

Behaviour in crises (Luke 22)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] There was a night that struck this world so different from any other.

The Apostle Paul, referring to it as he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians, called it that same night in which He was betrayed.

The events of that night are far too many to consider in the time we have.

What presses on my heart could be summed up in two words or three, behaviour in crisis.

Gethsemane, for that is the ground we look at, of which we've read.

[00:01:14] Gethsemane is a place of holy ground.

Today we're apt to think of this much more in our devotions on the Lord's Day morning than to examine some of the things that happened in the cool of our reading, to examine the scripture for our learning.

So tonight, let me disclose quickly what I hope to achieve in some measure, and that [00:02:07] is to give what the world today would call a rundown on the people who are to be found in Gethsemane.

Well it's as well to start from the bottom and work our way up.

The vilest character in that garden was none other than Judas Iscariot.

Now Judas Iscariot is a man who is mentioned quite frequently in the Gospels. He was chosen of the Lord.

He was numbered with the twelve. He was a man who went out and preached. He was a man who went out and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. [00:03:01] You remember when they came back, was it not in the tenth chapter of Luke, to report their doings and that the demons obeyed them, the Lord Jesus Christ turned to his twelve, which included Judas, and said, don't rejoice in that, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

And that must, I am sure, have stung Judas Iscariot into the depths of his conscience because full

well he knew that what Luke writes about him, as early as the sixth chapter of Luke, he mentions Judas Iscariot and says, which also was a traitor.

There's no more despicable character in the world than a traitor. Men can look with compassion on a soldier or a person who's given a foul duty to do [00:04:12] and say, well, he was under orders. Men may even excuse a spy, but never a traitor, one who has no sense of loyalty, no sense of love.

But Judas had a love.

He loved money.

And his troubles started there.

In the beginning of our reading, Luke records that Satan entered into Judas.

It would seem to me that all along the line, Satan had been attempting to make an entry into this man.

[00:05:02] This one who'd preached redemption in the name of Jesus Christ, this one who'd released men from the power of the demon, now put himself open to being indwelt by Satan himself.

Let us be quite clear.

Folk like you and me may not, I think, rightly claim that Satan takes much notice of us. He's got a legion who are well capable of looking after little folk like us and giving us all the trouble we need to wreck our lives morally and spiritually if he could. But there was something great working. And Judas, because of his lack of faith in Jesus Christ, because he failed to recognize [00:06:07] Jesus as his Lord, because he knew nothing of repentance for his sins, he laid himself open through his covetousness to being occupied, I mean not just his mind occupied, but he himself physically taken over by God's great enemy.

And it threw up the kind of conduct of which we've read and of which you may still read further.

If I may take you back in your mind for you know the event well enough to the 26th chapter of Matthew in the house of Simon the leper, who was it that had complained about the lavish [00:07:02] and extravagant way Mary had smashed the box and poured the ointment on the head of Jesus?

Back to the Lord's wonderful retort when he said, well, she's done this in faith anticipation of my burial.

And if I calculate all right, it wasn't a week away. It was just a day or two before, six days before the Passover it happened. And it would seem that when Judas saw the extravagance of that woman's devotion and worship, which got such a place that it is written into the book that will never perish. [00:08:03] Heaven and earth shall pass away, said the Lord Jesus Christ, but my word shall not pass away and Mary's name is eternally recorded as having done what she felt was right for him and in the anticipation of that burial that was just in front of him. May I say she was in the same mood as her master.

And Judas wasn't.

He never got round to it because he failed to see the glory of the person with whom he'd been a companion and a labourer for some three plus years. But it was after Mary's anointing that he went to the high priests and he arranged to [00:09:02] sell his Lord for 30 pieces of silver.

What a man!

And Satan entered into him.

And Satan had him.

He had him as a dupe because it was not only after the act of worship of Mary that Judas made his big mistake and went to the chief priests, but it was after Jesus gave him the sop at supper that Satan entered into him.

And he sold his Lord.

You may recall that later on Matthew tells us that when Judas saw that his Lord was condemned, [00:10:10] he repented.

He went back to the people who'd given him the money. He threw it down.

So it did him no good whatsoever. And shall we dismiss it by saying they laughed him to the echo, having gained their terrible prize.

Here's a man full of privilege, full of opportunity, listening to the words of the Lord himself accompanying with his people, looking like a disciple who turned out to be a fifth columnist from the very arch enemy of God.

