

Mark 14:53-72

As we begin tonight it's important to just remember where we are in the narrative of the life of Jesus. **It's the final day of our Savior's life as He** is now just a few short hours away from His death on the cross. **Sadly, these hours won't be filled with friends** and family but instead Jesus will face the torture of going to the cross alone.

If you remember those closest to Jesus had both betrayed and abandoned the Lord in His hour of greatest need. **Jesus in our study last week had informed** the disciples as they were on the way to the Mount of Olives and then the Garden of Gethsemane **that all of them were going to scatter** just as the scriptures had declared.

Each one of them responded by saying they would never do such a thing **but the text in the Gospel of Mark focused** on Peter and his response when he said "Even if those guys over there leave you I would never ever do such a thing." **He even said that he was willing to die with the Lord.**

Once they arrived in the garden the Lord knowing what was about to take place in His life was understandably upset. **His response...to run to the Father in prayer.** **He took three of the disciples with Him a little further and asked them** to keep watch with Him...**and then the Lord went to the Father and prayed asking if there would be any other way** that it could be so...**and then the Lord proceeded to submit Himself to the will of the Father.**

It was a sad thing that the Lord we were told prayed three times in a similar manner **and each time when He came back His three friends the ones that He** had asked to keep watch were found to be asleep.

The Lord even told them that they needed to pray for the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

After the third and final time that the Lord prayed He then woke up the disciples and simply said that the hour had come and His betrayer was at hand. Judas was then seen coming to Jesus and kissing Him which was the prearranged signal that this was the one that was to be arrested.

And then we saw Peter jump into action as he wildly swung the sword that he had, cutting off the ear of a man named Malchus...The Lord then took control and we know from the other Gospels that he healed this man covering the foolishness of Peter.

The Lord was then arrested and the words of Jesus certainly did come to pass as the disciples all scattered.

With these things in mind let's continue our study here if you look at verse 53 which says this ⁵³ **And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.** I want to share with you that as we look at Jesus who is now really on trial here in the narrative before us that the Gospel accounts can become maybe a little confusing to figure out what's going on. Just so you can have this information we should understand that Jesus was actually on trial before 6 different juries or judges.

Three of those were done before Jewish leaders and three of them were before the Roman authorities. I was thinking about this and remembered that when we went through the Gospel of Luke that I gave you guys this information on some slides so I wanted to share

that with you tonight as well this time via a handout that you should have. This updated sheet will also make sure to show you what the Gospel of Mark covers in his account.

So first Jesus went before Annas and Annas was the high priest of the people. He had been removed by the Romans and his son-in-law Caiaphas had been installed. Both of these men were referred to in the gospels as the high priest so there were two of them called by this title. You can read about Jesus' trial before Annas over in John 18:12-24.

Then the second trial (and this is what Mark is going to focus on in this section) took place and it was done at the home of Caiaphas and we see that here in Mark 14:53-65.

The third trial will take place in the early morning in front of the Sanhedrin and is seen over in Luke 22:66-71.

Then we have three Roman trials that took place as Jesus was first seen before Pilate and you find that over in John 18 in verses 28-38.

The fifth trial was before Herod Antipas and it takes place in Luke 23:6-12 and the final sixth trial was before Pilate a second time and can be seen in the Gospel of Mark chapter 15:6-15.

Mark's Gospel is only going to go through two of those trials being the second and the sixth ones while the other Gospels fill in the gaps. It's a little confusing I know but hopefully this helps a little bit.

Let's move forward here if you look at verse 54 which says this

⁵⁴ **But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.** Peter if you remember had run for his life when Jesus was

arrested. I wonder what went through his mind as he found himself in a place of failure. I wonder if he thought about what he had said to the Lord and had it in his heart to redeem himself in some way.

What I want you to notice and we'll come back to this later is that Peter was found where? At the camp of the enemy, with the servants of the high priest warming himself by their fire...and notice it says Peter followed at a distance.

In my mind as I read this the flags are coming out, the alarms are going off that Peter is already heading the wrong way at this point in his life. It's never good to find yourself far from the Lord and near to the enemy.

Back to the trial if you look at verses 55-56 which say ⁵⁵ **Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.** ⁵⁶ **For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.** Right away here we should notice that the case against Jesus had no official charge and zero evidence to actually bring against Him. Here these leaders are seen with hatred in their hearts and they are desperately looking for people to come against the Lord and we can see their ploy is failing.

Keep in mind it's the middle of the night as this takes place and we'll talk about that here in just a second but finally they found a few people that were willing to testify against the Lord. We are told their testimonies did not agree. I suppose the question could become where on earth did they even find witnesses in the middle of the night?

Now, I have to point out some serious problems with what is taking place here as Jesus is before these men...The reality is that these religious leaders were breaking all kinds of laws and traditions that they had in place to give a person a fair and honest trial.

Let me just work through some of these with you here tonight.

- 1) The betrayal of Jesus was a crime in itself that the religious leaders had committed. Though it is only forbidden for a judge to take a bribe according to Exodus 23:8 the judges in this case had actually paid Judas to betray Jesus...In other words it's a set up that is unfolding before our eyes.
- 2) The timing of the trial which took place in the night was illegal. The Mishna which is a compilation of the oral traditions that were written down for the Jewish people prohibited this. This is also why they probably had the third trial of Jesus very early in the morning before the Sanhedrin. They realized what they were doing was illegal and tried to cover it up or make it right by quickly convening to pass judgment.
- 3) The location of this trial is illegal. All trials were to take place in a pre-established public location. Not at the home of a ruler.
- 4) There was no charge that was brought against Jesus. They arrested Him without being able to actually state what the Lord had done wrong. Here in the text they have already arrested Him and then afterwards they are looking for evidence to justify their desire to punish Him by death.
- 5) We might notice that false witnesses were brought in to testify against the Lord and the text says very plainly that when they testified they didn't agree. I want you to listen to what the Word

says over in Deuteronomy 19:15-20 which says this ¹⁵ “**One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.** ¹⁶ **If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing,** ¹⁷ **then both men in the controversy shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days.** ¹⁸ **And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother,** ¹⁹ **then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you.** ²⁰ **And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.** In other words the moment these men realized the witnesses did not agree an investigation should have been done to sniff out who was lying and then hold them accountable.

- 6) Jesus was also given no opportunity to defend himself...we'll see later they ask Him questions but the typical trial again according to the Mishna required the person being accused to have the first say, to defend themselves was their right.

What I want us to glean from this as we look at it is that in no way was Jesus given a fair trial. **The whole order of events was wrong, they had no charges to bring against Him,** the witnesses didn't agree...For lack of a better term this court that was taking place was what would be called a Kangaroo court which was an unofficial court held by a group of people in order to try someone without good evidence, declaring the person as guilty of a crime or misdemeanor.

As we move forward here we will see what was said by some of the false witnesses if you look at verses 57-59 which say this ⁵⁷ **Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying,** ⁵⁸ **“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’ ”** ⁵⁹ **But not even then did their testimony agree.**

Notice again that even in this the testimony did not agree. What a joke of a trial that no one had the same story. You can imagine the religious leaders have all their witnesses lined up and one by one they are brought in and none of them have the same story. What an embarrassment for these men.

We do see that it would seem there was one charge that they at least tried to consolidate around at this point and it was over something Jesus had said early in His ministry. And what the witnesses said was that Jesus had said that He would destroy the temple that was made with hands and that within three days he would make another without hands...we might look at that and be a little confused.

To make it simple what they are doing is they are accusing Jesus of being a terrorist who is planning to destroy the temple. It was a capital offense to terrorize a religious site...To speak against the temple was a major no-no.

I do want to just take a minute here and explore what Jesus actually said and what He meant and actually if you look at those who testified against Him it becomes clear that they had added words to what the Lord said. Listen to what took place over in John 2:15-22 which says this ¹⁵ **When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the**

changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰ Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

So those testifying added words to what Jesus actually said as they added the words **made with hands** which meant they were saying Jesus would come against the physical temple. In our text in John 2 it is clear that the disciples understood very clearly that Jesus was not speaking about a building but instead about His body as He rose from the dead.

You know just as a side note thinking about the resurrection of Jesus what do you think these religious leaders thought after the Lord rose? When His body couldn't be found? **And to top that off the book of 1 Corinthians 15 says that over 500 witnesses** all agreed they had seen the Lord alive from the dead.

What a contrast to the fact that the witnesses couldn't agree that testified against the Lord.

Verses 60-and the first part of verse 61 of Mark 14 say this ⁶⁰And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?" ⁶¹But He kept silent and answered nothing.

Now the high priest gets involved and over in Matthew 26 we get a further detail as it states that Caiaphas actually put Jesus under oath. When this happened it essentially was placing the requirement over Jesus to respond or testify.

To this point we can see that Jesus hadn't said a word. All these false accusations and the Lord didn't say a thing. I don't know about you but the response I would want to have in my flesh is to justify myself...to point out all the failures of the court, to ask to have my own witnesses and the list goes on.

But that's not what Jesus did. Over in Isaiah 53:7 which is perhaps one of the most detailed accounts of what would happen to the Messiah we have the following which says this He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.

We might keep in mind that Jesus at this point has submitted Himself to the Father's will knowing that what is about to happen to Him needed to take place...Couple this with the simple fact that Jesus

could have easily just walked through the crowds and freed Himself or even called upon angels to release Him. We know the Lord is staying silent not only to fulfill prophecy but also to submit to what the Father wanted.

