

92. So close, but so far

September 3, 2017

At Foxstone Park, Vienna, VA on 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 Hanssen, 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 foot-bridge. Investigators said 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, Hanssen was sneaking classified documents out of the Bureau and slipping them to Soviet and Russian agents without revealing his identity. Now Robert Hanssen is serving a life sentence without a possibility of parole in a federal prison. He didn't think about the consequences.

One of his Catholic priests said that Hanssen had regularly attended at 6:30am daily mass for more than a decade. To him, being religious had nothing to do with following the commands of Jesus. Yes, he followed a few selected one he preferred and left out the rest.

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

This morning we are going to meet a man who had the most rare privilege in human history. Actually, including this man, there were only 12 men who had the same privilege. I am talking about Judas, the ultimate betrayer at its worst. He was so close to the Lord Jesus, yet he was so far from Him.

A. THE BETRAYER WAS PROPHESED

John 13:18-19 I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.' 19 Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

To the eastern concept of hospitality, they didn't just have a meal with anybody who came along. Having a meal together was showing hospitality and sharing fellowship. It had much deeper meanings than our idea of "Let's-do-lunch."

"Lifting up his heel against me" is a Jewish way to describe a vicious stomp kick against the back of a person's neck while that person is down. In other words, these two sentences point to what Judas was about to do against Jesus – one moment he was sharing fellowship with Jesus and next moment he was going to betray Him.

As we can see, Jesus was not surprised that Judas was about to betray him. In fact, Jesus pulls out a Scripture that shows that it was predicted by something that happened in the OT. The Scripture, Jesus quoted was Psalm 41:9.

Psalm 41:9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

When king David wrote this psalm, he was probably referring to his counselor Ahithophel, who was the grandfather of Bathsheba, became a traitor and joined Absalom's rebellion. It is one of those prophetic verses that described the current situation as well as the future event.

It is significant that both Judas and Ahithophel committed suicide by hanging themselves. However, Judas did not commit suicide in order to fulfill biblical prophecy, because that would make God the author of his sin. Judas was responsible for his own decisions, and those decisions fulfilled God's Word.

The name 'Judas' appears in dictionaries, as a noun, as a synonym for a 'traitor.' A Judas is someone who betrays a friend or a family. Of all the baby dedications I have ever done, I've done many, I had never yet dedicated a boy named 'Judas.' There are just certain names people stay away from. No parent in their right mind would name their child 'Judas' because of what this one person did 2000 years ago.

Marriages are split apart because of betrayal through adultery or distrust. Friendships are separated because of betrayal. Nations have split and wars have begun because of betrayal.

It is important to note that Judas was not a true believer, even though some liberal biblical scholars believe that he was. He was a hypocrite. He had never believed in Jesus. He had not been among the chosen ones whom the Father gave to the Son. How close a person can come to salvation and yet be lost forever – so close, but so far! Judas was even the treasurer of the group and was certainly held in high regard by his fellow disciples.

I want you to notice the two words at the end of v19, please.

John 13:19 Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

As your Bible shows, the word "He" was inserted by the editor of your Bible for a better understanding. Again, Jesus declared Himself as "I AM" which is one of the names of God from the OT.

B. ASSURING THE AUTHORITY OF THEIR COMMISSION

John 13:20-21 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Can you imagine the faces of Jesus' disciples in that room? Confusion and perplexity in their eyes. Jesus was assuring them that this is not the end of their leader. He was reminding them that His authority came from the Father in Heaven and their authority would come from Him.

This applies to us as well. When we go out to speak of Jesus, we represent God the Father as well. That ought to give us great boldness in our hearts.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

C. JESUS WAS TROUBLED

John 13:21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

Why was Jesus troubled in spirit? Was He scared of Judas' betrayal? Was He scared of what was going to happen to Him? Or was He scared for His life?

Jesus was troubled, because He could see with His omniscient eye, satan's moves around Judas; He was troubled because He had a knowledge of the sin of the betrayer and the terrors of his eternal punishment; He was troubled because He sensed all that sin and death meant to human beings; He was troubled because He had an inner awareness that Judas was a classic illustration of the wretchedness of sin, sin which He would have to bear in His own body on the next day, sin for which He would be made responsible, and would die for. He was troubled. He was in deep sorrow.

