

John 18:10-27

10 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.)

10 Malchus is an Arab name. The right ear was the one that was always to be attentive to his master. Luke tell us Jesus healed this man's ear (Luke 22:51). The servant was not considered to be on the same level as Jews. He may have been a bodyguard for the high priest. Even so, Jesus stopped everything to heal him. I appreciate the enactment of this in the movie *The Passion*. We wonder how it affected the man's life and how it affected those who observed what took place. What did the Roman soldiers think after being knocked to the ground and then to witness a compassionate act of healing to a seemingly insignificant Gentile?

Peter was ready to take things into his own hands. Earlier, Jesus had told them to buy swords (Luke 22:36), but He never told them to resist the arrest and crucifixion. In fact, He rebuked Peter for his argument against Jesus laying down His life (Matthew 16:23). I imagine Jesus' suggestion to carry swords was to deter those who might want to attack the disciples. Jesus said two swords were enough, and two were certainly not enough to resist this army. But Peter seems to have misunderstood and been ready to take them all on. That was pretty gutsy, but not God's will.

How often we think we are doing something for God, even being valiant, when we are really getting in the way. May God help us to look to Jesus' leading and not our own ideas or good intentions.

11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

11 Jesus put a stop to the violence immediately. The cup in the Old Testament often referred to the cup of wrath upon sins (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:22). Jesus was determined to drink the cup of wrath that our sins deserved. He had settled the matter in prayer and knew there was no other way. He had to go through with it to save us (Acts 4:12). After that assault, it is even more amazing that the disciples were not arrested. Jesus was in charge of each event as it unfolded.

12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

12 ...as if the Creator could be bound by His creation. Jesus let Himself be bound. Once they knew He was not going to physically resist them, they swooped in. It reminds me of the scene in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* when the evil beasts come up to touch bound Aslan the lion who represented Jesus. They quickly steal a poke and draw back fearing what will happen. When nothing does, they grew bolder and bolder until they began to abuse Him without fear. What a picture of what was happening here. No one knew if Jesus would use His power to stop them, but when He did not, they sprang into vicious action.

13 First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

13 A high priest was to be high priest for life, but the Romans changed that. They would install whoever best suited their purposes. Annas had been high priest from AD 6-15, the first to be installed by a Roman procurator. He was the one who established the selling of animals and exchanging money in the temple for a fee. After him, a number of his sons and this son-in-law served as high priest. Caiaphas was in office AD 18-36/37. John is the only one who mentioned

the appearance before Annas. He may have been the only disciple other than Peter who knew about it since it was a short appearance and probably in the same compound as Caiaphas' home. Annas probably questioned Jesus trying to find out if there were influential followers until the Sanhedrin could be gathered.

¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

14 Caiaphas had suggested that if Jesus were not killed the Romans would end the reign of the Sanhedrin and the nation of Israel. Ironically, it was because of Caiaphas intervention that that did happen. Caiaphas did not prevent it; he ended up setting up a scenario in which it would eventually happen. The disciples saw his words as being prophetic of Jesus dying for the sins of the nation (John 11:51). They believed that because of his office, he unknowingly prophesied of the atoning work of Jesus. It may look like He was facing the end of the road gallantly, but it is much more than gallantry. He is in charge; and out of this dark hour will come a glorious dawn, resurrection, our salvation, and eternal life.

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

15 This very home and courtyard have been identified with some degree of certainty. The first century steps that Jesus would have been taken up out of the Kidron Valley are still there. The courtyard now has a bronze statue of Peter, a Roman soldier, and a servant girl by a charcoal fire with a rooster on a pillar above them. Just inside the building is what appears to me to be an interrogation chamber. Archways have been carved in the stone near the middle of the room with holes above through which chains or ropes could have held a prisoner's arms. Just below is a dry cistern about 25 feet deep in which the most dangerous prisoners could be kept (Psalm 88:4-6).

We fault the disciples for abandoning Jesus, but these two showed great courage and love to follow Him into what might have ended in their own arrest and crucifixion. If the high priest's servants knew John. Surely, they knew he was now a follower of Jesus. The other Gospel writers have the first accuser saying, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean" (Mark 14:67). The word "also" points to the fact that they knew John was a follower of Jesus. These two disciples stepped right into the lions' den. That was an incredibly bold display of their commitment to Jesus, despite the denial that was to follow.

¹⁶ but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

16 It was not uncommon for a mature woman to keep the gate (Acts 12:13). From the inside she would judge whether the guest should be let in by lifting the bar that kept the door sealed shut. John went back and told her that Peter was okay. This means she probably knew John as well, adding to the mystery of John's relationship with this powerful family. You can ask John about it when you get there.

¹⁷ The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

17 Why did she not ask John? I do not know, but Peter has just given his first denial. Fear for personal safety, anxiety, concern for John, desire to get in to assist in some way, all may have been going through his mind, but he just did what he vowed he would never do. His mind probably justified it in the same way that we too often do (Genesis 3:12). "If I tell the truth, I

will never get in and won't be able to help my Lord." Or, "I do not want to get John in trouble. God knows my heart." How can I think of these justifications? I think you know because you can most likely relate. Most of us go through these times of testing when we can take a stand, but we choose not to and then justify it in our mind.

Jesus had been asked if He was Jesus of Nazareth. He answered, "I am!" (John 18:4-6) Peter is asked if he is a follower of Jesus, and he answered, "I am not." The contrast struck me as I read the passage. Jesus would not deny being our Savior, but we come up with excuses to deny being His follower. Every follower of Jesus must come to the place where they boldly confess their allegiance to Jesus as their Savior. Our "I am not!" must be changed to a passionate, "I am!" regardless of the consequences. We say it with our decisions, with our responses to situations, and even to those who ridicule believers. "I am His follower. I am a Christian." What will we do the next time we are faced with the opportunity (Acts 5:41)?

