

How Not to Be Like Judas

The Betrayal of Jesus

Matthew 26:14-25

Morning reading: 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

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Main point: Jesus suffers betrayal in route to the cross, fully in control and obedient to the Father's will.

Introduction:

Someone has said that "an unexamined life, is not a life worth living." Yet as we come to the text before us in Matthew's gospel, we need more than a superficial *examination of the text*; we need the Holy Spirit's deep, heart-penetrating *illumination* concerning the Person and saving work of Christ, so that we do not fail to respond to Him in the proper way of faith and obedience.

The act of deception and betrayal in this account is not so much about *what Judas did*, as much as it is about *how the Lord Jesus dealt with this act of treachery*. It puts on display how Jesus overcame the schemes of the evil one as he attempted a last-ditch effort to thwart the Son of God from going to the cross.

The ancient Parthians were taught that in war, when they found themselves in flight from their opponent, they were to turn around and shoot one last fatal arrow into the air in hopes of putting their adversary to death.

Here in this account, Satan aims another sharp arrow at the Son of God by using the traitor. Behind the scenes, Satan is on the run. His first ambush was in the wilderness (*Luke 4*), where the devil marshaled every temptation in his arsenal at Jesus, but to no avail. In the original desert storm, our Savior routed him, and he departed for a more opportune time (*Luke 4:13*). The opportune time has come! Satan employs, as one of his deputies, one from among the twelve—Judas Iscariot. Yet despite his evil plans, *the wisdom of God prevails*. Jesus, our Savior, marches on to Calvary where He would defeat the powers of darkness and "*purchased for God with [His own] blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*" (*Rev.5:9*).

One of the chief things that Mathew intends for us to see is that on the road to Calvary, our Lord endured one of *the bitterest ingredients in the cup of suffering*, namely, *the cruel dagger of betrayal*.

Why should you listen very carefully to this message today?

Come up close and listen, dear friend. Human deception and betrayal like suffering is a part of life in a fallen world. Although not everyone will face *this kind of betrayal*, many are deceived by friends and loved ones. If you have been mistreated, this account is not designed to mollify your grief and pain. Many preachers have taken this account and twisted its intent to help those who have been hurt. I understand their desire. I don't question their motives. But to make this passage about personal hurt, at the expense of setting aside *the insight and clear view of the dignity of Jesus and His passion* is a mishandling of the text. There are two reasons we should pay careful attention this morning.

The first reason is that this account highlights for us the fulfillment of the Scriptures in the life of Jesus. Jesus plainly tells us this in several verses in this very chapter. For instance, notice in verse 24 when He says...

- **Matthew 26:24**—The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him.
- Again in **Matthew 26: 31**—Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’”

Look again in **Matthew 26:52-54**. After His arrest, Peter is swinging his knife with bad intentions to defend Jesus, but our Lord rebukes him by telling him...

- **Matthew 26:52-54**—Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?
- **Matthew 26:56**—“But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

Prophecy is coming to pass. Salvation’s story is being written. The decree of God is being carried out. And if God fulfilled His Word as it relates to our salvation in Jesus, then we ought to believe everything He says about our lives in this world.

The second reason this passage demands our attention because, in the betrayal of one man, Judas, we discover just how deep the black depth of human sin is which lies in our hearts, and why it was necessary for God to send a Savior.

These are the two reasons we should pay attention: Scripture is being fulfilled in the life of Jesus, and a mirror is being placed before our eyes to help us to see why we need a Savior like Jesus.

The dark story of Judas is one of the most tragic accounts in all of Scripture. Besides the procurator Pontius Pilate, there is no one who is more *scorned* and *despised* than the man from Kerioth, called *Judas Iscariot*. Forever the label attached to his name is, “the one who betrayed Jesus.” Everything else about him is forgotten. It was of this man that Jesus said the most terrible thing that could be said of any man, when He said, “*It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*” (Matt.26:24).

Because of his crime, his name has become synonymous with betrayal.

- When a kiss is given falsely, it is called the Judas kiss.
- When a man says one thing and does another, he is said to possess the Judas character.
- In New Zealand, a specially selected castrated male sheep is trained and used to lure other sheep to the slaughtering house, and the name given to this sheep is the Judas sheep.

