

John Chapter 18

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[0 : 0 0] I can still remember the place and the rough time. The place was Woolworths in Stornoway. Many of you will remember it. The time I think would have been around about 1980.

I was at the back of the shop on the right hand side if the memory serves me correctly, that's where the toys were. I was in battle with my mother.

I had a Batman car in my hand in a box and I had a capsule of Caudillor oil in my other hand. It was probably only that size but it seemed to me like the size of a petrol canister that you buy from Ardazza.

This huge massive capsule. So that was in the one hand, the Batman car was in the other hand. And I was being made an offer under some pressure. My mum was saying that I needed to take this capsule. I was getting cold, I was a bit of a scrawny, weak, thin little child.

So I was told, you need this stuff. You need to be taking this stuff. They tried this spoon. I once before tasted Caudillor oil. It tasted to me like putrid, rotten herring and I didn't even like fresh herring.

[1 : 2 9] And so I was not relishing the prospect of this Caudillor oil. I'd refused point blank in the house over three or four days and here we were creating a scene in the toy aisle in Woolworths.

I was told, this will do you good. You take this stuff, you drink this stuff, this will do you good. I understood in my head that this would do me good. But I left Woolworths without the Batman car. Caudillor oil still in my hand and mother and son not in the best of terms.

As we come back to John chapter 18, we pick that back up this week at verse 11. Jesus says in verse 11, having corrected Peter for the swipe of the sword, Jesus says to Peter, he says, put your sword over me.

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

And that cup, we thought about last week very briefly. It was the cup of God's wrath. What is God's wrath? God's wrath is his punishment, his legal punishment for our sin.

[2 : 5 1] Sin is an offence. Much like in the civil law, every offence has a penalty. And for every sin that you and I have committed, there is a penalty for Christ to pay.

And so the cup that Jesus was taking was a cup that had been filled with the wrath of God. This is a cup of suffering.

This is a cup of punishment. This is a cup where every sin ever committed, every offence, every ugly transgression that stained the life of every believer.

You and I included. What was poured into that cup. This was the cup of wrath that Jesus saw.

And Jesus was beginning to lift. And here we see him. He's taking the cup. He knows the intensity of the suffering that it would bring.

- [3 : 54] He knew the horrors that were poured into it. He knows how distasteful. How unpalatable this will be.
- But he took it. And he took it for your good. He returned with a man. I remember wrestling. Such vivid memory in Woolies. Not to drink the cup of cod liver oil. Even though I was told and I knew this would do me good. And here we see Jesus.
- And he's wrestling. In the garden. To take the sinner's cup. That cup. That cup. That if he drunk would do us eternal good and bring salvation.
- And so he took it. And he perseveres. To the cross where he would drink every last drop. And die.
- [5 : 01] For sinners. One commentator Johnson. Says the death of Jesus lies at the very heart of the reason for his coming.
- We've been thinking a lot about his coming over past weeks. His birth. But if we really want to understand Jesus. If we really want to understand his love for us.
- If we really want to understand ourselves as well. We need to understand. The death of Jesus. If we are to receive any benefits.
- Says this commentator. From Christ's coming. We need more than anything. To come to terms with the meaning. Of his cross. And so that's what. I hope we'll do over these next few weeks.
- We journey with Jesus. In John's gospel. To his cross. As we ourselves journey as a congregation. To the communion table as well. Over these next few weeks.
- [6 : 06] Now on any journey we encounter people. We meet people on the way. And in these verses. That we've read today. We meet individuals. We meet individuals.
- Some of whom we know very well. In scriptures. Some not so much. And today. What I'd like to do in this sermon. Is to look at these individuals.
- To look at these characters. That we encounter. In these verses that we've read. Before we look. And finish by fixing our eyes on Jesus. So who do we see?
- Who do we encounter? Who does Jesus encounter? On this journey to the cross? Well the first group of people that we see. The first group that he encounters. Is the officials.
- And the first point is. We see the hardness of the officials. In verse 12. Then the attachment of soldiers. With its commander. And the Jewish officials.
- [7 : 05] Arrested Jesus. They bound him. And brought him first. To Annas. We'll come on to Annas in a moment. Now who are these officials? The Jewish officials.
- And the attachment of soldiers. Who are these men? Well if we just step back a few verses. To the beginning of the chapter. We see that these men.
- That Jesus meets with. And encounters. In the garden. As he's arrested. These are the same men. That are on their backs. In verse 6. As they arrive.
- Accompanied by Judas. Jesus said to these men. Look at verse 4. Who is it you want? Jesus of Nazareth. They said.
- Verse 6. I am he. Jesus said. And we read on there. When Jesus said I am he. They drew back. And fell into the ground.
- [8 : 06] Now we're not talking waifs here. We're talking. We're talking. Big. Towering. Roman. Soldiers. I don't expect any of us.
- We want it to. But. Very few of us in this room. Would be able to. To knock a Roman soldier on his back. And yet Jesus. Without touching. But with these words.

