

**The Word Became Flesh  
(Week 56)  
John 18:12-27  
“Trials and Denials”**

**Introduction**

**“Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”  
Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not  
crow until you have denied me three times.”** **John 13:37-38**

I simply love the gospel of *John*. I am especially partial to the **fifteenth and the eighteenth chapters**. For in those two particular passages, there are far more spiritual truths than can be seen at a casual glance. In **John 15**, we are shown exactly what it takes to be effective in our Christian walk. We learn that apart from the wonder working power that comes from Christ alone, we can do nothing. In our flesh, we are indeed a faulty and frail species. And we see this very same truth illustrated for us in **John Chapter Eighteen**.

First, we see Jesus’ Prayer, Power, and Purpose for coming. And after His arrest, we are given a tutorial of how precarious the flesh of man is, when juxtaposed against the faithfulness of The Savior. It is a narrative of trials verses denials. And the manner in which John sets forth this narrative (which is of course inspired by The Holy Spirit) is nothing less than spectacular. The way he goes back and forth between Peter’s struggles and Jesus’ steadfastness is wondrously composed. And it solidifies for us, once and for all, that our “good intentions” in and of themselves have no real power. This passage should serve to prove to us all the importance of **John 15**.

**“Apart from Me, you can do nothing.”**

**John 15:5b NIV**

After Jesus commanded the soldiers that they were to allow the rest of His disciples to leave, not only did the soldiers comply with the command, but His disciples immediately, and to the last man, ran off into the night to leave Him to His foes. Mark, in his account of the disciples hasty abandonment of their Master, tells us that one young follower of Jesus (not one of the twelve) lingered there a bit longer than the rest as they scattered. When the soldiers made an attempt to arrest the young man, he wriggled free of his clothing and ran off into the night in abject nakedness (**Mark 14:51**). The irony of this must not be lost on us. For here were these men who had left everything behind in order to follow Jesus, and when things got rough, they were willing to leave behind even the clothes on their backs to abandon Him! It is a sad commentary indeed on the unfaithful natures of men. Once again, we are nothing apart from Christ.

The soldiers bound Jesus’ hands and led Him away for the first phase of His six separate trials. Three of which were religious in nature, and three of which were secular. **All** of them were a sham. In the first phase, The Savior was taken to the home of the infamous ex-High Priest Annas. We will talk more about him later. But suffice to say for now that he was an evil, greedy, and ambitious man. But even though he is called the High Priest in this narrative, he was most certainly not the High Priest at the time. But make no mistake. He was the power, the malevolent force, if you will, behind the vicious ruling Sanhedrin. And he hated Jesus with a passion!

So, as we study this passage today, I want you to not only know the facts of the matter, but also to fully understand what The Spirit is saying to us. There are a great deal of so called Christ-followers out there, who are overly impressed with themselves. They have somehow convinced themselves that they are a cut above, when it comes down to faithfulness. May I say to you this morning, if Christ Himself did not keep us safe, we would all be treacherously unfaithful! All the glory belongs to Jesus. He is faithful, even when we are faithless.

**Psalm 1** teaches us that if we are to be “blessed” (meaning happy in Christ), then we must cling to The Word and not align ourselves with the world. But here in **John Chapter Eighteen**, we see Simon Peter, a man who loved Christ with his whole heart, do the exact opposite of this teaching. And the results were catastrophic for him. It is a lesson that we would do well to learn.

**“How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the  
pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers.”** **Psalm 1:1**

**Walking in the advice of the wicked. (vs. 12-17)**

**Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus and tied him up. First they led him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be better for one man to die for the people.**

**Peter Denies Jesus**

**Simon Peter was following Jesus, as was another disciple. That disciple was an acquaintance of the high priest; so he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. But Peter remained standing outside by the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the girl who was the doorkeeper and brought Peter in. Then the servant girl who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" "I am not," he said.**

The soldiers bound Jesus before they led him away for trial. John is the only gospel writer that mentions this action taken by the soldiers. But it is an important detail nonetheless, for Jewish sacrifices were always bound before they were slaughtered. Abraham also bound his son Isaac, before placing him on the altar. As for any reason other than that of spiritual significance, the binding of Christ was unnecessary for He willingly laid down His life. He had no intentions of trying to make His escape. His disciples, on the other hand, were quite the opposite, they had run for their very lives.