Alongside the name of Jezebel, Judas has been black-balled by mothers everywhere as a name unworthy of the slightest consideration. Here we discover painted on the canvas of Scripture, a traitor guilty of the blackest crime in history which ended in a hangman’s rope. His is the story of a wasted life—one that started out *so right*, but ended up *so wrong*. And whenever we are given a profile of such tragic proportions, we must ask the question: what lessons can we learn from him, who is said to “occupy the lowest place in hell with Lucifer himself?” There are three scenes which unfold the narrative.

In scene #1: We see *the betrayal ignited* (vv.14-16). What *sinister intentions* led to this act?

In scene #2: We see *the Passover prepared* (vv.17-19). Why were *special preparations* arranged?

In scene #3: We see *the betrayer exposed* (vv.20-25). What *sober reflections* must we have as submit our hearts to the Word of God?

We will conclude with some lessons specifically for *believers, parents, members, listeners, and individuals*.

Exposition:

A. The Betrayal Ignited (vv.14-16)

What was it that lit the fuse for this diabolical betrayal to take place?

Explained: Notice carefully in the immediate context, Matthew places the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany (vv.6-13) before the scene quickly shifts to the story of Judas' deal to betray Jesus (vv.14-16). In modern cinematography, the technique is used of shifting rapidly from one scene to another in order to enhance dramatic effect. Here in chapter 26, almost 2000 years ago, Matthew does something similar, as the scenes are rapidly shifting. Clear word clues are given in the text. Chapter 26:1 begins with the word, "**When...**" then we hear *Jesus predicting His death* (vv.1-2). Chapter 26:3 shifts with the word, "**Then**" as we see the leaders gathering together *to plot His death* (vv.3-5). Chapter 26:6, begins with the word clue, "**Now**" which shifts us again to another scene and what follows is the account of Mary's extravagant gift of love and the anointing of Jesus.

But as Matthew shifts to the next scene, he uses the word clue, "**Then...**" again. "*Now...then...*" "*Now...Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest.*" As if one sets off another.

- ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. ¹⁶ From then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

A look at John's gospel tells us that it was Judas who served as the spokesman for the group and calculated the cost of 300 denarii (*John 12:4-6*). So, it seems that Mary's lavish action of devotion, and the reception of it by our Lord, set Judas off on this quest to betray Him. But wait, there is more.

This scene highlights *the sinister intentions of Judas*. The question is, why did Judas make this decision to betray Jesus? The answer is,

1. He allowed and nursed secret sin.

For weeks, perhaps months, Judas has been living with *secret sin*. How do we know this? Listen to John's testimony.

- **John 12:4-6**—But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

The secret sin was theft. This hidden sin of *stealing, covetousness*, and greed had begun to eat away at him like cancer. As Judas pilfered or stole from the offerings given to support Jesus and the disciples, his conscience was stained, muddled, and defiled. And he continued in it. His conscience became desensitized to the light of the Lord. Instead of the sermons that he heard impacting him,

the secret sin, like termites spreading over a house of maple wood, swarmed his soul. Here we see the vicious spiral of secret, unrepentant of sin. Once we start to enjoy secret sin in our hearts, we subtly lose the ability to know where it will stop.

A secret sin has driven him to think of doing the unimaginable! He is not merely thinking of *walking away* from Jesus, but of *betraying* Him! Don't miss that. Verse 16 says, "*from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.*" If you had approached him months before, Judas would probably testify that he would never do what he is now doing.

So how did he get on this slippery slope? First, he entertained and enjoyed *secret sin*. He thought he could travel down the road of sin and just hit the brakes at any time he wanted. But no...no, sin deceived him, and now we see him losing the ability to control his life.

However, when you put the gospel accounts together, you discover that this secret sin of stealing became an open door for Satan to put something into his mind. Listen to John 13:2,

- **John 13:2**—During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.

