted with someone who denies that Jesus is God and/or says the purpose of Jesus in the Gospels is unclear? How can we respond to someone like that?
- What other scene in the Gospel of John should we connect to Peter’s denial here in chapter 18?
- What’s one truth you can take away from this passage that can be encouraging to you the rest of this week?