The Savior was marched immediately to the home of Annas. John refers to Annas as the "High Priest" but actually he had been removed from this office by the Roman Governor with his son-in-law Caiaphas having been named as his successor. There are many reasons why Annas might be called the High Priest in this narrative. The first being simply because he was at one time the High Priest. Another and more sinister reason may well be that everyone recognized that He was the power-behind-the-office, as it were, calling the shots, as his son-in-law was merely an extension of himself.

Annas was ruthless and cruel in his dealings. He had been appointed as High Priest over Israel by the Romans in 6 AD and was deposed in 15 AD, being replaced by Caiaphas to rule in his stead. This gives us insight with regard to the corruption of Rome, and also the illegitimacy of the Jewish council in Jerusalem. The position of High Priest was not only supposed to be a lifetime appointment, but also the one chosen for this position was to be selected by God Himself. Here we see a pagan gentile government directing the affairs of God's people. No one ever selected by Rome would be recognized by God as a proper authority over His chosen nation.

Not only were Annas and his son in law considered to be Roman "puppets", but they were also greedy for both wealth and power. And herein lies the reason that they had hated Christ with such passion. For you see, these men were the beneficiaries of all the buying and selling done at the temple. They were the ones who profited from the schemes to defraud the people by forcing them to buy their sacrifices and exchange their currency before they could offer them up to God. The Romans of course would also be given their "cut" of the profits. In those days, the moneychanging apparatus at the temple was commonly referred to as "The Bazaar of Annas". And Jesus had not once, but twice, condemned this fraudulent scheme and had expelled the money changers from the temple. This of course had not set well with Annas. And he desired to rid himself of this Galilean upstart once and for all.

John mentions the prophesy of Caiaphas that stated the expedience of **"one man dying for the nation" (vs. 14)**, so we can know that the fix was already in before the trial began. The men who tried Jesus weren't trying to get to the truth, they were simply looking for a way to justify the murder of their hated enemy, namely The LORD Jesus Christ. The trials were a sham from the start. The rule of law was completely ignored, and the end had already been determined.

After the scattering of the disciples, two of them were able to get themselves somewhat under control and followed Jesus and the soldiers to the home of Annas. We know the name of one of these two men, for John tells us that it was Peter. The second is undoubtedly John himself. For we know by reading this gospel account that John is reluctant to mention his own name. But the precise details of the trial serve to prove that John had been there to see it with his own eyes.

It is apparent that John was not afraid for the people to know that he was a disciple. For apparently he was well known to the household of the former High Priest and was given access to the compound. In fact, he had to go back and vouch for Peter, in order for the older disciple to be allowed into the courtyard. While John was a familiar acquaintance of the priestly class, it becomes very clear to us that Peter was out of place there. Some have speculated that John was accepted because his family

were themselves descendants of the levitical priestly line. Or perhaps it was due to his father's lucrative fishing business, for John himself may well have been a food supplier to the priest's household.

Whatever the reason for his acceptance, John had taken advantage of it for he wanted to observe the trial. Peter on the other hand doesn't seem exactly sure what he wanted. But one thing is for certain, the fisherman quickly became a "fish out of water" very unsure of how he should conduct himself in that place. His first mistake? Walking into the courtyard. **"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked."** Rather than going to inside with John to witness the trial, Peter remained outside with the company of the ungodly. And when asked by the servant girl, who opened the door leading into the courtyard, if he was a follower of Jesus, Peter immediately responded that he was not. The trial for the Son of God had begun, and along with it, the denials of Simon Peter.

### **Standing in the pathway of sinners (vs. 18-24)**

**Now the servants and the officials had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold. They were standing there warming themselves, and Peter was standing with them, warming himself.**

#### **Jesus before Annas**

**The high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus answered him. "I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews gather, and I haven't spoken anything in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who heard what I told them. Look, they know what I said." When He had said these things, one of the officials standing by slapped Jesus, saying, "Is this the way You answer the high priest?" "If I have spoken wrongly," Jesus answered him, "give evidence about the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit Me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.**

Here we see Peter not only **walking** into the place of the wicked, but now we see him **standing** with them. Warming himself by their fire. Remember just a few hours earlier, when we saw Judas standing with the enemy? (**John 18:5**). Now we see Peter doing the exact same thing! I am certain that the old fisherman was simply trying to blend in and not be noticed. But herein lies the problem. A child of God cannot "blend in" with this world. We have not been called to "go along to get along". We have been chosen to be the salt and light of this world. And as such, we can never fit in. Peter was doing his very best to do just the opposite of what **Psalms 1** has commanded do. We cannot **stand** in the pathway of sinners and warm ourselves by their ungodly fires. We are called out to be holy and separate. I have seen so many Christians fall by the wayside in their faith by making compromises with the world. It always starts out small, but before it is over, little distinction can be made between themselves and the pagans they have chosen with which to congregate. If you want to follow Christ my friends, then you won't be able to "blend in" with this world.