In the first chapter of Acts, when Peter, after the resurrection, when Peter is speaking, [00:11:06] he calls Judas, guide to them who took Jesus.

What a terrible indictment!

Let his habitation be desolate and the place know him no more.

It is, of course, recorded that he went out and hung himself. He lost his money. He lost his life. He lost his reputation and faces eternal desolation.

And that man is one of the chief actors in the Garden of Gethsemane. That was his behaviour in the crisis when they were seeking to put the Lord Jesus Christ to death.

He sold himself to the enemy and reaped the fruit of his rewards.

[00:12:08] He loved money.

He sold his Lord and he died the death.

Let's pass on.

There was another set of people. I would like the time to analyse these with you one by one but we must group them together because in the second collection of folk, there are the companions of Judas.

These were his new friends. Have you ever made new friends? Well, it is a good thing to keep to your old and trusted friends.

The Bible will show it. The philosophers show it. The friends thou hast and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with thongs of steel. [00:13:06] But Judas had some new friends, friends that he thought were going to help him. He had a duty to perform and if you read through the four Gospels, you will find that there is an enormous company. It's called a multitude. It's called a band. It's led out by Judas who knew the place where Jesus went, for what?

To get out of the city to pray and Judas intended that night to break up the prayer meeting.

Who was that? Well, Luke is quite clear. He was an educated man. He was a doctor.

He says quite definitely that this was not just a multitude of thugs. [00:14:02] There may have been some, I have no doubt there were. There was chief priests and if you want to know who a chief priest was, you go back to the early books where the priesthood was set up and I understand that you will find that whilst Aaron was the high priest, his sons were chief priests and then there were others of lesser degree, captains of the temple. These weren't soldiers, I'm told. These were men who were in the ministry. Here was the official representation of those who were keeping a religious system going in Jerusalem.

To the glory of God, I suppose they would say, but like Judas, for their own covetousness, for their own intent and they failed to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ for who he was. [00:15:03] To them, he was just a nuisance. And then there were the elders. I suppose these were those men who, well what did they do later?

Those were the very people who spent the rest of the night trying to find false witnesses and none of them could be found. As a boy, I used to wonder how it was if they only wanted two men to say the same thing or three, how they couldn't find this to be done. But then I learned that according to Jewish custom, which was even kept up very particularly at this time, it was customary to bring a witness in, cross-examine him and stand him down and bring the second one in and cross-examine him, not having heard what the first one said. This is why they failed to find three men because there were many men who would have [00:16:03] stood together and if one had said, this is what he said, they would have signed the document as witnesses. Have you ever tried this when there's trouble about examining the witnesses separately in camera and then comparing what they say and you'll find it's a very different thing. These elders were the men who failed, though they tried hard to find sufficient witnesses to agree to make the trial anything but a sheer mockery.

And then John tells us that there were officers. I suppose those were the subordinates. Let's just pass over them. But there was a man called Malchus. John, it would seem, knew him. He knew him well enough to name him. John, if you read your scripture, was well known in the house of the high priest. [00:17:01] Some have said that in the fishing business he was the contact man in town. He was a

salesman with the polished manners. He was a man who was known in the high priest's house. He had enough influence to talk to the doorkeeper and bring Peter in, who was just a fisherman. But this John, writer of John's Gospel, he was a man who had one foot inside the door. He wasn't a Judas. But he was known and he could name Malchus, Malchus, a servant of the high priest. You see the high priest was personally represented there, although he had all the official representation he needed. Malchus was to the fore, it would seem, because I'm going to be brave enough to say that as the Lord Jesus Christ stood there, I see Peter at his side. And when Peter struck with the sword, it struck Malchus.

[00:18:06] The fact that this man is named, never again in the scripture, the fact that he is named raises my hope that with that ear that was healed as the last miracle of our Lord recorded on earth, that he heard with the hearing of faith, if the Lord touched your ear and you hear his voice, he that heareth the voice of the Son of God shall live.

The fact that he's named does raise my hope for Malchus because he's a wonderful example of the love of God. He seemed to me to be the man most nearly representing the high priest, perhaps very [00:19:04] subordinate in his official capacity, but there commissioned to go back, no doubt, and tell the whole story to the high priest in his chamber.