The word "*put*" here means *to throw*. It describes the spiritual assault of Satan. In Ephesians 6:16, Paul describes certain temptations as the '*flaming arrows of the evil one.*' You've seen it in movies of ancient battles on TV. The military custom of firing arrows with tar which had been set on fire was an effective wartime maneuver. In addition to the impact of the arrow, the flame would set the person or the object on fire. And Paul thought that it was a fitting description of what takes place in the spiritual war. Satan's temptation set Judas on fire with inordinate desires.

Applied: Here is the danger of secret sin. Judas was no victim of circumstance. The Gospel writers tell us that Judas' betrayal was *premeditated* and *money played a part in the decision*, for it is clear that Judas was the treasurer (*John 12:6*) and a thief. He was no pawn in the hand of evil forces. He represents all of us as free moral agents who choose freely to live for ourselves rather than the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you nursing secret sin today? Do you recognize how dangerous it is to live with an unwashed heart and a defiled conscience?

Before the temptation, he allowed and nursed a secret sin. But let me show you something else.

2. He yielded to temptation which opened the door for Satanic possession.

In Luke 22:3, we read,

- **Luke 22:3**—And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

Oh, what a terrible thing it is to come to this place spiritually. It's one thing to be *tempted* by Satan; it's another thing to be *attacked* by him. But it's an entirely different ballgame to be possessed by him! To be *sifted, buffeted, and led captive* by the Devil is terrible indeed, but when Satan enters a man, not only has the evil day come, but one has just become *a child of hell*.

It seems as if *the secret sin*, cracked open the door to *a Satanic temptation*, and the Satanic temptation opened the door for *Satanic possession*. John tells us that later on during the meal, when

the disciples were asking who it was that was to betray Him, he leaned back on Jesus' bosom and said, "Lord, who is it?"

- **John 13:26-27**—Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot.²⁷ After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

MacArthur said, "At that moment the day of salvation ended for Judas and hell arrived as Satan entered into Him." If Judas had been led by the Spirit of God, he would have never been able to become possessed by Satan—"for all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14). Judas was never a believer in the first place. What this shows us is that there were more forces at work in the betrayal of Jesus than just human sinfulness. Satan didn't make Judas do anything that he hadn't already planned and was in the process of doing. Satan could never have entered Judas without Judas granting admission.

Let this be a warning to all of us: whenever we line up with the ways of Satan, we make ourselves vulnerable to his influence and control.

Satan is called some very specific names in Scripture for a reason. Jesus called him *a liar and the father of lies* (John 8:44), and so whenever we lie, we are putting ourselves on Satan's side. He is called *a thief* (John 10:10), and whenever we steal, we put ourselves at Satan's disposal. He is called *an accuser and a deceiver* (Rev.12:10; 2 Cor.11:3), and Judas put himself in a position to be influenced by Satan by lining up with his character.

When Satan entered into Judas, he simply found a ready instrument to carry out his evil and dark purposes. And the door was opened through greed, my brethren. Let us beware!

John Calvin lovingly reminds us,

When Satan takes possession of a person, he overthrows the fear of God, extinguishes the light of reason, and destroys every feeling of shame, therefore let us learn to repent early lest our continued sin open the door for Satan's reign.

We move now from the scene of sinister intentions of the betrayal ignited to the scene of special preparations arranged by our Lord.

B. The Passover Prepared (vv.17-19)

- ¹⁷ Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I *am* to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"" ¹⁹ The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

Explained: Why is this scene given to us by Matthew? Without the background, it only appears in black and white, but once we understand the historical background and the spiritual significance, then it comes alive with rich color!

Historically speaking, just the mention of the word, "Passover" and the picture of a festive, elaborate Super Bowl like preparations should come to your mind. In our day, the closest thing to the extensive

preparations for Passover would be the Olympic Games. The entire city was impacted. Roads were repaired; bridges were made safe; wayside tombs were whitewashed lest the pilgrim should fail to see them, and so touch them and become unclean. Lambs, lambs, lambs were seen everywhere! Every family had a rope with a little lamb in tow to offer at the Passover. Outside the gates, merchants sold lambs like ticket scalpers outside of a major event.

