

66. In complete control

February 5, 2012

As we pick up the story of Jesus Christ our Lord in John chapter 18, the plot against Him has reached its climax. Within 15 hours from now, the Son of God will breathe His last breath on the cross.

I believe that it was close to midnight at the southeast area of the outside of Jerusalem walls. Jesus has just finished praying to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane away from the crowd that filled the Holy City Jerusalem during this Passover season.

For the last three and a half years, Jesus had been watched by an official band of Jewish religion leaders, whose hostility grew with each passing day. With the cunning of snakes and the ruthlessness of scorpions, the unholy alliance – the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes could not wait to get their filthy and devious hands on Him.

They prepared everything meticulously for this time – an insider was contracted to help orchestrate the arrest – Judas with a mere thirty pieces of silver which was the going rate for a slave; a detachment of the Roman soldiers from the Pretorium was secured in case Jesus' disciples fight back; all the religious officials were notified and were waiting for the arrival of this Jesus in handcuffs at the former high priest Annas' home first, and then the current high priest Caiaphas' home.

No time to lose with some proper judicial procedures that they should have followed. They didn't care about the law that was given to them by God through Moses as long as they could get rid of this pain in the neck, Jesus of Nazareth once and for all. They would do anything to make it happen including lying, cheating, concocting a conspiracy to murder, and even pledging allegiance to the Caesar of Rome – something they thought that they would never do in a million years.

A. TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.

En route to the Garden of Gethsemane lays the Brook Kidron. This Kidron Valley is located east of Jerusalem, between the city wall and the Mount of Olives; and the Garden of Gethsemane is on the western slope of Olivet. Jesus often went to this Garden with His disciples, no doubt to rest, meditate, and pray.

Jesus chose the Garden of Gethsemane – a.k.a. Olive Garden, just kidding – as the place to be arrested by the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman soldiers, because if He was arrested within the wall of Jerusalem during this Passover season, He knew that there would be a massive riot by the people to protect Him because He was still popular at this point. All of that would be changed within 7 to 8 hours from now. Besides, Judas knew that Jesus would be there.

Jesus didn't want any of the people in Jerusalem to be hurt or get killed. They were the reason why He came to die that they may believe in Him.

As Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Brook Kidron, the unmistakable blood smell of the sacrificed animals from the brook was a vivid reminder to Jesus of His own soon-coming sacrificial death. Because a channel led from the temple altar to the brook, collecting the blood of lambs slaughtered and sacrificed during Passover.

The Brook Kidron had a special historical significance that portrayed what had happened almost 1000 years earlier. King David crossed the Kidron when he was rejected by his people and betrayed by his own son Absalom and counselor Ahithophel in 2 Samuel chapter 15; Jesus was rejected by His people and betrayed by His own disciple Judas. At the end of the revolt, when Ahithophel realized that David was going to win against them, he hanged himself; at the end of his betrayal, Judas realized that he betrayed the innocent blood, he, too, hanged himself.

B. HERE COMES THE BETRAYER

John 18:2-3 And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. 3 Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Between v1 and v2, other Gospels, like Matthew chapter 26 and Mark chapter 14, give us what went on in the garden. There Jesus prayed to the Father in heaven about what was about to happen.

Human history began in a Garden as we learned in Genesis chapter 2, and the first sin of man was committed in that Garden. The first Adam disobeyed God and was cast out of the Garden of Eden, but the Last Adam was obedient as He went into the Garden of Gethsemane.

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

In a Garden, the first Adam brought sin and death to mankind; but the last Adam, Jesus, by His obedience, brought righteousness and life to all who will trust Him. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

History will one day end in another garden, the heavenly city that John describes in Revelation 21 and 22. In that garden, there will be no more death and no more curse. The river of the water of life will flow endlessly and the tree of life will produce bountiful fruits. Eden was the Garden of disobedience and sin; Gethsemane was the Garden of obedience and submission; and heaven shall be the eternal garden of delight and satisfaction, to the glory of God.

The Greek word for 'detachment' is "speira" which is the tenth part of a Roman legion. One legion was 6000 soldiers, so a detachment had 600 foot soldiers.

What irony! With lanterns and torches, the Roman detachment searched to find the Light of the World. And the Light just stood there right in front of them – without pretense and without protection – and shined openly through the darkness. But those standing in the darkness did not even recognize Him just like the majority of the world population choose not to.

C. THE POWER OF THE NAME OF THE LORD "I AM"

John 18:4-9 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who

betrayed Him, also stood with them. 6 Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

If I recall the size of the Garden of Gethsemane near Jerusalem correctly, it is not a very big place. There were only 11 sleepy head disciples and Jesus originally, but all of sudden, over 600 soldiers, plus Jewish religious rulers were in that small garden. Everybody was tense, except one – Jesus.