¹⁸ Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

18 Jerusalem has about the same climate as our city of Sedona, Arizona. If you have been to a sunrise service here, you know the season of Passover can have some very chilly nights, even snow. The servants and officials are around a charcoal fire. Officials are the temple guards with their clubs. This tells us the Roman troops have gone on back to their fortress. The arrest was rather uneventful as far as a physical battle. Jesus is now safely in the high priest's compound. What a worldly perspective! If they had a clue as to the spiritual realm, they would be shaking in their sandals, knowing that Jesus could at any time call on the armies of heaven (Matthew 26:53; Revelation 19:21).

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."

19-21 A Jewish trial forbade self-incrimination. Witnesses' testimony had to agree to convict someone. Jesus is calling Annas on his political misuse of power. He would never betray His followers by giving Annas their names. Jesus was calling for a proper trial and an end to this secret political hunt for enemies.

In saying, "*I have spoken openly to the world*", I believe He was clearly pointing Annas and all who heard to Proverbs 8:1-4. Jesus had only spoken in the tiny land of Israel. That phrase "*to the world*" had to stir their minds to think of a similar phrase in Scripture. ¹ *Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice?* ² *On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;* ³ *beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:* ⁴ *"To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. (ESV)* The chapter goes on to speak of wisdom being with God when the earth was created. ³⁰ *then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,* ³¹ *rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man. Proverbs 8:30,31 (ESV)* It was a subtle declaration that Annas was standing before Wisdom Himself, the Craftsman of the universe, whom Annas had abandoned and was even trying to destroy. What futility! Annas thought Jesus was on trial, but Jesus reversed the roles (John 5:27).

²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"

22 Because of Exodus 22:28, God's own injunction not to speak evil of your ruler, the temple guard thought Jesus was out of line. Jesus was showing us the correct way to confront corrupt leaders. Ask them to obey the law that governs their behavior. Dear political activists, this is our example. You are not to speak evil of your ruler, but you can follow Jesus' example of requesting that they submit to the laws that govern them. Slandering political leaders has become a popular past time in the last few decades. It is not helpful (Romans 13:1). There is a proper way to confront rulers who abuse their power. Jesus demonstrated it here.

The word for "struck" denotes a sharp blow with the flat of one's hand. Striking a prisoner was against Jewish law, but that did not seem to bother this crowd. Matthew tells us that they spit in Jesus' face, slapped Him, and struck Him with their fists (Matthew 26:67). By the time he gets to Pilate, His face will be badly beaten.

23 Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" 24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

23,24 Annas was getting nowhere with Jesus. In fact, Jesus was exposing Annas' abuse of power. Again, we see that Jesus is the one in charge. He is the one who is calm and collected, speaking truth, exposing evil, and even directing the conversation.

Some of the Sanhedrin had been in on the arrest and others were most likely woken and came to plan the predawn trial of Jesus. They had to agree on what charges they would present to Pilate. The plan was to have Jesus crucified. They wanted Him humiliated in a way that would convince the Jewish masses that He was not the Messiah (Deuteronomy 21:23). The public equated crucifixion with being cursed.

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?"

25,26 what justifications went through the mind of Peter? Did he think, "It is too late to change my tune now"? He could probably now see that this was headed toward crucifixion, the most torturous death imaginable. Perhaps he thought, "Surely Jesus wants me to survive to carry on His message?" Whatever the thoughts, he did again what he said he would never do (Mark 14:31).

Luke (22:59) tells us that about an hour passed before another confrontation. It was time for Peter to consider what he had done, but also an increasing knowledge of where this was all heading! It was Peter's third chance. Would he take a stand and suffer with Jesus? Will we? What choice will we make when it comes down to our own suffering? What choice do we make daily when given the chance to deny ourselves and live for Jesus?

27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

27 Luke tells us that at that moment, Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter (Luke 22:61). Peter went out and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). Remorse is different from repentance. Judas was remorseful. Peter was heartbroken with grief. He failed His Savior. He was not as strong as he thought he was. He was no different than the other disciples. He could not keep his promise to stand by his Lord.

This failure was his opportunity to come to grips with the fact that he trusted in himself more than in the Lord. He thought he loved Jesus more than himself, but this test showed him the truth about his own heart. Now he can repent and be changed. Our failures can be the same

for us if we will take them to heart as Peter did. We can learn the truth about our own hearts, repent, and be changed. Then our confidence will be in the Lord and not in our own strength.

Neither Peter the fisherman, nor Annas the high priest, had real security. Peter was still trusting in his physical prowess. Annas was trusting in his fame and fortune. Both securities are an illusion. Annas was assassinated in A.D. 66 clinging to his wealth and position that he thought kept him secure.

A few years before Annas' death, Peter was martyred and went to a glorious reward. He had long since given up trusting in himself for security and had thrown his lot in with the One who could call fish into his nets (Luke 5:6), or calm a sea with His command (Mark 4:39), or speak with wisdom and confidence before this world's most powerful men and face death with confident assurance. Peter fixed his eyes on eternity and the love he had seen in his Savior.

Questions:

How did C.S. Lewis tell of the binding of Jesus?

Why did they go to Annas?

In what way did Caiaphas have everything backward?

Why do you think Peter gave the first denial?

Why are we so good at justifying sin?

Why did Jesus respond to Annas as he did?

Where was Peter at the second denial and how long until the third?

How were Peter and Annas similar? Dissimilar?

What is your security?