As the trial began, it was evident what a farce it had become. Annas tried to get Jesus to incriminate Himself in some manner, so that he could further accuse Him. Christ did not fall for it, for He knew The Law much better than Annas. It was forbidden to try and get an accused person to incriminate himself. For just as we here in this country have the protection of the fifth amendment, the Jews had something very similar. It was incumbent upon the prosecution to call witness against a defendant not to try and trick him into convicting himself. And that was exactly why Jesus reprimanded them. If they could produce any witnesses against Him, then they should have brought them forward.

The embarrassment of Annas to be rebuked according to the very law he claimed to represent must have been evident upon his face. One of his officials, no doubt in an effort to curry favor with the boss, struck Jesus, which was also illegal. For under Jewish law, a person who had not yet been convicted could not be harmed in any way. Once again, it becomes obvious that the fix was in. But through it all, The Savior remained calm. He never once retaliated, nor did He try and defend Himself, for He knew that this was indeed the cup that The Father had intended Him to drink (**John 18:11**). As the phony trial continued, Jesus did nothing to save Himself from His impending death. Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard doing everything that he could to save his own skin! What a stark contrast between the *faithless* hearts of men, and the *faithful* heart of Christ.

**Sitting in the company of mockers (vs. 25-27)**

**Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Peter denied it again. Immediately a rooster crowed.**

At this point, Peter should have simply excused himself and left. Or if he had been truly concerned for the welfare of his Master, he might have made an attempt to join John and go inside to the trial. But apparently neither of those choices occurred to Peter. Although *John's* gospel doesn't distinguish this fact, the gospel of *Mark* makes it clear that eventually Peter sat down with the enemies of God to further warm himself by their charcoal fire (***Mark 14:54***). He not only **walked** in to join them, he **stood** with them, and eventually **sat** down with them.

Notice the progression of ***Psalm 1***. A person starts out by walking (going along to get along) with sinful people. Then, as he becomes more comfortable in their ranks, he eventually begins to stand with them, and ultimately, sits down as one of them! This is why it is so very important that the people of God stay in close fellowship with Christ and with the people of God. The devil loves to try and "cut us from the herd", so to speak, much like a lion with his prey, so that he may devour us. If Peter had stayed with Jesus and John, none of this would have happened. But as it turned out, following his becoming comfortable with the devils crowd, he began to act as one of them.

Perhaps his proximity to the fire so illuminated his face, that he became more recognizable to them. Whatever the reason, one of them who was a relation to Malchus, the man whom Peter had previously attacked in the garden, recognized him. The man, who was probably more than a little upset that his kin had been assaulted by the old fisherman, stood up to accuse him.

Not once, but twice more, Peter denied even knowing Jesus. He feared for his life, and once more, just as he had in the garden earlier, self preservation won out over his commitment. It was not a pretty sight to see this faithful member of Christ's very own inner circle abandon the One Who had loved him so dearly.

Annas had asked Jesus a question regarding to His disciples that The Savior chose to completely ignore. He would tell these men nothing of His followers. While He stood in that room protecting the very identity and lives of His beloved, one of them was in the courtyard denying Him. I, for one, am so thankful that my Savior won't abandon me, even when I deserve to be abandoned! Can I get a witness? To be in Christ is to be permanently sealed in Him. And He will never abandon His own. We see this truth lived out after His resurrection, when He goes immediately to reinstate Peter. Yes, Peter, like Judas, betrayed The LORD. However, the difference between the two; Peter was truly convicted and broken, while Judas was merely remorseful.

**"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death."** **2 Corinthians 7:10**

When Annas realized that he was no match for Jesus, he sent Him to be tried and convicted in the kangaroo court of his son-in-law. There they would bring in a number of "hired guns" to bear false witness against The Son of God. And in so doing, were heaping all the more unpardonable sins upon their own heads. Apparently (by synchronizing the gospel accounts) just as Jesus was being transferred and came out into the courtyard, Peter was just uttering his third and final denial of His Savior. At that moment, a rooster crowed in the distance, and Jesus looked into the eyes of His beloved disciple. *The Bible* says that Peter was cut to the heart by that look. And he left that place to weep bitterly (***Luke 22:60-62***). Thank God, this was not the end of Peter's story.

**"How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in The LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."** **Psalms 1:1-3**

In other words, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing!

And let His followers say TRUTH!!!