I am. Put the Roman soldier. And these officials. On their backs. These men. Had witnessed. These men.

Had felt. First hand. The power. The supernatural power. Of Jesus. These men. Had witnessed. The supernatural power. Of Jesus.

Not just. In the dust. On their backs. But as they saw. Jesus. Touch the severed ear. Of Malchus. And instantly. Sealed. These men.

[9 : 05] Had seen miracles. In the last few minutes. These men. Had seen miracles. And yet. They still. Would not. Believe.

In Christ. The hearts. Of the officials. Ryle says. He makes the comment. That these men.

Saw. Our Lord's divine power. Exhibited. When they went backward. And fell to the ground. Both saw a miracle. According to Luke's gospel. When Jesus. Touched the ear of Malchus.

And healed him. Yet both remained. Unmoved. Cold. Indifferent. And insensible. The hardness.

Of these officials. They saw miracles. They felt miracles. Yet.

[9 : 59] They would not. Believe. You know. I think. There are. Likely some here. Who are waiting. For a supernatural.

Touch. Of Jesus. You have the word. You hear the word. And there.

Are some. Who. I know. Because you've told me. You're waiting. For the Damascus road. You're waiting. For the thunderbolt. You're waiting.

For the. The flash of light. You're waiting. For a miracle. And people say. If I. If I see the miracle. If I hear the miracle. If God breaks into my life. In this kind of.

Supernatural. Spectacular way. Then I'll believe. And John. In this gospel. Says. No you won't. Jesus.

[10 : 56] Can put you. On your back. With a supernatural. Push. They don't believe. Jesus. Can. Transform.

The appearance. And the feeling. Of the man. Who's sick. With a. Supernatural. Healing. Touch. As he did. Thousands of times. In his ministry. And they walked away.

And they would not believe. Such is the hardness. Of their hearts. And I'm conscious.

That I. I may. Saying. Like a broken record. But can I say this. Again. And again. And again. Today. If you hear.

His voice. If this is making sense to you. If you see. Jesus. If you see. Your sin. If the word of God.

[11 : 54] If the word of God. Is speaking. Don't wait for the flash. Don't wait for the thunderbolt. Don't ask for the. The blast from heaven. Today.

If you hear. His voice. Don't harden your heart. Trust him. Trust him. Trust him. Trust him. Because every day.

You hear his voice. And every day. You refuse to believe. Another hard. Skin. Goes around your heart. Ever shaking the hands. Of a bricklayer. Ever shaking the hands.

Of a few bricklayers. You know. Their hands. Are like. Hardened leather. And they can pick up. A molten lava. Plate of broccoli.

Spit out of the oven. And they don't even blink. Their hands are callous. Layers upon layers. Upon layers. Of hard skin. Feel nothing.

[12 : 52] Hearts get like that. Every time. Jesus. Speaks to you. In his word. You hear his voice.

And you say. Maybe tomorrow. Another layer. Goes on. The hardness. Of the officials. They're the first group.

That Jesus. Encounters. In these verses. The second thing. We see here. Is the blindness. Of the high priest. Verse 13.

We continue here. It says there. That they. They bound. Jesus. Verse 12. And brought them first. To Annas. Who was the father-in-law.

Caiaphas. The high priest. That year. Now this is slightly confusing. When we're. Trying to figure out. Who is the high priest. Is the high priest Annas. Is the high priest Caiaphas. Who is the high priest here.