For a month before, the story and meaning of the Passover was the subject of the teaching in every synagogue. Two days before the Passover, there was, in every house, a ceremonial search for leaven. The householder took a candle and solemnly searched every nook and cranny in silence, and the last particle of leaven was thrown out. Every male Jew, who was of age and who lived within 15 miles of the holy city, was bound by law to attend the Passover. But it was the ambition of every Jew in every part of the world (as it is still) to come to the Passover in Jerusalem at least once in his lifetime. To this day, when Jews keep the Passover in every land, they pray that they may keep it next year in Jerusalem.

Josephus tells us that the number of lambs slain at one particular Passover was 256,500. That means that on this occasion, if these figures are correct, there must have been more than 2,700,000 pilgrims to the Passover. It was in a city crowded like that where the drama of the last days of Jesus was played out. We don't have time to go into the meal itself and the 15 stages that the participants went through, but it was a very religious and spiritually significant time! That's the historical background. What is the spiritual significance?

Jesus desired to keep this time with His men. They were away from their families, but they were to become the heads/leaders of a new household, a household of faith—a new Israel (*Eph.2:20; Gal.6:16*).

In this Upper Room, Jesus would wash their feet and teach them the example of service. Once Judas left, He then would give them the Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17 and those wonderful truths that we have all come to love (*John 13:34-35; 14:1-3, 6, 16-18*).

What Matthew wants us to see is that everything was PLANNED, and Jesus is in control.

- He knew the priests' purpose before they formulated it.
- He knew Judas' role before he initiated it.
- He knew the place where they were to celebrate it.
- He knew people who would be involved.
- He knew that you would be listening and here today.

He knows everything because of who He is.

But more importantly, the King Himself was making these arrangements and preparing Himself to walk the Via Dolorosa (the way of suffering) for you and for me.

Applied: Here we discover that although Christ was being persecuted and hounded by His enemies, He did not put off His responsibility to eat the Passover and to invest in His men. He refused to allow threats from without or fears from within distract from His mission. In doing so, He teaches us that we cannot make excuses for gathering together for corporate worship or prayer meetings because our lives are so full of various challenges and concerns. Our gathering together helps to silence fears and comfort us during our troubles (*Heb.10:24-25*).

We've seen *the betrayal ignited* and *the Passover prepared*, now let's conclude with the final scene.

C. The Betrayer Exposed (vv.20-25)

The last scene begins with,

1. A solemn announcement (vv.20-21)

- ²⁰ Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples. ²¹ As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me."

John 13:21 tells us that Jesus was *troubled in His spirit*. Not that He was hesitant or fearful, but rather He was *agitated*, and His *anguish* was visible which caught the attention of the disciples. In the last hours of His earthly life, the presence of a traitor among His friends troubled the Lord and constrained Him to speak. "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me."

There is a two-fold emphasis here. One is the fact that "**one of you**" will betray Me. Not His enemies (*Matt.10:33*), but one of the twelve. One of the very men He had invested in, cared for, and loved with His very life. "This was not a stranger," as Calvin points out; "if a stranger had done this, it would have been more easily endured." But this was one of His intimate friends.

The second emphasis is seen in the phrase, which is found in Mark's gospel, "**one who is eating with Me**" (*Mark 14:21*).

Now all of them were eating with Him at the time, so this is not like Jesus is pointing out the betrayer from a lineup. Rather, I believe the emphasis is on the fact that the one who is betraying Him is adding to that betrayal, by sitting down and eating a meal with Him, as if he really desires friendship. The presence of a traitor was a burden upon His spirit, and it cast a dark cloud over what usually was a joyful occasion.

It would help us to know that in that day, to sit down and eat a meal with a person made taking hostile action toward that person impossible. Meals were like a token of *friendship* or *solidarity*. No one would sit down to eat a meal with one whom he was hostile toward, but Judas was sitting right in the presence of invincible Love and hardened in sin. Oh, it's easy to see Judas' crime here, but can we not also see how we have committed the same crime in different ways?

Applied: How many times have we bowed our heads to thank Him for a meal at the dinner table, only to get up and betray Him by disobeying His word and breaking His commands?