In front of their drawn swords, Jesus simply and quietly asked, "*Whom are you seeking?*" When they replied, Jesus told them, "*I AM.*" You may say, "Oh preacher, you missed 'He.'" No, I didn't miss it. As you can see, the word "*He*" is in Italic which means that it was added by the editor of your Bible for your easier understanding.

In other words, Jesus used one of God's names "*I AM.*" Ever-present God, Almighty God, all knowing, all powerful God identified Himself as "*I AM.*" He could add, "*and you are not, bye, bye.*" But He chose not to do that. Instead, He laid aside the privileges of deity and willingly laid His life down.

Mere mention of God's name, all these big burly, rough and tough 600 Roman soldiers fell backward like dominos. Can you imagine that? I am sure it was rather comical – in front of one unarmed man, over 600 soldiers falling backward. How embarrassing!

Now who is in control? Jesus. He was in complete control. He knew what would happen. Our God has never lost His control over anything. Even to every little detail, nothing escapes His all-knowing wisdom and all-seeing insight. There is no such word like "Oops!" in God's vocabulary.

I don't know where you are today or what situation you are in. You may be in between the rock and hard place right now. Or you may be sitting alone in a little spiritual or emotional boat surrounded by raging waves of financial difficulties, joblessness, loneliness, sickness, despair, or even suicidal thought. Or you may be facing temptations and problems that seem too great to bear. But remember this: Jesus is interceding for you from heaven. When the hour seems the darkest, He will come to you and He will take you to a safe harbor!

Pain that comes from trials of life often seem pointless, but God assures us that it is always purposeful. Pain is a part of life. In God's curriculum, it is a course we can neither drop, nor simply skip, nor just take someone else's painful experience as ours. With regard to pain, God has at least five objectives He may want to accomplish in our lives.

1) God can use pain to develop our faith.

As the saying goes, "No pain, no gain." just as endurance is developed in a long distance runner through strenuous exercise, so faith ONLY grows through testing.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

2) God can expose error through pain.

Heat has a way of bringing impurities to the surface, whether they are in our theological understanding, or our ethics, or our day to day life.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

3) Our relationship with God grows through pain as we learn obedience.

It is by falling and scraping our spiritual knees that we learn to walk obediently as the Lord directs us.

Hebrews 5:8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

4) God can use pain to create humility in how we relate to others.

Our thorns in the flesh have a way of piercing pride and deflating an overgrown estimation of ourselves.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

5) Our suffering can bring glory to God as we respond with grace.

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Our God is in complete control over all of our lives. We cannot find anyone better than Him to trust with our lives, no one.

D. A WRONG WAY TO PROVE HIS LOYALTY

John 18:10-11 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. 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

While we admire Peter's courage and sincerity, it was certainly a demonstration of zeal without knowledge of God's will. Why did Peter not know the will of God? Because he slept when he should have been praying; and he talked and inserted his foot in his mouth when he should have been listening. Do we not often do the same?

Later Peter discovered the true Sword of the Spirit which God's servants use in fighting in their spiritual battles – the Word of God – at Pentecost and won 3000 souls for the Lord.

According to Luke chapter 22, Jesus had to heal the high priest Malchus' ear, otherwise Peter might have been arrested and killed. This was another act of God's grace. This servant came to arrest Jesus with the Roman soldiers. It was our Lord's last public miracle before the cross.

This brings an important question: Does our God need our protection? Like Peter tried to do, or some well-meaning but ignorant Christians decided to blow up an abortion clinic or kill an abortion doctor to protect unborn babies? No way!

By the way, in case you didn't know, this church is the most well armed and secure church in the world. Many of our congregation carry their weapons. Who influences you to carry weapons, people?

What did Jesus mean when He said, *"Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"* To understand what Jesus meant, we must go to the verse that came from Jesus to the Father during His prayer prior to this situation:

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

The cup represented the suffering He would endure and the separation from the Father that He would experience on the cross. Jesus' holy soul must have been stirred to the depths when He contemplated being made sin. The drinking of a cup is often used in Scripture to illustrate experiencing suffering and sorrow.

Jesus was able to accept the cup because it was mixed by the Father and given to Him from the Father's hand. He did not resist the Father's will, because He came to do the Father's will and finish the work the Father gave Him to do.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) No matter what kind of difficulties you are going through in your life now, remember that God loves you very much. He will not leave you, nor forsake you.
- 2) Our God is in complete control over all of our lives. We cannot find anyone better than Him to trust with our lives, no one.
- 3) We need never fear the cup our Father hands to us, because the cup He prepares will never contain anything that will harm us.