[13 : 48] And so. When you dig into the commentary. In a bit. I won't bore you. With the detail. A bit. Too much. But. Annas and Caiaphas. Were very close. They were something. Of a double act. Annas was the.

The retired high priest. And in many senses. He can have still. Held a power base. He still had huge influence. Caiaphas. Was the current high priest. They lived in the same palace.

They. They shared many. Of the same duties. They were. Regarded. By the people. Both. As. Having the role. Of the. The high priest. They shared.

Many of their duties. But they also. Shared a spiritual. Blindness. Towards Jesus. Second. Verse 14.

Caiaphas. Was the one. Who had advised. The Jews. That it would be good. If one man. Died for the people. And that takes us. Back to John 11. We don't need to go there.

[14 : 45] But in John 11. Caiaphas. Essentially. He prophesied. As they're deliberating. As they're plotting. The death of Jesus. Caiaphas. Is used of God.

To prophesy. To speak truth. He's used of God. In a sense. To explain. Jesus death. He speaks. About the heart. Of the gospel. Caiaphas. He speaks.

About the. The sense. That one man. Needed to die. For all of the people. And he didn't understand. What he was saying. Really. But he was speaking.

About Jesus dying. As a sacrifice. For our sin. He spoke. The truth. Of the gospel.

And yet. He was blind. To Jesus. As savior. And this reminds me.

[15 : 41] Of a testimony. Of a. Of a minister. That I think. I probably shared before. He was a minister. He'd been a minister. For a number of years. But he wasn't converted. He'd went through his training.

He'd been accepted into ministry. He did all the things. He was a professional. Professional. Religious. Worker. But he wasn't converted.

He wasn't born again. He was blind. And one day. As he stood there. Preaching. He spoke out.

The truth of the gospel. As he had done. Many times before. And as he spoke it. Suddenly. As the Holy Spirit. Without words. He saw for the. The first time. His own sin.

And he saw for the first time. In these moments. As he spoke. Jesus. As his savior. And mid-sermon. He was converted.

[16 : 38] And he first agreed with the sermon. He was different. And one of the congregation. Converted. Gangster type. With very little.

Finesse. Couldn't. He just couldn't wait. So. He burst out. In the middle of it all. Hallelujah. The minister's been converted. And he had been.

That was his testimony. And one would hope. That. Caiaphas and Amos. As Christ comes. Face to face with them. One would hope.

That they would have. A similar testimony. But it seems. That there's. None so blind. As those. Who do not want.

And will not see. The application. For you and I. Here. Is.

[17 : 38] To stick forward. All. It's possible. To see. Jesus. In scripture. It's possible. Even to recognize him.

As. The savior. It's possible. To come to. An intellectual. Grasp. Of the work. Of the atonement. Jesus. Dying. As a sacrifice.

For sin. And yet. Not seen. It was for us. It was for me.

It's Johnny Cash. Amongst others. Who sang. Were you there. When they crucified. My Lord. And the believer. Will say. Yes I was.

I was there. On that day. This is not. An event. That happened. Over 2,000 years ago. Over 2,000 miles away. Disconnected.

[18 : 38] From my life. I was there. Behold. The man. Upon. A cross. My sin.

Upon his shoulders. Ashamed. I hear. My mocking voice. Call out. Among the slaughters. It was.

My sin. That held him there. Until it was accomplished. His dying breath. Has brought. Me life. I know. But it.

Is finished. Amazing grace. We saw. I've sweetest sign. That saved. A wretch.

Like. Me. vegetables. Once. Like. Adam. That büyük. Just.

[19 : 40] hecho. or he wouldn't see Jesus.

What about you and I? Can we see? Are we saved? So there's the hardness of the officials, there is the blindness of the high priest, and the third point here is the delusion of the high priest and his officials.

Look at verse 19 as we continue here. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. We'll come back to Peter shortly. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

I have spoken openly to the world, Jesus replied. I always talked in synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me.

Surely they know what I said. When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. Is this the way you answer the high priest, Jesus? The high priest, he demanded.

[20 : 57] If I said something wrong, Jesus replied, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me? Then Anna sent him, still bound to be kind of this, the high priest.

