

WALKING WITH JESUS WHILE FOLLOWING SATAN

John 13:18–30 (No. 72)

Treasuring Christ Church – Pastor Boyd Johnson

June 24, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Absolute Control

As we've studied Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of John, we've underscored his absolute control over his life. Nothing was left to chance. Nothing was accidental. Nothing was happenstance. Nothing was a surprise. Every step on the path to the cross was ordered.

We would be impressed if he were merely able to exercise such *self*-control over everything he ever said and did. But his control over his life went beyond self-control, he was able to control everything and everybody around him so that they ended up serving his aims. He controlled nature. He controlled people. He even controlled his enemies.

So a man who had such control over his life would naturally have control over his death. Jesus said just this in John 10:18: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. . . ." He meant not only that he would determine when and how he would die, but also that he would exercise sovereign control over all the steps leading up to his death, including Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

Unmasking His Betrayer

Now in the passage we've come to in our study (13:18–30), Jesus and the twelve disciples were in the upper room on Thursday of the week of Passover, the night before Jesus died. Unknown to the other eleven disciples, Judas had already secretly met with the Jewish authorities, who were seeking to put him to death. They came up with a plan that Judas would help them find a time when Jesus was away from the crowds and a place easy to arrest him. The authorities would get Jesus. Judas got thirty pieces of silver.

Though the other disciples didn't know about Judas' conspiracy, Jesus did. He didn't know it through natural means or a secret messenger, he knew it supernaturally. Jesus had always known about Judas. He had known about him from the beginning (6:64). Yet at this point, Judas didn't know that Jesus knew. Jesus had hinted that one of them had a dirty soul. But now was the time to unmask the betrayer. Now he would reveal the traitor among them.

He had washed their feet and, more importantly, they had become spiritually clean by trusting in him. But not Judas. Not all were clean. That's where we pick up the story as Jesus exposed Judas' treachery.

Text

John 13:18–30: "I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say

to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.”

In this passage we find that nothing sinful man can do can overcome God’s purposes. No will is so resolute, no mind is so crafty, no scheme is so wicked, no hand is so powerful as to thwart the sovereign will of God. Even as Judas executed his plot to betray Jesus from within, Jesus was in absolute control over what would happen. His sovereign control over all the steps leading up to his death, including this night of betrayal, is demonstrated in six ways in this passage. As we find Jesus in control over his circumstances, we can take comfort that he is in control over ours as well.

I want you to see first, the sovereignty of his choice.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS CHOICE

Jesus said in verse 18, “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen.”

The disciples weren’t all the same. There remained one among them who was not truly with them. Though Judas had walked with Jesus for three years, he followed Satan. So before Jesus continued teaching his disciples on the night before his death, it was time for Judas to be exposed and for him to leave. As Jesus had cleansed their feet, now he was ready to cleanse the wicked one from the community of disciples.

But Judas’ defection didn’t mean that Jesus had failed in his recruitment. I heard a popular pastor say that he took comfort when he made a bad hire by insinuating that even Jesus made a bad hire with Judas. But that’s not the lesson here at all. Notice: Jesus *knew* whom he had chosen. “Chosen” doesn’t, in this instance, refer to election. Rather, it refers to Jesus calling the twelve disciples to follow him. He said to his disciples in 6:70: “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.”

Jesus chose the Twelve. He hand-picked each one of them of his own free will. And he knew their character when he chose them. *He* selected Judas. The devil didn’t sneak Judas into the Twelve. Judas didn’t fool Jesus with his hypocrisy. Jesus could have called someone else to be his disciple. But he chose Judas, not in ignorance, but with a sovereign design.

II. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS WORD

Continuing in verse 18: “But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’”

The Scripture that Jesus quoted is Psalm 41:9. Psalm 41 is a psalm of David, likely written during the time that he was exiled from Jerusalem because his son, Absalom, had rebelled and seized the kingdom for himself. When David wrote this, he was in great need: he suffered from a life-threatening illness, his enemies were closing in on him, and seemingly everyone had abandoned him, including one of his close friends. David cried out to the Lord that even the one who had dined with him in close fellowship, who had eaten his bread at his table, had lifted his heel against David.

Lifting one's heel is the picture of a horse lifting up its hoof to kick. One of David's friends was ready to stomp out his life. This is exactly what Judas aimed to do. He knew when he approached the Jewish authorities that they wanted to kill Jesus. He knew. They all knew. Judas didn't turn over Jesus so that he would be fined or charged with a misdemeanor. He delivered him over to death.

What Judas did was cruel. Jesus had treated Judas as a friend for three years. He had cared for him, loved him, and counseled him. He showed Judas things no man had ever seen. He had taught him revelation no man had ever heard. Yet he betrayed Jesus.

But even this was a fulfillment of Scripture written hundreds of years before, which means that Judas' betrayal was ordained that long ago.

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS REVELATION

In verse 19, Jesus said, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."

Jesus had a purpose in telling his disciples about his forthcoming betrayal. The reason he told them was to strengthen their faith. At this point, their faith was still immature and fragile. So he told them the future. He told them how bad it would get. He did this so that on the other side of it, they would look back and realize that what he predicted came true and that he must be right about everything else he claimed, including that he was God.

He wanted them to believe that "I am he." The word "he" is supplied by the translation—it isn't in the Greek, though it is implied. Literally, he told them what was to come so that they would believe "that I am"—the personal name of God.

His perfect revelation of the future proved his divinity and would strengthen their faith in him as the I Am—God himself.

IV. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS COMMISSION

Verse 20: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.""

As bad as it was going to get—with Judas' betrayal, the arrest of Jesus, the disciples fleeing in fear, and the crucifixion—the disciples might wonder whether they should give up on the ministry. Was hardship and opposition signs that their commission was over as Christ's representatives to the world? No! God is sovereign in his commission.

When he calls, Satan doesn't get a say. When Christ commissions, the enemy doesn't get a vote. So they must look to the sovereignty of God in his commissioning, not their circumstances. Facing opposition doesn't mean it's time to quit. Resistance from the evil one doesn't mean you're unfit to be Christ's ambassador. Those in the world who received them as Jesus' ambassadors, received Jesus. And if they received Jesus, they would be receiving the Father. As God's representatives, then, their calling wasn't dependent on things going well.

V. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS LOVE

At this point, Jesus turned the conversation to identify his betrayer. Even as he did, he hurt deep in his soul (v. 21): "After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.'"

We've seen Jesus troubled at other times. In chapter 11, Jesus became troubled as he saw Mary weeping for her brother, Lazarus, who was dead. In chapter 12, Jesus said that his soul was troubled as he contemplated the hour of his death. It's a term of deep turmoil and intense agitation. We've described it as the waves on the sea during a violent storm, which thrashes boats about and stirs the waters.

Now was the time to unmask his betrayer and let Judas know that he knows. His anguish was visible. Perhaps there was even a tremble in his voice when he said, "One of you will betray me." One of *you*. My friends. Not one from outside the group. The traitor was in the room.

The disciples were at a loss to know who he meant.

Verse 22: "The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke."

They were shocked. The news took them by complete surprise. One of them? They had heard him say that one of them was unclean, but one of them was a betrayer? How could this be? Who could this be?

Judas' deception was so clandestine that none of the disciples suspected him. There was nothing obviously wicked about him. No one pointed the finger at Judas. The other gospels tell us that they all began to ask, "Lord, is it I?"

Judas' hypocrisy was so devious that the others accused themselves before the accused Judas. And Judas *was* a hypocrite. In Matthew, even Judas asked Jesus, "Is it I?," knowing full well that it was him (26:25). According to Luke, the disciples began discussing among themselves who it was. The shock of Jesus' accusation left everyone bewildered.

So Simon Peter—always ready to take action—motioned for John to find out from Jesus of whom he spoke (v. 24). John was next to Jesus (v. 23).

As I mentioned last week, for special occasions, such as feasts and important banquets, the Jews and Greeks ate from low tables reclining on mats and propped up usually on the left arm on a cushion and eating with the right hand, feet radiating away from the table. This position encouraged the meal to linger. It was a mark of unhurried celebration. Verse 23 says that, "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side." That's John.

He never identifies himself by name in his own Gospel.

This wasn't a proud way to refer to himself. Just the opposite. In humility, John always lived in awe that the Lord loved him. Jesus' love wasn't a concept. It wasn't a general, abstract truth. It was intensely personal and he never got over it. The table was usually arranged in a V or U-shape with the host at the center.¹ Peter was somewhere along the edge and he caught John's eye. He motioned for him to ask Jesus who it was.

Verse 25 says that John leaned back against Jesus to ask him. So John must have been to Jesus' right. He asked simply, "Lord, who is it?" The other disciples didn't seem to notice Peter nor hear John ask the question. Perhaps they were still discussing among themselves what Jesus said. He responded to John in a way you wouldn't expect.