2. An unexpected revelation (vv.22-23)

- ²² Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

The response by the group reveals to us two things: *First, no one suspected that a betrayer would be among them*. From the outside, yes, but not from among the team! Not one said, "Is it John? Is it Matthew? Is it James?" Second, everyone including Judas questioned themselves—Surely not I? The tone of the statement is with a view to clear themselves, "Is it I? Lord tell me for I am aware of my own weakness!" It is a question that seeks to clear themselves—"Lord, search me, for I am not aware of anything in me that would do such a thing...Lord, is it I?"

Jesus gets a little more specific, but he doesn't identify Judas nor remove their doubts. He just says,

- ²³ And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me.

Why so vague? The other gospel accounts give us more detail, but the reason Matthew leaves it out is to show us how Jesus dealt with Judas. Notice, He does not throw him out into the open and force a confession out of him, but rather, He deliberately withholds his name to permit him to make a voluntary confession. The phrase, "*He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl*" is Matthew's way of saying, "*Look how near he is to Jesus.*" They are not just sitting in the same room and at the same table together; Judas is actually so close to Jesus that they are sharing a dipping bowl together. *No one suspected Judas. It shocked them that any of among them might be guilty of such a sin. (Think about what it would feel like if the State Attorney General came and spoke to us one morning and said, "One of the elders is going to be indicted on racketeering charges today...")*

Applied: The applications are so numerous at this time that I hesitate to mention them. Let me ask you to think about two offered by Jon Bloom in his book, "*Things Not Seen*."

"Judas's masquerade is a lesson for us. Wolves can look and sound almost exactly like sheep. And sometimes Jesus, for His own reasons, allows the disguised wolves to live among the sheep for a long time and do great damage before their deception is exposed. When this happens, we must trust that the Lord knows what He is doing."¹

"Judas reminds us that even ravaging wolves have a part to play in the drama of redemptive history."²

We have considered the solemn announcement and the unexpected revelation, now we see...

3. The divine perspective (vv.24-25)

Then Jesus said,

- ²⁴ The Son of Man *is to go*, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

This verse is meant to set the betrayal of Jesus in a larger context. Jesus is not just a helpless victim here, but what is happening to Him is **necessary** because it is a fulfillment of Scripture. To believe in Christ savingly means that we understand that Jesus' death was not determined by chance. He was not accidentally dragged by men to the cross and crucified, no. No! He was appointed to that end by His own Father, but the sinful, responsible acts of men were also a part of that plan.

- **Acts 2:23**—This *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

In obedience to His Father's will, Jesus voluntarily goes there to not only fulfill the Father's will, but also to offer Himself in your place and mine *in love*.

¹ Jon Bloom, "*Things Not Seen*," p.190

² *Ibid.*, p.191

Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Psalm 41:9, and 55:12-15 all point to the fact that it was *foreordained of God* that He was to suffer as a substitute for the sins of the whole world. But that predestined purpose did not make the guilt of Judas any less.

Jesus pronounces a "**woe**" upon Judas. "*Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.*" A woe is a lament or cry of heartfelt pity. The best way to perhaps think of a woe is a mixture of wrath and pity together. God's wrath is the reflective action of His righteous and holy nature, yet, God never delights in the death of anyone who dies (*Ezek.18*).

Then Jesus makes that statement which echoes through the portals of time,

- "...It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

The word "**good**" is meant to be understood comparatively. In other words, if you had a choice between nonexistence and suffering the fate of betraying Jesus, it would be better to have never seen the light of day.

There is a sin that totally rules out the good of human existence. You see dear friends, existence is not a blessing at all, but a curse for the person who consciously and willfully rejects Christ. And so I must plead with you, hear the Word of the Lord! Accept the peace offer made by God in Christ! Little boy, little girl you're not too young! Backslider, hypocrite, you haven't gone too far! You sir, you ma'am, your secret sin can be forgiven! While you have breath, the time is now! The time is short! The day of salvation is at hand! The gates are still open today!

Matthew concludes the scene in verse 25,

- ²⁵ And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

Jesus replied in a low voice that he was the one. And John's account makes it clear that none of the other disciples heard when Jesus made the identification so that when Judas left, they did not understand the significance of Christ's parting words, "*What you do, do quickly*" (*Luke 13:27*).

Then we are told that he went out before the Lord's Supper was instituted, and "*it was night*" (*John 13:30*). It was not only the night of the evening sky but for Judas, it was *the night of his soul*.

We will see him again before it's all over. First, *betraying Christ with a kiss*. Then, *battling with a tortured conscience*. And finally, in *tragic suicide*.

Conclusion:

What lessons can we learn from JUDAS? Lessons from the biography of Judas: How not to be like Judas

- **The first lesson** comes from the exhortation of another apostle who finished the race with joy. He said, "*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*" (*1 Cor.10:12*). **As believers, we cannot be too watchful.**

Now although many seek to defend the actions of Judas and even whitewash his character, the plain testimony of Scripture is that his fall was not merely due to *a lack of judgment*, but rather flat-out

criminal intent. Judas did not rush *blindly* and *ignorantly* to his fate. He did not act in a moment of passion and insanity. Oh no! We know that his dark deed was quietly planned and deliberately executed.

But how did he get to this point? *His confidence rested on false grounds. This man believed he was secure because of the company he possessed or the privileges he secured.*

Charles Hodge put it this way,

There is a perpetual danger of falling. No degree of progress we have already made, no amount of privileges which we may have enjoyed, can justify the want of caution...this is a warning to the person who thinks himself secure of salvation or against the power of temptation.

Why do some people have a false security of their salvation? Answer: because it rests upon belonging to a church or knowing certain doctrine, but we often forget that whether you are a member of the church or a theologian of the first rank, no person can be saved unless they persevere in holiness (*Heb.12:15*).

But others have a false security regarding temptation because their confidence rests in their own strength—forgetting that within the heart of every sinner lies the seed of every sin imaginable.

To avoid possessing a false security, we must allow Christ to be the judge of our spiritual condition. Scripture abounds with examples of faulty self-judgment. Let Christ be the judge by His Word and by His Spirit.

- **The second lesson is as parents, our spiritual training cannot begin too soon.**

As parents, we must remember that the spiritual training of our children cannot begin too soon and that *God directed discipline cannot be too firm.*

What we often forget is that although Jesus said it would have been better if Judas never saw the light of day, he had **parents** who thought it was good to bring him into the world and even rejoiced over his birth. Our Lord's reference to Judas as "*the son of perdition*" (*John 17:12*) is translated by Martin Luther as "the lost child." But how did he get to that point? Certainly, we cannot ignore the role of parents in bringing children up in the "*discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (*Eph.6:4*).

Now I know that no parent is perfect, and even if some parents do the best job they can, some kids can still go astray. Yet, I wonder if many times we are simply refusing to believe the Word of God which says, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it*" (*Prov.22:6*). It did not say that he might not depart from it, but he will not depart from it. Here Solomon reminds us that instructing our children in the right tone and using the right methods which correspond to their stage in life has a tremendous life-preserving effect.

In essence, it becomes *a second nature to them*, which is first imprinted like a stamp and then inbred so they become accustomed to it. And all of us who are adults can testify that many of the right things we were trained to do as kids are now a part of our lives today.

All we can do is speculate at this point, but perhaps the early training of Judas was defective, and his tendency toward greed was never checked. And perhaps if his bent toward greed was checked by loving discipline, he may have been saved from suicide. Nevertheless, we cannot escape the fact that a part of

our role as parents is not only to evangelize our children, but also to train them to be men and women of character. This is one thing we will never regret as parents.

Now if we are to avoid raising a bunch of Judases let us apply the three-fold principle of child development that the Puritans practiced.

1. Start early. *"Since Satan begins his assault upon them in infancy, we must not delay in dropping instruction upon them as soon as they are able to understand anything."*
2. Teach by example as well as by words. *"The ability of a bad example can wipe out good instruction."*
3. Steer a middle course between harshness and leniency. *"Be careful to avoid extremes of being too rigorous or too indulgent...don't treat children as slaves or brutes...let us bring them as near to Heaven as we can...yes, restrain them from the visible out-breakings of sin."*

- **The third lesson is that as members, when imposters are found, we cannot be too surprised.**

Paul warned Timothy, *"...not all men have faith" (2 Thess.3:2)*. Peter said, *"false prophets arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you" (2 Pet.2:1)*. Jude sounded the alarm saying, *"certain men crept in unnoticed...these men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts" (Jude 3,12)*. Jesus said, *"Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil" (John 6:70)*.

There are some who see the presence of imposters among the church as a proof against the veracity of Christianity. They say, *"The reason I don't believe is because I know such and such who is a hypocrite."* But the argument of Judas or any hypocrite being true does not leave a stain upon the white holiness of Christ! Neither does one goat turn the whole flock of sheep into goats! Yes, Judas was said to be *a disciple outwardly*, but inwardly he was a devil. He had *a good name*, but not a *godly nature*. And, are we not warned here that even a privilege of nearness to Christ does not mean one's heart is converted?

When an imposter is found within the church, let it be a proof as well as a warning to you and me. Imposters are a proof of the fact that the Word of Christ is true. The Kingdom of God has come. There is no need to wait for its coming. His Kingdom has broken into this dark world with power. Yes, the consummation still lays out of sight. Yes, there remains a day when all the purposes of God will be completed. But, the fact that we see tares and wheat growing together tells us that we are not dreaming of a coming kingdom; it has arrived! The Word has been made flesh. The invisible has been made visible! Into this battleground, our Lord has come! Donning the weapons of warfare, He has defeated the enemy by the cross. He has been raised from the dead, ascended into glory, and He sits at the right hand of God until His enemies are made a footstool under His feet. Then He shall return, once for all and forever, to claim what is rightly His, for the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever! Amen.

- **The fourth lesson is that as listeners, our fellowship with solid believers and exposure to the truth cannot make us too safe.**

It is possible to have a name as Christians, yet be spiritually dead. If ever a man had the opportunity to become a true believer, it was Judas who lived with the holiest man on earth for over two years. Yet, his life demonstrates that it is not always true that what a person becomes depends largely on their surroundings.

What this tells us is that even the most privileged positions are powerless to save a man. This is what John Bunyan was getting at when he said in the last sentence of his Dream in the Pilgrim's progress, that he saw, "a way to hell even from the gates of heaven."

Oh, dear friends, listen—it is possible to lie in the bosom of Christ, yet have a heart that is set against the entrance of His love. Judas fell for a number of reasons, but one that was at the top of the list is that he followed Christ with a divided heart. He possessed a divided allegiance. His mind was on what he might *get*, rather than what He might *give*. He refused to do what Peter did, who said, "*We have left all to follow thee.*" Judas was content with mere association. The message he heard found no place in his own heart. Professing *much*, he possessed *nothing* and ultimately lost all he had—even his own soul. Exposure to truth cannot make us too safe.

- **The final lesson is that as individuals, our repentance cannot be too soon, but it may be too late.**

If we get behind the scenes, it's easy to see how often Jesus was speaking directly and indirectly to Judas's own heart and situation. Think about all the teaching that Judas heard. Was not Judas sitting right there when Jesus said, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth*" (Matt.6:24) and when He said, "*for what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?*" (Luke 9:25)?

But time and time again, what should have softened his heart, only hardened it because he sacrificed the highest privilege for a lower pleasure.

Repentance must come quickly, or it may come too late. Later after Judas recognized that he had betrayed innocent blood, "*he felt remorse [not repentance—but regret] and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders*" (Matt.27:3).

But no one gets to this point overnight. Judas just kept making *decision after decision* until he passed a point of redemption. Judas had reached a point in the history of his soul when Christ was not there to save Him. Because he constantly refused to listen to the Word of Christ, even when Christ Himself spoke directly to him giving him the opportunity, he had gone too far. Jesus let Judas go! Why? Because *JESUS never forces His followers to obey*. Love, not force, is the weapon of Christ! Has His love overcome the resistance in your heart?

- As believers, we cannot be too watchful.
- As parents, our spiritual training cannot begin too soon.
- When imposters are found, we cannot be too surprised.
- Our fellowship with solid believers and exposure to the truth cannot make us too safe.
- Our repentance cannot be too soon, but it may be too late.

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