Let's finish verse 61 and read verse 62 which say this **Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"**

⁶² Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

So the high priest now demands that Jesus plainly declare if He is the Christ the Son of the blessed...Essentially the high priest is forcing Jesus to say whether He is the Messiah or not.

And we see the Lord declaring the truth as He finally speaks at His trial...I wonder what the people thought when they heard the words I AM...Perhaps they thought back to the days of Moses at the burning bush when He asked who it was that he was to tell Pharaoh had sent him. The response of God was tell him I AM WHO I AM.

Jesus here lays it all out on the table publicly declaring who He is. For so long in the life of Jesus He had instructed those with Him and those He healed not to say who He was...but now Jesus plainly and clearly states the truth.

And not only was Jesus saying I am the Messiah but then He goes on to say that He is the Son of Man...and this was a term that the prophet Daniel in Daniel 7:13-14 had used when he spoke of the coming Messiah.

Notice Jesus then says that He will sit at the right hand of the Power meaning He will be the ultimate judge one day...the religious leaders thought they were judging and condemning Jesus to death, but the Lord is saying you may do so in the here and now but one day I will be the judge and you will be seen for who you are.

Again we can reach back to the Old Testament in Psalms 110:5-6 which says this about the coming of the Lord and His authority to judge. It says **The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.**

⁶He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill the places with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.

And then the Lord simply says that one day He will come with the clouds of heaven...meaning not only am I going to sit in power but one day I'll rule and reign here on the earth.

Make no mistake about it Jesus is fully affirming that He is the promised Messiah, Jesus is here refusing to back down from who He is, knowing full well that those listening would then accuse Him of blaspheme which we'll see here in just a minute.

I want to just bring to your attention the incredible rock solid decisions Jesus is making in the midst of this trial that He is passing through.

You don't see the Lord wavering at all, you don't see the Lord failing in any way, you don't see the Lord flip flopping back and forth in His decisions, you don't see the Lord squirming to get out of a tough time.

It's really an amazing contrast to what we are going to see here with Peter in just a few minutes...and really I guess the verses that we are

looking at here tonight could all be boiled down to two different people and how they are responding to tests and trials they are going through.

Jesus is going to soar through the things He faces while Peter we will see will fail significantly in his own life.

So Jesus has declared who He is very plainly and then in verses 63-64 we have the reaction of the high priest which says ⁶³**Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?”**

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

The tearing of one's clothes was reserved only for those times in a persons life that something horrendous had taken place and especially in the case of a high priest the clothing was considered sacred, set apart for the use of God...Usually the garments of the high priest were passed along from one person to the next...some argue that perhaps the high priest didn't have his priestly garments on but I suppose I would be skeptical of that for these were men that were all about self-promotion and importance. Either way we see Caiaphas in complete shock and horror over what has been said by the Lord.

Now they have their accusation against Jesus in that they are accusing Him of blasphemy, and he turns to those with him and they all assert the same thing.

Then they go ahead and pass judgment on the Lord saying He is deserving of death...there is a problem with this though. You see the Romans had taken away the right of the Jewish people to put someone to death...and the second problem in this is that the

Romans typically did not see religion as a capital offense, so they have multiple problems still with bringing Jesus to His death.

Look at verse 65 which says ⁶⁵**Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.**

This is such a sad thing to see unfold. Here we can see their murderous hatred seeping out of their lives as they begin to ridicule Jesus and they even put a blind fold on Him...and then they began to beat Him after spitting on Him...The human body is an amazing thing and one of the built in features we have is that we have reflexes that can help to lessen a blow when it's coming. When you can't see what direction a blow is coming your body can't react and so when Jesus was beaten while blindfolded the damage was probably very significant.

And then to hear the people calling out to the Lord “Prophecy who it was who hit you” what a sick situation and what sick people to do something like this to a man they know is innocent.

So the Lord is being punished and beaten and the false trial has taken place and they have deemed the Lord as being guilty of blasphemy and then the narrative in the Gospel of Mark turns...So the Lord has done what is right and then we come to Peter if you look at verses 66-68 which say ⁶⁶**Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.** ⁶⁷**And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.”**

68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.” And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

Remember Peter had entered the courtyard and was last seen warming himself at the fire of the enemy and then there is a servant girl who was there and for some reason she recognized Peter and keep in mind that Malchus was also a servant in this house so these two servants probably knew of each other. I wonder if Malchus had told her someone had cut his ear off and the Lord had healed it?

So this servant girl sees Peter and I can imagine the wheels are turning in her mind as she has a hunch this man was someone that had been with Jesus and so she finally comes over and asks Peter about it...and Peter he immediately responds with a denial and he quickly heads to the porch.

We are told here that a rooster crowed and it's worth it to note that in Mark 14:29-30 the Lord had said before the rooster crows twice you'll deny me three times...You would think the first rooster crowing might get the attention of Peter but it seems that it went unnoticed.

