

40. So close, yet so far

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In a Virginia park in February 18, 2001, a group of FBI agents rushed over to a car that was about to leave the location near a wooden bridge. They arrested their own fellow agent, Robert Hansen, a counter intelligence expert, a 25-year FBI veteran, was the bureau's liaison to the State Department Office of Foreign Missions. He was arrested minutes after he allegedly left a package under the footbridge. Investigators say the bridge was a drop site for delivering top secret documents to his Russian handlers.

While his neighbors and colleagues knew him as a quiet family man and hard-working FBI agent, Hansen was sneaking classified documents out of the bureau and slipping them to Soviet and Russian agents without revealing his identity. Now Robert Hansen is serving a life sentence without a possibility of parole in a federal prison. He was not thinking the end results.

What was going through that former FBI agent's mind while he was sneaking out his own country's top secret and classified information to her enemies? Yes, money was a part of his motivations. But mostly he was blinded by his own twisted self-justification and seared conscience. The law he upheld as an FBI agent before became nothing more than letters on the paper.

We are going to see two types of people who walked in the same path of Robert Hansen's self-destruction. While they were walking on that path, their hearts were seared and they were coming up with their own twisted excuses for the wrong doings.

A. BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF GOD

Matt 26:47-50 And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

1) The Kisses of death

It is tragic to see how Judas cheapened everything that he touched. He even used the kiss as a weapon, not as a sign of affection. In that day, it was customary for disciples to kiss their teacher. But in this case, it was not a mark of submission or respect. The Greek verbs indicate that Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly.

Judas did not really understand Jesus. Judas thought they would have to search for Him in the Garden and fight off His disciples in order to arrest Him. That is why Judas came with a detachment of soldiers which is about 600 men. But Jesus came to them and calmly surrendered. It would not even have been necessary for Judas to betray Jesus with a kiss, because Jesus told the soldiers who He was.

Before we go on to the next study, I'd like to ask you a question: Do you kiss God repeatedly, yet betray Him? You will say, "I would never betray Him. What do you think I am, a Judas?" Maybe. When you come to church and sing worship songs, that is "Kissing God's face." The root word of worship is "Kissing forward." So, if

you worship Him with your hands lifted and sing worship songs and deliberately continue your sins after you leave this church service, you are doing exactly what Judas did. You need to stop sinning and repent from it.

2) No Jesus Christ Superstar

One thing interesting here is that Jesus was such an ordinary looking man that Judas had to mark him to recognize. We tend to think of Jesus as glowing, huge in stature, or more hunk than Hollywood hot male actor. Obviously not!

3) The ultimate hypocritical words - "Greetings, Rabbi"

There are no more hollow, hypocritical words in the Bible than "Greetings, Rabbi!" in the mouth of Judas. The loving, heartfelt, loving words of Jesus - calling Judas "Friend" - stand in sharp contrast. Jesus is giving him one last chance to repent.

4) Truly saved?

If a person can commit sins habitually without remorse and conviction, that would be a good evidence that he or she is not truly saved. If you are sinning against God, but you don't care, you might have examine your heart carefully.

B. NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER BUT BY MY SPIRIT

Matt 26:51-56 And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

1) Peter, a poor bodyguard of Jesus

In an attempt to protect Jesus, Peter - a better fisherman than a swordsman - lopped off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Luke writes that following Peter's show of force, Jesus touched Malchus' ear and healed him. In other words, Jesus was doing a damage control for Peter like He does it for us all the time.

2) The Sword of God in right place, right time

I think that's perhaps the miracle Jesus does most: healing people who have been needlessly wounded by His followers who have used the sword of Scripture foolishly.

How often we hurt one another in our attempts to protect Jesus. Ears fly everywhere, and the body of Christ is maimed because well-meaning Christians like Peter unsheathe their Bibles and start chopping away at each other. Listen to the words of Jesus. If you are using the Sword of the Spirit to slice other people up and put other people down, put it away.

When Peter moved in the power of the world, he only cut off ears. But when he was filled with the Spirit, using the Word of God, Peter pierced hearts for God's glory.

Acts 2:37-41 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

3) Not a contest

A legion being six thousand, Jesus was talking about 72,000 angels at His disposal - quite a force, considering it took only one to wipe out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night according to 2 Kings 19:35. I don't think that there were enough population on the earth at that time for each angel to get his quota.

We realize that He is perfectly capable of defending Himself. Our job is not to protect, defend, or avenge for Jesus. Jesus calls us to do one thing: to love others.

C. GOD ON TRIAL

Matt 26:57-61 And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

1) Annas - the godfather of the Sanhedrin

After Jesus was arrested according to John chapter 18, He was taken to the house of Annas, the former high priest who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Annas, a powerful, yet twisted politician, was something of a "godfather" in the temple establishment. From the night of His betrayal till the day of His crucifixion, Jesus actually stood in kangaroo court trials several times before different judges.

2) Caiaphas came from the same cloth

Caiaphas hastily assembled the Sanhedrin. They had already determined that He was guilty, but they wanted to go through the motions of a legal trial. The Sanhedrin was the seventy-one-member Jewish Supreme Court, composed of the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. These judges have no right to be prosecutors and least of all to seek after false witness and even to offer bribes to get it.

3) Jesus was the lamb of God

Jesus was not dragged before Caiaphas unwillingly. Rather, He was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter," just as Isaiah had prophesied.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

Matt 26:62-68 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"

4) Conspiracy for murder, lies, having illegal trials not a problem

This nighttime trial was illegal according to the Sanhedrin's own laws and regulations. According to Jewish law, all criminal trials must begin and end in the daylight. Therefore, though the decision to condemn Jesus was already made, they conducted a second trial in daylight (Luke 22:66-71), because they knew the first one - the real trial - had no legal standing.

Here are many illegalities made in the trial of Jesus:

- According to Jewish law, only decisions can be made in the official meeting place were valid. The first trial was held at the home of Caiaphas, the high priest.
- According to Jewish law, criminal cases could not be tried during the Passover season.
- According to Jewish law, only an acquittal could be issued on the day of the trial. Guilty verdicts had to wait one night to allow for feelings of mercy to rise.
- According to Jewish law, all evidence had to be guaranteed by two witnesses, who were separately examined and could not have contact with each other.
- According to Jewish law, false witness was punishable by death. Nothing was done to the many false witnesses in Jesus' trial.
- According to Jewish law, a trial always began by bringing forth evidence for the innocence of the accused, before the evidence of guilt was offered.

None of these practice here, so the trial against Jesus was illegal.

5) Going for a different approach

When Caiaphas saw that the false charges were not incriminating Jesus, he took another approach. He put Jesus under oath. In our day of repeated perjury and carelessness with the truth, I don't see a big problem with perjury here in America. The former president of the United States lied through his teeth and still got away with it. Of course, it is wrong.

6) The defense of Jesus

I can only imagine the amazing defense Jesus could have made. He could have called witness after witness - starting with Adam, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and more. If that is not enough, He could point to irrefutable evidence that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God by making them into little worms. But He knew that He must go through this kangaroo court to fulfill the prophecies made in the OT.

Psalms 110:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

Daniel 7:13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

7) Slapping the face of God

If you want to insult and have a major fight with any Eastern and Middle Asian people, slap their faces. Before you do that, please let me know in advance, I will start to prepare your funeral ceremony. Because that would be one of the ultimate insults to them. These Sanhedrin's slapping Jesus's face is more to insult Him than to injure Him. They dared to slap the face of God.

We still slap the face of God. God extended His blessings to this country throughout many generations, so that she becomes the most powerful and wealthiest country in the world. What does she do? America insults God's grace and mercy with granting gay marriage, banning prayers in the school, applauding increased sexual fornication, adultery and perversion, killing unborn babies under the name of women's choice, embracing Eastern religion over Christianity and denouncing our supports to Israel.

Without even considering the evidence, Caiaphas passed the sentence. The treatment given Jesus after the verdict was certainly illegal and inhumane. Of course, all of this only revealed the wickedness of the priest's heart. At the same time, it fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

Isaiah 50:6 I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

8) Jesus had you in mind

Do you know while Jesus was being beaten and the saliva was running down on His cheeks, He was thinking about you and me? He was going through all this humiliation, because there is no other way for us get to heaven other than His atoning sacrifice? Do you know anyone who went through that much difficulty to give you true freedom for eternity?

D. THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JUDAS AND THE SANHEDRIN

There are a tremendous similarities between Judas and these Jewish leaders:

1) They both tasted the goodness of God, yet they betrayed Him.

Judas spent last three years with Jesus, witnessed the miracles of Jesus, even performed miracles with the power he was given by Jesus.

The Sanhedrin were selected to uphold the law of God and to minister to His people in Israel.

2) They both ignored the truth for their own benefits.

Judas was more interested in his own agenda of being a VIP in the earthly kingdom he wanted than the Kingdom of God.

The Sanhedrin was given that positions by God to do His work, but they cared about their positions and benefits more than anything else, including God.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) There is no such a thing is too late to turn away from sin. If you are in sin, turn away from it now.

Jesus called Judas "Friend" even at the moment of betrayal. Even here, Jesus gave Judas the opportunity to turn away and to change his mind. Here, Jesus is giving Judas a way out as He asks, "Friend, why are you here?" In other words, Jesus was giving Judas one last chance to change his mind.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

2) The erosion to sin does not happen overnight.

If you are thinking that you can handle the little sin you are committing, you are kidding yourself. The Bible never tells us to wrestle with sins. As a matter of fact, it tells us to run away from sins. Because God knows that we cannot handle it.

3) Let's be careful how we use the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God to one another.

The Word of God is powerful and living and sharper than any double edged sword. It can hurt fellow Christians if we are not using it carefully. Please remember, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.