Sometimes we emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ so much that we neglect to think about His humanity. We tend to think that Jesus would just brush off whatever would happen to Him. It's not true. He lived in the complete awareness of both deity and humanity, but He was deeply troubled and agitated as a God and a human. As the writer of Hebrews puts it in chapter 4, Jesus was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Some misguided people tend to think that Judas got all the dirty end of the deal – he was used by God as a pawn to betray Jesus; or he didn't have a chance to make himself innocent because God predestined him to be a betrayer.

Listen, even a renowned Calvinist of our time, such as pastor John MacArthur acknowledges that Judas had his chance to exercise his own free will to choose to be obedient to Jesus or continue to betray Him.

Judas was exposed to the same spiritual privileges as the other disciples, yet they did him no good. The same sun that melts the wax only hardens the clay. In spite of all that our Lord said about money, and all of His warnings about covetousness, Judas continued to be a thief and steal from the money bag that he carried around. In spite of all our Lord's warning about unbelief, Judas persisted in his rejection. Jesus even washed Judas' feet! Yet his hard heart did not yield.

D. WHO IS THE BETRAYER?

John 13:22-26 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. 23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. 25 Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

When it comes to pulling the wool over one's eyes, Judas did a superb job. None of the disciples had the foggiest idea that it was Judas. Up to the very hour of his treachery, Judas was protected by the Savior whom he betrayed. Had Jesus openly revealed what He knew about Judas, it is likely that the men would have turned on him.

I like the way apostle John described himself "a disciple whom Jesus loved". Loved by Jesus – you cannot ask for better love than that. Did John mean that he was the only one whom Jesus loved? No, I believe that he was so grateful that Jesus loved him and he wanted others to know about God's love for everyone.

Sitting at the right hand and the left hand of a host at the Passover were the guest of honor. Jesus invited Judas to sit next to Him. And now the Lord dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas which was a double honor for Judas. Yet Judas didn't repent.

E. THE DEMONIC POSSESSION OF JUDAS

John 13:27 Now after the piece of bread, satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

Here is a biblical reference of demonic possession. Some of you may not like the idea of demonic possession because it sounds spooky like a cheesy horror movie. Whether you like it or not, it is biblical.

Please think about this. When you received Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior and Lord, guess what is happening in the spiritual realm? The Holy Spirit who is the Third Person of the Trinity, very much God Himself comes into your heart and resides there. In other words, you are possessed by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Let me put these three verses into one paragraph: When we receive Jesus into our lives, He gives the Holy Spirit as a guarantee for our eternal salvation; then the Holy Spirit resides in our hearts and we become His temple where He lives. The Holy Spirit who lives in us is the God Almighty who has no rival or competitor, period. He doesn't share our hearts with satan or his demons like a duplex condominium.

Is this demonic possession still happening in this 21st century? Yes, a thousand times yes. I've seen it, I personally encountered the people who were possessed by demons. Not a pleasant experience, I might add.

Even though satan had entered Judas, it was Jesus who was in charge.

F. IT WAS NIGHT

John 13:28-30 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. 30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

As Robert Hanssen, the former FBI agent who became a Russian spy, didn't think about the consequences of his decisions and actions, nor did Judas. The only thing that mattered to him was getting money for the life of his own Master and Lord and getting out of dodge before the Jewish religious rulers come down on Jesus.

Please keep in mind that Judas knew what he was doing and he did it deliberately. He had already met with the Jewish religious rulers and got paid with thirty pieces of silver which was the price for a slave.

John's little sentence at the end of v30 carries a tremendous impact when you remember that light and darkness are important spiritual images in John's Gospel. Jesus is

the Light of the world, but Judas rejected Jesus and went out into the darkness. Those who do evil things hate the Light of God because the truth of Jesus reveals their evil motives and actions.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) The devil can provide us all the lame excuses, false reasons, and even twisted justifications how we can sin against the Lord and follow our carnal nature without facing consequences later. But it is us who make that decision, not the devil.

2) Don't ever think that we would never be like Judas. Our betrayal starts with a small compromise that leads to another one and another one. Spiritual erosion doesn't happen all of sudden.

3) If you are a believer of Jesus Christ, you don't have to yield to temptation whenever it raises its ugly head. We have the power that comes from our God the Spirit who lives in us. All we have to do is:
Submit ourselves to God > Resist the devil.
Then, he will flee from us.