I want to ask the question. Try and put yourself in this scene. Try and visualize that you were there on the fringes and you were seeing and you were within hearing range of everything that was happening.

somebody nudged you and said, who's in control of this situation here? What would you have said? I think the onlooker would have said as they looked in to this scene that the high priest, Annas, was in control and Jesus was on the ropes.

He was in trouble. And Annas himself and the official who was assisting him who struck the face of Christ. I think when you interviewed them and asked them, they would say, we are in control.

Not Christ. He answers to us. He is at our mercy just now. We hold the power. That's how it looked.

[22 : 23] But that was an illusion. That was a delusion. If people believed that. The reality was so far removed from that.

These men, these officials, these high priests, they were deluded if they thought that they had authority and if they stood in the judgment over Christ.

And Jesus himself, as he stood there, and as he took the hit, and as he felt the hate coming towards him, and as he listened to all their words, Jesus, all the while standing there, knew that one day the tables would be turned and one day Annas and Caiaphas would stand before his judgment seat.

As we all know. it strikes me an application here. We can widen the application of this one. The delusion of the high priest in that day is the same delusion that we see and is evident in our world and particularly in our nation on this day.

just as the high priest and his officials thought that they could lash out and strike Jesus and mock him and stand in judgment over him.

[23 : 55] That's a picture of our age. It's a picture of our day. We live in an age where the name of Jesus is a curse.

An acceptable curse. You stick on the television four or five o'clock there's certain curses that you won't hear but the name of Jesus Christ that's not funny. Any time of the day it's a curse.

we live in an age where the Christian message is deemed to be at best foolishness and at worst dangerous and offensive and to be eradicated.

We live in a culture where the culture seems to stand in judgment over Christ and his gospel.

and he's attacked and his people are attacked and his word is ridiculed and his laws are thrown out.

[25 : 09] We have seen even today that we look at in an age where increasingly Jesus has been evicted from schools and government and even the church in some places.

And every blow that is struck to him he permits it. he is but don't for a moment think that he is on the back foot.

Don't for one second think that Jesus is on the ropes. Don't think that he's in trouble.

It may look that way it may feel that way but we're deluded if we believe that. The reality is that Christ is the eternal unchanging all powerful ruling king of kings.

and he stands in authority over every government in every age. The delusion that we live in where Christ is put down and we lift ourselves up is like a thick fog of deception and it will pass.

[26 : 51] and ultimately every eye will see truly who Christ is. And ultimately every knee will bow before the one that many ridicules.

And ultimately every tongue who cursed will confess that he is Lord. so let's remember reality.

Don't be taken in by the delusion. Let's remember the eternal reality. Let's be encouraged by the eternal reality of Jesus as Lord and Saviour and King.

If we don't see that, if we don't remember that, we will fail and we will fall as Peter did. And that's the fourth point that we come to today, the failure of Peter.

We look at the failure of Peter, this is a familiar account to us. We will probably have read this many times in all four of the Gospels.

[28 : 08] John is probably kindest in the picture that he paints of Peter and his failure. And yet even in John's Gospel, if we limit our thoughts to that, John shows us that Peter's failure was comprehensive.

Peter failed thoroughly. Peter denied Jesus, not once, not twice, three times, just as was predicted.

And we read about the two scenes and time pretty much is gone. so if you just look at this and you can read this yourselves at your convenience afterwards.

But from verse 15 to verse 18, we see Peter's first amount. We see how he was pressed by this wee girl.

Peter's an enigma, isn't he? Five minutes ago, when his life could have been taken in a second by a garrison of Roman soldiers, Peter takes his sword and swipes it.

[29 : 16] Ill-advised, foolish. And now when a little girl comes to him and says, are you one of them? Peter's fear overwhelms him.

His courage has gone and he denies Christ, I am not. I am not one of them. And then after doing that, in verses 25, through to verse 27, we hear Peter a second time denying Christ, and then a third time denying Christ, before the alarm call of the rooster, the cop, the horse.

And Peter realises in that moment what he's done. Peter's failure was massive, comprehensive.

We often use the phrase in the world in different contexts that we're in, three strikes and you're out. Football, that's the way it works.

