

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 18.1-40



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 18.1-40
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Introduction to *John 18.1-40*

Jesus promised that we would have tribulations and trials in this world (Jn. 16.33). But He also promised that He had overcome the world, and that if we would abide in Him, we would bear fruit regardless of what we had to endure.

During His own trial, Jesus demonstrated how to rest in the sovereign power and wisdom of God, so that we can bear up and grow through our trials. Peter and Pilate show us the pitfalls we can expect when trials come, and by looking carefully at them, we can avoid falling through trial into sin.

Jesus' trust in God, commitment to His calling, and love for His disciples are clear throughout His trial. Let's pray that we not only grow in gratitude for the benefits of Jesus' passion, but that we learn to grow in faith by following His example.

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1 Betrayed

Read and meditate on John 18.1-6.

What is most amazing about the events that follow, is that Jesus knew them all, knew what was going to happen to Him, and yet He faced His trial and suffering without hesitation. How unlike Him we can be!

¹And when He had thus prayed and spoken, Jesus went with His disciples over Kidron Brook. There was a garden there, and Jesus took His friends into it with Him. ²Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place, for Jesus used to meet there with them. ³Judas came there then, and with him, officers and soldiers sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. And they had lanterns, weapons, torches to display and wield. ⁴So Jesus, fully knowing all that was about to happen to Him, saw the mob approaching, and He went to them and said, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵They answered Him, "We're seeking Jesus, He of Nazareth." He answered, "I am He." And he was with them who betrayed Him, Judas. ⁶When He said unto them, "I am He," they, full of dread, drew back, and fell down to the ground.

- John 18.1-6

Reflect

1. Jesus and eleven of His disciples headed for the garden across the Kidron Brook. It was a familiar place, and Judas rightly suspected this is where he would find Jesus. Meditate on Psalm 55.12-14. We will see that Jesus was meditating on certain psalms as He underwent His passion. Do you think He may have had this one in mind? Explain. Read through Psalm 55.15-23. How would this have comforted and strengthened Jesus? Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me always to keep Your Word in mind, especially when...*
2. Judas arrived with a mob of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. Based on how John describes this contingent, what were they expecting? Why? *Father, protect me this day from...*
3. Jesus met them head on. He did not try to hide or otherwise avoid those who had come seeking Him. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He has told us what to expect in this world (Jn. 16.33). When might we expect this? Should we try to avoid it? Explain. *Jesus, help me to be bold in the face of challenges and trials, and to trust in You to...*
4. Jesus did not want there to be any mistake about His identity. He wanted the mob to arrest the right Man, and to know Who that Man was. Jesus identified Himself by saying simply, "I am." This answer had two aspects to it. Explain. *Thank You, Jesus, that You allowed Yourself to be taken so that...*

5. Notice the response of the mob to Jesus' forthright claim. Why did they do this? What does this suggest about the power of God's glory, when we are identified with it? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"With no other weapon than his own solitary voice uttering the words 'I am,' he knocked down, repelled and rendered helpless that great crowd, even with all their ferocious hatred and terror of arms. For God lay hidden in that human flesh, and eternal day was so obscured in those human limbs that he was looked for with lanterns and torches to be slain in the darkness. 'I am,' he says, and throws the wicked to the ground. What will he do when he comes as judge, who did this when giving himself up to be judged? What will his power be like when he comes to reign, who had this kind of power when he came to die? And now even at the present time Christ is still saying through the Gospel, 'I am.' And ... the result is the same, as people go backward and fall to the ground because they have abandoned what is heavenly in favor of what is earthly."

Augustine (354-430 AD)

Jesus knew no fear. He faced His enemies squarely, and stood His ground, fully aware of what was about to ensue. How does this instruct us?

Closing Prayer

As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me,
For there were many against me.
God will hear, and afflict them,
Even He who abides from of old.
Selah
Because they do not change,
Therefore they do not fear God.

Psalm 55.16-19

Psalm 55.16-23 (*Bread of Life: Break Thou the Bread of Life*)

Lord, I will call on You, answer and save!
Morning and evening too, my voice I raise.
Grant me Your peace, O Lord; answer my foes!
All who reject God's Word He overthrows.

Many assail, O Lord, many betray.
See how they draw their sword across my way.
Take up my burden, Lord; strengthen and bless!
Let judgment by Your Word their souls distress.

2 The Beginning of Glory

Read and meditate on John 18.7-14.

Jesus was about to come into the hands of Jewish and Roman authorities. They have Jesus right where He wants them.

⁷Then He inquired of them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus." ⁸Jesus answered, "I have told you I am He. So therefore, why should you detain these others; let them go, since you seek Me." ⁹Now Jesus said this so that what He prayed might be fulfilled, "Let none Whom You have given Me be lost." ¹⁰Then one of His disciples, Simon Peter, drew a sword, and struck the high priest's servant, who was Malchus, and cut off his ear. ¹²So to him Jesus said, "Put up your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My own Father has assigned Me?" ¹²So they tied His hands, arrested Him, ¹³and led Him to a man named Annas, who was kindred to the high priest, Caiaphas. ¹⁴And was he, this Caiaphas, who spoke unwittingly the prophesy that it was better that one man should die for all the people.

- John 18.7-14

Reflect

1. While the officers and soldiers were busy recomposing themselves from the shock of Jesus' revelation of His glory – the first blast of that glory, as we shall see – Jesus repeated the question: "Whom are you seeking?" (vv. 7, 8) Why do you suppose He repeated the question? Was it because He didn't understand the first time? Or was there another reason? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, You are always my Shepherd, always looking out for me, always...*

2. Who's in charge here? On the surface, we might think the mob has the situation well in hand. But who *really* is managing this situation, and how can you tell (v. 9)? Meditate on Acts 2.22, 23 as you think about your answer. What comfort should we find in this? *No matter how desperate, dangerous, or dire the circumstances, Lord, You...*

3. Peter sought to make good on his previous boast (v. 10, cf. Jn. 15.37). Although Jesus had been telling His disciples what was going to happen to Him for some time now, Peter's perspective on this situation was not the same as that of Jesus. Explain. Do we ever find ourselves caught up in a similar loss of perspective? *Forgive me, Lord, whenever I allow the things I can see to keep me from seeing the unseen things which are...*

4. Jesus would not fulfill His Kingdom-and-glory calling by human means (v. 11). What did He mean by "the cup" which the Father had given Him? Meditate on Psalm 116.12-14. What is our cup? In what ways is it like

the cup Jesus had to drink? In what ways was Jesus' cup unique? *Lord, I must seek Your Kingdom and glory according to Your plans, not mine, and this means...*

5. John is careful to tell us the names of specific people. Why should we care that the servant was named Malchus? Or that Annas and Caiaphas were the priests to whom Jesus was brought? Does giving us these names lend credibility to John's account? For whom? What's ironic about Caiaphas' role in these proceedings (v. 14, cf. Jn. 11.49-52)? Who's in charge here? In what ways have we seen the glory of God thus far since Jesus and His disciples arrived in the garden? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“When Jesus says, ‘I have not lost one,’ he was not referring to temporal but eternal death here, although the Evangelist also understood him to be talking about temporal death. And one might wonder why they did not seize the disciples with him and cut them to pieces, especially when Peter had roused their anger by what he did to the servant. Who then restrained them? It was no other than that power that cast them backward. And so the Evangelist, to show that it did not happen through their intention but by the power and decree of him whom they had seized, has added, ‘That the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, “Of those which you have given me, I have lost none.”’” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

From the beginning of his gospel, John has been pointing us to Jesus' *hour*, indicating that His glory would be revealed in the great work accomplished at that hour. The prelude to that glory occurred when Jesus revealed Himself as *I Am*, and everyone fell backward to the ground. His glory continued to be displayed as He calmly rebuked Peter and allowed Himself to be arrested, making it possible for His disciples to be escape capture. Jesus was supremely confident in the Word of God, and in His own authority as God's Word. He would drink the cup His Father had given Him, because He saw the joy that awaited Him beyond the bitterness (Heb. 12.1, 2). How can believers help one another to have this kind of confidence in God's Word?

Closing Prayer

Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The Lord preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
For You have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
I believed, therefore I spoke,
“I am greatly afflicted.”
I said in my haste,
“All men *are* liars.”
What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people.

Psalms 116.5-14

Psalm 116.4-14 (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

I called to God, "O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!"

The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.

His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –

I rest in Him forever!

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.

My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.

Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,

And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.

What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?

Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love

And pay my vows most truly.

3 Two Trials (Part 1)

Read and meditate on John 18.15-24.

The trial of Jesus is really two trials in one, and each begins in this passage.

¹⁵And

so Simon Peter followed Jesus, and another of His friends, also. And that disciple, since the high priest knew him, went along with Jesus as the soldiers led Him to the high priest's court yard. ¹⁶Peter stayed outside; but that other disciple made it possible for him to enter. Since he knew the priest, he managed to convince the keeper of the door to let him in.

¹⁷The servant girl, who kept the door, said when she let him in, "Aren't you one of this Man's disciples?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸So then, since it was cold, they made a fire to warm themselves. And Peter stood there, too, to warm himself.

¹⁹The high priest questioned Jesus then of His disciples, and His doctrine. ²⁰Then He answered, "I have spoken openly to all the world, in synagogues, to meet where all the Jews do, in the temple. I in secret have said nothing. ²¹So then why do you ask Me? Ask those who heard Me what I said to them. Indeed, they really ought to know." ²²And when He said this, standing by, an officer struck Jesus, saying, "Why do you speak thus to the high priest?" ²³And He replied, "If I have spoken wrong, show Me the evil; but if well, then why do you strike Me?" ²⁴Then Annas bound and sent Him to the high priest, Caiaphas.

- John 18.15-24

Reflect

1. The first trial is that of Peter. Peter had boasted that he was ready to die with Jesus, if need be. The Lord decided to try the limits of Peter's confidence. Peter seemed to begin well, going with "the other disciple" (undoubtedly, John) into the very court yard where Jesus was to stand before the high priest. We can give him some marks for this. Why? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know that I can sometimes let my own sense of safety or convenience to...*

2. But it's not enough to begin well. Perhaps Peter was caught off guard by the servant girl (a *servant girl!*) inquiring as to whether he was one of Jesus' disciples. Do we ever get caught off guard about our faith? There

is more than a little irony in Peter's reply to her. Recall Jesus' response to being questioned in the garden (vv. 5, 8). Contrast Peter's response with that of Jesus. *Lord, I hope I would never flatly deny You, but I'm sure that I do at times, such as when...*

3. It's also clear that Peter's concern for his own wellbeing would ultimately get the best of him. Rather than stand with Jesus on the cold pavement, he stood with the enemies of Jesus around a warm fire. Are we ever tempted to do this? In what ways? How is the "trial" of Peter going so far? If you had been with Peter *before* he entered that court yard, what counsel might you have given him? *Lord, we betray you in small steps that can end up in giant calamities. Help me to recognize whenever...*

4. Now begins the "trial" of Jesus (v. 19). Jesus spoke truly, but obliquely, and in particular, as a Shepherd protecting His sheep. Explain. How do you assess Jesus' first response to these interrogations? *Lord, You do all things well. Help me to learn from You how I can...*

5. It's pretty clear from the beginning where this trial is going. Jesus' interrogators are not interested in the truth; they intend to silence Jesus, once and for all. Jesus was unlawfully struck by one of those standing near him (cf. Acts 23.1-5). How do you assess Jesus' response to the one who struck Him? Is there any counsel here for us, when we are similarly challenged, or even abused? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"The fire of love was smothered in Peter's breast, and he was warming himself before the coals of the persecutors, that is, he was warming himself with the love of this present life, which only increased his weakness." *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

Self-interest and convenience are the enemies of truth. How can you tell when self-interest and convenience are leading you to deny Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the great mountains;
Your judgments are a great deep;
O Lord, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.
Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Psalm 36.5-10

Psalm 36.5-9 (*Landas: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Your lovingkindness, Lord, is great, it reaches heav'n above;
Your faithfulness mounts to the skies, and keeps us in Your love.
Your righteousness like mountains high and judgment like the deep
Preserve Your creatures one and all and in Your mercy keep.

How precious is Your love, O Lord; we shelter in Your wings.

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We drink refreshment to the full from Your abundant springs.
You give us freely of Your grace, we drink it with delight;
Life's fountain is with You, O Lord, in Your light we see light.

4 Two Trials (Part 2)

Read and meditate on John 18.25-32.

One trial ends, and the other experiences a change of venue and jurisdiction. And Jesus remains completely in charge.

²⁵Now Peter stood and warmed himself. Then someone said, "You should be one of His disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."²⁶Then one who served the priest, a relative of him who had his ear cut off by Peter, said, "Were you not there with Jesus, in the garden?"²⁷Peter then denied again that it was so, and when he did, a rooster crowed.

²⁸So after this the Jews led Jesus out from Caiaphas to the Praetorium. The day was just beginning. They did not go in there, lest they be defiled, and kept from joining in the Passover.²⁹So Pontius Pilate then went out to them and said, "What charge do you bring here against this Man?"³⁰They said unto him, "We would not be here at all if He were not an evildoer, nor would we deliver Him to you."³¹Then Pilate said, "Take Him and judge Him by your law instead." They said to him, "Our law does not allow us to put Him to death,"³²and this is how the word of Jesus was fulfilled, when He explained how He would die.

- John 18.25-32

Reflect

1. Jesus had been struck, undoubtedly in Peter's sight, and was being led from the courtyard of the high priest to the courtyard of the Roman governor. Meanwhile, Peter continued warming himself. Is Peter thinking more about himself or about Jesus at this point? Is there a warning here for us? Complete the following prayer: *Let me not fear to be identified with You, Lord Jesus, or to...*
2. Peter is given two more opportunities to confess Jesus, yet he is emphatic in denying any relationship with Him (vv. 25, 26). What has happened to Peter? Why did this happen? How can we make sure this never happens to us? *Lord, let me not be afraid to confess You, or to share with others what You...*
3. Peter's trial is over. He has fallen through temptation into sin. It's not the end of his story, of course, but the trial of Peter offers an opportunity for us to reflect on our daily trials. What can we learn from Peter's failure to help us in remaining faithful to the Lord whenever we're tempted to deny or disobey Him? *Thank You for Peter, Lord, because he...*

4. Jesus' trial now undergoes a change of venue, and there is only one reason for this. Jesus has said that he must be "lifted up" in His dying, clearly implying His being impaled on a Roman gibbet (cf. Jn. 3.14, 8.28, and 12.32, 33). Why didn't the Jews just take care of this themselves (v. 31)? Jesus' word could not fail or be broken, so it was necessary for the Jews to put the trial into the Roman court. Now they have Jesus right where He wants them. Explain. *Lord, You are sovereign down to the smallest details of my life, and I thank You that...*

5. The Jews could not put someone to death without Roman consent (except they would in Stephen's case, Acts 7, so angry and passionate had they become). