

Sovereign Grace Triumphant Over Sin

Mark 14:10–21

We move fully into Jesus's passion as he fully enters the suffering he endures to redeem sinners.

Mark 14:10–21 — ¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

¹² And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶ And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" ²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

PRAY

A Stubborn Sinner — vv10–11, 18–21

Luke 22 tells us that Satan has now entered Judas. Well, Satan has dupes, but that does not reduce or mitigate the moral responsibility of those who sin. It does not wash to say, *The devil made me do it*. Judas is a responsible moral agent before God. We are all responsible moral agents before God.

Consider how Judas stubbornly and strategically chose sin.

- He went to the chief priests; they did not come seeking him. He initiated the evil.

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- He chose profit in this life over eternal riches in heaven. He chose worldly gain at the cost of his eternal soul — he forfeited his soul in so choosing. One of the ongoing temptations for Judas was love of money. It was a sin he never turned from, and it finally grew to the point it destroyed him.
- He chose to betray Christ specifically. He went to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus to them.
- His sin was planned. It was premeditated. It was strategic. He calculated the meeting with the chief priests. He calculated a convenient time to commit his sin. He sought opportunity to sin.

And he is accountable for his sin. His premeditation, his attempt to sidetrack the redemptive plan of God in unbelief, his valuing of worldly treasure over the eternal Christ — All these things led Christ to say that his culpability is so severe that **it would be better that he had never been born**. His iniquitous end is aggravated by the fact that he shut down any opportunity for forgiveness by committing suicide. Surely he was energized and tempted in some way by Satan. But he was responsible for choosing sin, for valuing sin over the things of God, and for planning the opportunity to act on these things.

The repetitive pattern of choosing to sin brought such darkness into his life that it overrode the direct teaching of Jesus that he had been under for over 3 years. Repeated patterns of sin cut contours into his heart, hardening it so that he was so self-deceived about who Christ was that he thought he could fool even the Lord in the betrayal by committing the act with a kiss. **No one will know it was me. Jesus will think I love him** appears to be what he thought. But as we see in his interactions with Jesus, the Lord was not fooled. Of course he wasn't. He knows the hearts of men.

This pattern of cherishing sin should serve as a grave warning to our minds and souls.

- Do you seek out opportunities to sin?
- Do you profit or anything else that this passing world has to offer over the eternal riches of God's kingdom? Worldly gain will cost our eternal soul.
- Are you allowing *pet sins* to cut contours into your heart that bend you away from God and holiness?
- Is there any place where you deliberately choose against Christ? He is hated, and those who follow him will be hated. Do you choose approval of the world over life-giving devotion to Christ?
- Are you planning, or premeditating, or calculating to engage in sin? Are you living a secret life? Is there any cherished sin or idolatry you plan for an ideal time or a convenient time to act it out? Do you have a strategy to act on your sin? Are you seeking opportunity to sin?

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If any of these things are true, your soul is in great danger. But it does not have to be so. Fear your sin and bring yourself under the warnings and wisdom of God's Word. Walk in repentance. Judas *did not* do this, and such darkness engulfed his soul that he killed himself. Satan has come to steal, kill, and destroy. After he entered Judas and the betrayal was done, no doubt he then tempted him to kill himself. This is the reality of your enemy. Remember this when we tempts you to sin.

How do we escape the plight of Judas? Hear these warnings and gracious helps from God's word:

- **Romans 13:14** — ... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
- **2 Timothy 2:22** — So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- **1 Corinthians 10:14** — Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.
- And a powerful aid in killing sin: **I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.** — **Psalm 119:11**

Jesus came in order that we might have life, and have it to the full. The repeated calls we see in the bible to stop sinning, to turn from sin are calls to blessing. God is not taking any good thing away from us. He is calling very literally from death. He is calling us to life.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.¹

This a powerful lesson about the deadliness of sin from Judas's life. But there is something infinitely better, infinitely more encouraging, infinitely more faith-building in the life of the Sovereign Savior.

Sovereign Savior

Jesus is entering into the pain of his passion as the redemption plan for the world now comes to a climax. If we were to only consider Judas and his actions — perhaps *if we had not already read the end of the book* — we might be inclined to despair about the impact this man's great sin might have on God's plan of redemption. **Does he derail the whole thing?** Well, we have read the ending — so let's be reminded of the reality of our Lord:

¹ Romans 6:12–13

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He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Of the great evil that Judas did, what of it sidetracked Jesus **reconciling** to himself all things, making peace by the blood of his cross? Jesus is governing and ruling over all things. **He sovereignly fulfills all that he has been assigned, and he does exactly according to the Father's plan, fulfilling all righteousness and ushering in the new covenant in his blood.**

As the Law requires, **Jesus keeps the Passover**. Here is a reminder that Jesus perfectly kept the law, so that he was the perfect substitute for lawbreakers. His righteousness in keeping the law perfectly is what makes up, if you will, the robe of righteousness, that he places around those who placed their faith in him.