You're going to bad challenge, warning. Second one, yellow card. Third one, three strikes, you're gone. Workplace, it's a misdemeanor, warning.

[30 : 35] Second one, written warning. Third time, you're gone. Three failures, you're finished. Cheerio, it's done.

How thankful Peter must have been down the line that it was Jesus who was dealing with his failures and not the world.

Lord. How thankful Peter must have been that it was Jesus who came to him. Jesus who sought him out in order that he would repent.

Jesus, who as we sung, is compassionate and gracious and slow to anger and abounding in love. And even though it took some time for Peter to receive the grace of Jesus, even though it took a bit of time for Peter to truly believe that he could be loved and forgiven and restored and recommissioned, the gospel tells us as we'll come to him due course that he was.

He was a huge failure and yet he was brought back to a position of such intimacy with Jesus.

[31 : 58] and such usefulness in the gods of Christ. When Jesus said, you are Peter, you are Simon and on this rock I will build my church, Jesus knew.

He knew in that moment what Peter would do. But he knew that in spite of Peter and his failure, he could rebuild and he would.

and if Peter can receive this forgiveness and this restoration, so can you and I. Now for the Lord's people, failure is not final.

Failure is never final. because the one who holds us is stronger than the Lord that we even have in him, which is not that strong often.

Satan wanted to put an end to Peter. And Jesus told him that in Luke 22. Jesus said to Peter in Luke 22, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed to you that your faith may not fail.

[33 : 24] Jesus had a hold on Peter. And even in the courtyard, even in everything that we see tragically unwavering here, Jesus still has a hold on him.

One hymn writer says, the soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not deserve to his foes. That soul, though all hell, should endeavour to shake, I'll never, no never, forsake.

I think Peter would love to sing that. What encouragement, what security, what hope there is in Christ.

So if you're here today, and if you're feeling like a spiritual failure, if you're here today and you feel, as many of us so often do, if you're feeling like we've let the world down so badly over the last while, if we feel like we've wandered far from, and you wonder, is there any way back?

and Peter shows us that it is. If we repent, Jesus will receive us.

[34 : 59] And even in this moment, Jesus is pursuing us, so we will repent, and he will receive us. no matter how far we fall, no matter how long we've been away from him, we return to him, he will return to us.

We are weak, he is strong. We are prone to wander, but he has relented us in his pursuit of us. Ryle says this, if Peter's fall has made Christians see more clearly their own great weakness, and Christ's great compassion, then Peter's fall has not been recorded in vain.

Why is this tragedy in the Gospels? This is a scar on the Gospel account. Why not edit it out, John? Why not erase it?

This doesn't cast the church in a good light. This doesn't make the disciples do it good. Why not cut it out? You're the editor. It's for us. We're failures like us, so that we'll be encouraged, and so that we will be restored as we come back to Christ.

And the final thing, just a word, because we will continue to do this over these next few weeks. We see the meekness and the majesty of Jesus. We finish just with our eyes fixed on Christ.

[36 : 38] As we navigate through these scenes, as we look at the way he relates to these individuals, we see such majesty. We see such dignity. We see such poise.

We see such meekness. Jesus had all the power of heaven to call upon. And in a second, he could have brought an end to all of this suffering, and yet he endured it all.

He persevered through it all. Here we see the king of kings, with absolute unflinching resolve to do the will of the father, to do the work of salvation, our salvation.

They bind him, and he likes them. Even though with a second, with a thought, the chains could be shattered as they were for Paul and Silas, and yet Jesus stands there, bound.

And he's led through the bound. And they interrogate him, and he need answer no one, and yet he stands in the place of the guilty and condemned, and he answers for the sin.

[38 : 07] And they try to intimidate the maker of heaven and earth with their swords, and with their blows, and with their words. we see Psalm 2 in real time, we haven't got time to go there, and he permits it, and he suffers the pain, the personal part of hearing and seeing Peter denying three times with curses, nations, and he suffers the isolation as the disciples scatter, and he is left alone, condemned, and he knows everything that is still to happen.

And yet Jesus, so full of regal dignity, he allows it all.

Why? Love. For who? For you.

Heavenly Father, help us to see, help us to hear, help us to trust.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.