Now someone else there, before we close this, unseen but there, Satan himself in the person of Judas, whom he had taken possession of, and he was moving Judas to his own destruction.

And if you lend yourself to the enemy of God, that enemy will show his sheer perfidity because what he offers as a prize, he is pleased to see it go from you and leave you poor indeed.

[00:20:08] I turn abruptly now, having run through these people that I'd like you to consider in your thoughtful moments.

They may each have something to teach us. To a third man, only recorded by one of the evangelists, and it says a certain young man. Now when we come across that word certain, I think it means just what it says. This is a person who was known. This is a person who could be named if it were necessary. It was not just a figure.

It was a certain young man whose name is suppressed for some good reason. Mark records him.

Where does he fit in? [00:21:01] He wasn't a disciple.

He wasn't with Judas.

He'd followed Jesus into the garden.

There's something else that catches my eye about him. He was a young man, and you know at that day men didn't live to be very old in any case. So he was younger than we would call a young man probably, a stripling.

He was a man who was trying to show the generation gap, wasn't he, because of his dress. He was off beat.

He was dressed just with a linen cloth.

I can't get much out of this. I'm not going to spend much time on it at all. Have you thought that it might have been a black one which he thought would hide him on that dark night?

[00:22:02] But you can't hide when you're in a crisis like this. But how did he get there? He had followed Jesus.

Probably idle curiosity.

Well who was he?

No one can answer that question. If you read your scripture, you may veer towards a feeling that I have, that it was none other than Mark.

Are there any reasons for it? When Peter was in prison and the angel touched him, awakened him, dropped his chains, opened the door and left him free in Jerusalem, where did Peter go? He went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark.

And there was many gathered there.

[00:23:02] That was a gathering place. And one may just ask the question, I'm not going to answer it, but let's ask the question, was this a house that had the large upper room? Was this a house of the guest chamber? Was the good man of the house the father of Mark? Because if it was so, Mark was lurking round the very house where the supper party went on on the Passover night. Who more likely as a boy are to follow that party to see where it went next? But brave as he was, probably disobedient as he was, and probably camouflaged as he thought himself to be, he failed to recognize that he was in the power, he was in a place [00:24:01] where there was power. There was a power of God and there was a power of Satan to the greatest degree, probably more concentrated that night than there's ever been before. Because it was a day of crisis, a night of crisis, and a crisis not just in Jerusalem, not just in Palestine, not just in Jewish history, not just in world history, but a crisis that moved the throne of God himself.

Had God not looked to this day, to this night, to this dark, dark night, had he not looked down all the centuries as he'd thought of a work of redemption which would put him in a position to show men and women like you and me the kind of God he really was. [00:25:09] But neither his youth, his cunning, nor the darkness could hide him. And when attacked, who by? By Satan. Satan will attack in any direction, at any purpose at all.

And it's characteristic of those who serve him. What does the scripture say of them? Their feet are swift to shed blood, and the way of peace have they not known. But if it were Mark, I say with a big if, if it were Mark, he turns up later, doesn't he?

He was the nephew of Barnabas.

He was that serviceable in the ministry of Paul. [00:26:06] And Peter speaks of Mark, some people say it's a different man. I don't know where they get it from. I'm not going to go against them in argument at all. But that Mark, Peter says, my son, I take it, a son in the faith.

And who more likely was one for the Lord Jesus Christ than the boy who ventured into Gethsemane where Peter made such a fool of himself in his mistaken enthusiasm to save his Lord from death?

If that were so, if part of what I've said stands any test at all, then just gather this, [00:27:02] what do you get as a young man?

Oh, you're different from your elders. You wear different clothes from your elders. And I'm saying this with the greatest of kindness because I was once a young man myself. And as I was dressing one morning, my father looked at me with a half grin on his face and said, where did you get that vest from?

I said, well, I got it from Hope Brothers. He said, I thought you'd been to a woman's shop for it. He said, it's got feather stitching round the neck and no sleeves. And it shook him. But when I got dressed in my suit, I thought I was a whale of a fellow. I bent it two inches round the bottom of the trousers, not a bit less. And I walked down the meeting room in Hull very, very conscious that I was going to shake somebody [00:28:07] when an old sister who was a wife of a tailor looked round and said, good gracious, are those things in fashion again? And I went home very deflated. I could have you dressing like me if I only dressed like you. It's this generation gap. Now here was a young man who was quite offbeat in his dress. I believe his hat was in the right place. Let's forget about his dress. Let's say he followed his lord.

He lost all he'd got. He fled naked.

May it be that if we lose all we've got and all we're proud of, that we win Christ's great gain.

[00:29:01] There's somebody else now in that garden.

Let's speak of them just for a minute or two. These people are spoken of so often, I think we can almost leave them out. It says that when Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, across the brook he'd run up the sides of the Mount of Olives to that garden that he knew. And don't take any notice what they tell you now about the place. Nobody else knows where it is. They'll show you the olive trees. I've sat under them, got a leaf at home that was grown on the side of the Mount of Olives. But the Lord knew of that place.

His disciples did.

It was a Christing place. It was a mating place. And these eleven disciples, they shame themselves by missing the whole point of the venture.

[00:30:09] Jesus, as a Lord, moved into that garden and he said, Pray! And they didn't.

They might have altered things that night. I don't know how, but they might have altered things because prayer does alter things. Peter wouldn't have drawn his sword and made that bloody assault on Malchus. I say this because he cut his ear off. I don't know if you've ever seen a fellow with his ear cut off, but you seem to get more blood out of an ear than you do out of any other wound. My thoughts go back to the time when we were on the battlefield and a friend of mine who was in the infantry, he was hit by something and they brought him right into my arms covered [00:31:07] with blood and my heart sank.

But we found that the shrapnel had hit his glasses, run along, and clipped a hole in his ear.

It bleeds like that. It was our most profuse show and our most futile action that Peter ever did.

Let's hope it was the last time he used his sword because in passing Jesus said, Those who take the sword will perish by it.

Three things those disciples did and then we pass on. He said, Pray, they slept.

And the consequence was that when the crisis came their behaviour was to forsake him and fled. [00:32:01] These men who like Peter had said we will never, never, never go. Now Peter, we're climbing aren't we?

Of the apostles the scripture says the first, Peter, marvellous man, in Luke 22 says to the Lord, Ready to go to prison and death.

And the Lord took him at his word and Peter went to prison and to death. But before he did he got a lot to learn because to walk into prison and to death may sound very good, may sound extremely brave, but God may have something far greater for you to do that's not half so dramatic as that. [00:33:01] And Peter made, shall I say, a vow that he would go to prison and to death and when we make a vow to God we're obliged to keep it.

The scripture says don't make a vow but if you do, pay it. Well this man, he went to prison and we know.

I'm sure that he paid the full price of martyrdom for his faith.

The scripture forecast it, it happened. But he slept in the prayer meeting, have you ever done it? I have.

You needn't snore, nobody may know that you're asleep, you may be wide awake, my mind might be far away on other things and as far as the business of a prayer meeting goes, [00:34:06] I'm asleep, I'm just out of touch.

And it was this that led Peter, I'm sure, to one or two things, to strike with a carnal sword to make the Lord show once again his power to heal, his compassions that run so deep that he loved his enemies and called Judas his friend.

And to stay the panic, he turned to them and said, don't you know, if I ask the Father, he could presently, which I believe means right now, send me more than twelve legions of angels.

Judas had got a band, a multitude, he got some officers and men all milling about. [00:35:07] He was being pushed by Satan himself from within, but there was one who had the right to ask for more than twelve legions of angels, an enormous army because angels excel in might.

They could have altered history and brought you and me, poor sinners that we are by nature, to a lost eternity. And Jesus said, but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?

And Peter went on. He went on that night to the palace of the high priest. I haven't time to go through his threefold denial. [00:36:04] I know not the man, says Peter.

I don't know what you're talking about, says Peter. And finally, in Matthew's gospel, that great narrator, he says he began to curse and to swear.

I know not the man.

He took a solemn vow that he'd never seen Jesus until the cock crew, heralding another day. And it says he went out and wept bitterly.

There was a brother who stood in the hall meeting once and quoted these few lines. We not like boastful Peter nor confidently say I never will deny thee, Lord, but grant [00:37:02] I never may, for none of us know the pressure that is going to come upon us and none of us have the power to say I never will deny thee, Lord.

But we may say, grant I never may.

But Peter's experience in a word of his great decline, of his shameful behavior in crisis, because he was out of touch with his Lord's mood, when he wrote a letter, and he only wrote two, I used to wonder why Peter never wrote one of the gospels, been the chief of the apostles.

[00:38:01] There are those who will tell you that Matthew and Mark, particularly, are based on what Peter communicated. I think they may have good reason for such an assumption, but don't you think it may have been that Peter forfeited the right to write a gospel because of what we've read of him tonight?

But he wept bitterly, bitter tears of repentance, which moves the God of heaven as it always does into active compassion, and Peter was restored.

When he wrote his first letter, he did write two letters that were encoded in the Holy Scripture.

What does he say? He says in the beginning of the first one, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, [00:39:03] Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by resurrection from the dead. He puts all the credit back to God and to that wonderful person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the very last words he wrote in his very last letter, he says, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. You and I may well listen to a man like that. His very experience puts him into a unique class of men who know what it is to have slept and to be irretrievably lost if it were not that there's a pardoning God who is able to [00:40:04] act freely for sinners because the redemption price was paid.

And he says to him, to Jesus Christ, be glory both now and evermore.

And Peter fades into the blackness to see his wonderful Lord exalted.

Lastly, what can I say?

The Lord himself.

You know, it occurs to me that the people that we've met tonight so far in Gethsemane, you could write them off at a word, a traitor, or what have you.

[00:41:04] They were simple characters, but the complex person of the indivisible Christ.

The person who's put before us. Even at this very point of time, as you read the four stories of what happened in Gethsemane, when they came and Jesus said, who are you looking for? They said, Jesus of Nazareth, and he said, I'm he. Who was he? The man he'd lived, Jesus of Nazareth.

Of course, the power of him saying, I am he, revealed his Godhead that though Satan, as in Judas he fell back, take courage, Satan has not a leg to stand on when he comes into [00:42:07] the confrontation with the one who was called and called himself Jesus of Nazareth.

He said to his disciples, rise, wake up, the son of man is betrayed. Oh, he was a son of man.

It was in that capacity that he died.

And into his hand, the glorified son of man, God has entrusted all judgment. And at the kernel of Gethsemane, when he'd left his eight disciples and taken the other three forward, when he'd left then and gone forward himself, in that deep darkness of the garden, he turned his eyes towards heaven and Mark records, he said, Abba, Father, all [00:43:10] things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me, nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. He'd no time to linger here except to say that he's shown here to be the son of God in an agony of blood.

And if you see the Lord Jesus Christ in these various attributes, if you see him as a son of God, the son of man, Jesus of Nazareth, Jehovah himself, God with us, you see the [00:44:01] terribleness of the crisis that had arisen and Mark, his behavior.

Come to do the will of God.

He had a desire to avoid it because he said, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, nevertheless, not my will.

And the apostle writing of him said afterwards, even Christ pleased, not himself. He came to do the Father's will and he did it in perfection.

So we read of the Lord Jesus Christ who left Jerusalem, who crossed the Kidron, which I understand can be translated as the Black Torrent. He went to the Garden of Gethsemane, which means the wine press. And the wine press is a vintage of the harvest of the grape.

[00:45:09] Here's a picture, a terrible picture of the harvest in wrath that God will yet reap in this world when he judges this world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained.

You know of Christ's agony, that conflict that he had alone.

This is the point. It had gone beyond human endurance. It had gone beyond the ability of any man to

stand that ground because our wrath of God was about to descend on this wonderful person, central figure of Gethsemane, the [00:46:03] only cause of the crisis that night because if Satan had had his way, he could have carried every man of Adam's race down into a lost eternity with him.

And Christ, the central figure. And what does the scripture say of him? It says, consider him who endured such contradiction of sin as against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.

There's so much more.

I stop here, objectively to put your eyes on him, to speak of that same night, so much happened that same night in which he was betrayed and beg you to examine again the behavior in crisis of God's man and the behavior in crisis of every other man and the behavior [00:47:12] in crisis of Satan himself who knows that he is defeated.

What a wonderful Lord we have. What a lot there is to encourage us to live for our Lord in lively communion with him and to act under his instructions.

When he says pray, to know what it is, to pray and to know his guidance.

I leave this quite unfinished, quite unsatisfactorily in my own mind, like tearing it off with a ragged edge and commend the word of God to the occupation of each one of us and that [00:48:03] central figure, our Lord and Savior to whom be glory now and forevermore.