- **He keeps the Passover in the right place**. Deuteronomy 16 requires that the Passover sacrifice be offered within the city that God would provide — Jerusalem. If you were curious about why Jesus did not have the meal at Simon's house in Bethany, it would *not* have been a perfect keeping of the Law. So He moved two miles into the city and took his disciples with him.
- **He keeps the Passover with all the prescribed requirements**. Everything is furnished and readied by the master of the house. No detail undone — even rugs for reclining at the table.
- **He keeps the Passover in such a way to thwart threats to the Father's schedule**. John 11:53–57 tells us that the Sanhedrin was on the lookout for Jesus so that they could arrest him and kill him. The covert meeting and supplies provided by someone who likely would not be watched by the religious leaders tells us Jesus was not going to allow them to interfere with this critical meal or its timing. Carrying water was women's work in the first century — a man simply would not have done that. So the disciples are to find this man doing something no other man would be doing and follow him. No conversation would be necessary, and no suspicion would be raised in case someone was watching. Just follow him. The master of the house preparing everything needed under Jesus's command meant they would not need to pack in supplies. He could simply blend into the huge crowd that had amassed in the city for the feast.

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Jesus's *sovereign rule* over the events of Passover parallels his *sovereign rule* over the events as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey the previous Sunday, which we call Palm Sunday. Perhaps a good Lord's Day exercise would be to go back and read side by side the account of how everything was arranged under Jesus's governance as he fulfilled the prophesy from Zechariah 9:9.

He is the Sovereign Savior on mission to redeem those who will turn to him in faith and repentance. He accomplishes all he wills. As the week wears on it may seem that his plan in is jeopardy. It is not. God accomplishes all that he intends. Let this build your faith. **What he wills, he brings to pass.**² Judas's betrayal, the arrest, the mock trial, and ultimately the crucifixion — all of these may seem like loss. But as v 21 tells us, **the Son of Man goes as it is written for him.**

God is no way the author of sin, but sovereignly accomplishes his work through the means of sinful people. The Apostle Paul expounds this in Romans 8 — **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** When Joseph confronts his brothers concerning all their sin and evil against him, he says in Genesis 45 — ... **do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.** You sold me; God sent me. And in Genesis 50 — ... **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.** A more contemporary voice that resonates with us, perhaps: ***No power of hell, no scheme of a man can ever pluck me from his hand.***

Believer, behold your God. Evil schemes are launched and executed against the Son of Man. He suffered through these, but suffering was part of God's plan. As he has suffered, he understands our suffering. And ***as he has triumphed over suffering*** produced directly by evil and wicked people, **so he will secure and deliver his believing child in the midst of suffering.** Again, the hymn writer:

***Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control:
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate and has shed his own blood for my soul.***

Christ controlled and governed all things to accomplish the salvation of the world. If he triumphantly reigns over the onslaught of hell and all the evil that men could hurl at him, do you think he cannot hold you?

Suffering and trials will come. Some of those simply spring from a fallen world. Some of them may be direct assaults from your enemy. In either case, **look away to your Savior**, who endured the cross, despising its shame and is now seated in victory. He will not allow your defeat or eternal loss.

² Isaiah 46:11

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One of the difficult pills to swallow, as Philippians 1:29–30 tells us, is that God, in his good plan, grants us hardships and suffering. That suffering may even come through the hand of our enemy who would perpetrate evil against us. He redeems every loss and pays back 100-fold. He is a debtor to no one. In **2 Thessalonians 3** Paul asks them to pray that [he] may be delivered from wicked and evil men. God may answer that prayer with a **yes** and stop the evil. Or he may purpose the evil to accomplish his greater plan for his glory and your good. In either case God remains faithful, good, and the reigning King. **We must believe this and live our lives under this certain hope.**

Suffering, and ultimately death, will come to those who cherish sin and coddle it in their hearts. Such suffering is all loss. The way of sinners is hard; the way of the treacherous is their ruin.³ The only good that comes from suffering for sin is that the holy righteousness of God is revealed as he judges it. Sin produces no good thing.

But suffering for Christ's sake and standing in faith, even under the onslaught of evil schemes can be beautiful as we **release our lives** and **our demands for comfort** to the infinitely wise and loving plan of our good and sovereign God. Christ submitted himself to the Father and fulfilled all righteousness, including the suffering wrought through evil schemes. His obedience brings you, child of faith, out of the dominion of death into the kingdom of life in the Son. Do not discount this. Do not let the roar of evil or the suffering it produces drown out the truth of God in your ear: God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁴

- If you are in a season of suffering – even if it seems that all hell is moving against you, fight despair. Yes, examine your heart and see if there is any sin that must be dealt with. We will look at that more next week as we move to the Lord's supper. But to suffer because of the enemy's assault is not a sign that you are forsaken. It is a call to look more fully and his wonderful face.
- If you are not currently in a season of suffering, drink deeply of the sovereign rule and reign of Christ. Worship in the fullness of his grace that a strong foundation is laid for you to stand on when the day of difficulty comes.

A stubborn sinner... A Sovereign Savior — and next week, a Sacred Supper as we move toward his peacemaking cross. **[PRAY]**

³ Proverbs 13:15

⁴ Romans 5:8