Look at verses 69-71 which say **69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, “This is one of them.” 70 But he denied it again.**

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, “Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.”

71 Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”

⁷² A second time *the* rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.

Here we have the 2nd and 3rd times that Peter denies knowing the Lord. You can imagine that Peter as he was near the fire had to have had conversations with those around him and they all noticed that this man had a little different dialect than they did.

It would be kind of like if you talked to someone from Boston or from the south (which I can't do at all) and when they speak you know they are not from around here.

And then you can imagine the rooster crowing a second time and Peter suddenly realizing what he had done...you know how it is when you fail the Lord. If you have a heart for God and you want to do things His way and then you fall short your heart breaks, there is a conviction that sets in as you realize you have done something you never desired to do.

I wanted to share with you a detail from Luke's gospel that we get if you listen to Luke 22:59-62 which says this ⁵⁹**Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”**

⁶⁰ But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to

him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” ⁶² So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

I just honestly can't imagine how Peter felt when the rooster crowed and the Lord made eye contact with him. I wonder what that look conveyed to Peter. I don't think it was a look of disappointment or an I told you so from the Lord...I think Jesus looked at Peter with pure love in His heart.

I'm so thankful that the Lord wasn't finished with Peter. And as we discussed last week the Lord will restore this man who went so far as to deny even knowing Jesus calling down curses on his life.

I wanted to take a few minutes tonight as we close and really compare Jesus and how He handled what He was going through and Peter and how he handled things in our passage. Jesus succeeded. Peter failed.

The truth is that all of us will go through tests and trials as we go through life looking to serve Jesus. Over in the book of James 1:2-4 the Word says this ²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

And over in 1 Peter 1:6-7 Peter said this about trials ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Trials are never fun nor are they easy. I will be honest some tests of my faith I have done well in, while others I have found myself to be in need of much change and development in my life. The trials we go through tend to expose who we are and can often expose specific areas in our lives that need some serious refinement.

What did Jesus do as He approached the trial that He went through?

Well we see the Lord preparing Himself spiritually and even encouraging the disciples to do the same. Jesus sought out the council and strength of the Father, He submitted Himself to the Father's will, We saw the Lord press in spiritually that He might have what He needed when the time came.

On the other hand Peter when the Lord told him to watch and pray what did he do? He slept...and then when the Lord woke him the first time the Lord specifically said to him the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak...And still Peter when given a second chance fell asleep.

Peter was seen to be self-confident, he was cocky, he said "Lord these yahoos over here may fail but I never will, for I'm willing to die with you."

Then when the Lord was arrested where was Peter found? Was he found praying? Was he found seeking the Father for wisdom? Nope Peter was found warming himself by the fire of the enemy.

I want you to know that if you find yourself associating with those who are from the world more so than those that are looking to honor Jesus that you are in for a rude awakening when the world turns on you and challenges you. Be very careful you don't spend time in the enemies camp looking to blend in with everyone else like Peter was.

We were also told in our text that Peter followed the Lord from a distance. Following Jesus from a distance is always going to be a mistake. I would challenge us all to look at our lives and just evaluate whether you are closer to Jesus now or further from the Lord now in your life...If you see yourself following further and further behind the Lord understand that's a bad sign.

If you can look at your life and you can see that you used to be really involved in the church and with the people of God but now you aren't nearly as involved it could very well be an indication that your relationship with Jesus is suffering.

We can also see that Peter lashed out in his flesh when he was challenged. His response is one of anger and fear of his fellow man.

I think that we can all find ourselves in the place of Peter in our lives. But I also think we can equally find ourselves in a place that we can be like Jesus. Obviously we will never be perfect like our Lord was but we can see ourselves having victory in the difficulties and trials of life.

The Lord can work in us in such a way that we can stand. I am reminded that one day Peter will stand for the Lord in his life...and so much so that church history says he will be crucified upside down for his stance for Jesus.

We might draw strength from the book of Hebrews if you read chapter 11 and you can see there that there were many who stood in the most difficult of circumstances. God can equip us and empower us to do the right and honorable thing as we go through life.

I suppose the point I'm looking to make is that you and I can learn from Peter and we can learn from Jesus and that we can have

victory as believers in Christ as the Bible says clearly that all who believe in Jesus Christ have everything they need to live a godly life. We need only take the time to be in the presence of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ and He will help us.

Let's pray as we close this evening.

Mark 14:53-72 “Victory and Failure in Trials”

Cross References

Verses 55-56

Deuteronomy 19:15-20

Verses 57-59

John 2:15-22

Verses 60-61a

Isaiah 53:7

Verses 61b-62

Psalms 110:5-6

Verses 69-71

Luke 22:59-62

James 1:2-4

1 Peter 1:6-7