Verse 26: "Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."

In those days, the host of a meal would give honor to someone by taking a choice piece of food from a common bowl and handing it to the guest of honor. That's what Jesus did: (v. 26b): "When he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."

From the other gospel accounts, it's likely that Judas was reclining just behind Jesus. But anyone who witnessed what Jesus did would only reason that he honored Judas by giving him choice food. Yet to John, perhaps Peter, and Judas, the betrayer had been exposed.

Think of Jesus' sovereign love on display. He washed Judas' feet that night as an act of love for him. And even as he identified Judas as the one who would betray him, he did so in the most loving of ways—with a gesture of kindness. He loved Judas with a sovereign love until the end. Yet Judas had received the morsel, but he didn't receive Jesus' love.

VI. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS TIMING

Once Judas took the morsel, things turned quickly. Judas didn't respond with a broken and contrite heart. Rather (v. 27), "After he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him." This wasn't the first time Satan entered into Judas. In Luke 22:3, Satan entered into Judas when he first approached the Jewish authorities to betray Jesus. So he wasn't always possessed by Satan, but he was clearly continually influenced by him. Satan chose the opportune time to take hold of Judas again. After taking the morsel, Satan would not let Judas have a second thought.

We must remember that Judas was no victim in this. Satan entered him because he found a willing co-conspirator. He found a fellow deceiver. There is no sympathy for Judas. He betrayed Jesus willingly as he was empowered by Satan.

Now Satan is not omnipresent like God. He can't be in multiple places at once. He may be fast, but he can only be in one place at one time. That means that just before he entered Judas, Satan was in the room. How long had he been there? We don't know. But it may have been for the

¹ So Leonardo di Vinci, who painted the Last Supper with all the disciples seated at a long table, had it all wrong.

whole supper because in Luke 22, Jesus said to Peter during the Passover meal that Satan demanded to have him, that he might sift Peter like wheat (v. 31). When did Satan demand to have Peter? Probably during the meal, when Satan was in the room. He had Judas, he wanted Peter too. Satan looked for every angle to destroy Jesus. Along the way, he ensured the destruction of Judas.

Once Satan had entered him, Jesus knew there was no possibility of his repentance. Judas had closed himself off to Christ's love.

Verse 27: "Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

The hour had come for Judas to complete his wicked scheme. There would be no more delay. Judas was dismissed from the gracious presence of Christ forever.

Depending on how this is interpreted, Jesus may have been saying to Judas, "What you are going to do, do *more* quickly." In other words, get on with it. Even here, Jesus was in control. He forced Judas to execute his plan more quickly than perhaps he intended. Even as Judas was led by his flesh and Satan to harm Jesus, he was constrained by the sovereignty of Jesus. Only upon his permission could he go and betray him. Everyone heard Jesus say this to Judas, but they didn't understand what he meant.

Verses 28-29: "Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor."

They thought it was strange that Judas would leave the Passover meal, but they still didn't suspect him.

Verse 30: "So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night."

Judas did as he was told. He didn't hesitate at all. Immediately he went out—evidently without thought of repentance, without a second thought.

John writes, "And it was night." Of course it was. All this happened during the evening meal. But it was night in another way. The Light had gone out for Judas. The Light had been with him for 3 years, but no longer. Darkness had overtaken him. He was enshrouded in the blackest of black. His opportunity to believe the Light was over.

As Isaiah said, of which John quotes in 12:40, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."

Judas was blinded by his sin and couldn't see the blazing Son who loved him all these years. Jesus had loved him to the end. But Judas would not receive his love. So now Judas was handed over to the night—to complete darkness.

Never had someone walked so close to the Light. Never had someone rejected the Light so wickedly.

CONCLUSION

What a sad story. Reading this story, we are witnesses to a man's self-inflicted destruction. He wasn't someone who was self-deceived. He didn't think he was a believer, but turn out not to be. He knew he wasn't a believer, but deceived others into thinking he was.

If you're part of the church long enough, you'll find that devils can wear a mask of piety. No church is immune from the disease of Judas, including this one. Paul faced Judases in the church. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15: "Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds."

But we don't need to fear. The same God who dealt with the original Judas can deal with any Judas who comes here. Some religious hypocrites are exposed now; others are exposed on judgment day. But God knows who are his and who are Satan's.

And we know that our Lord is sovereign over all things at all times in all places, including our circumstances. And this is our assurance and comfort.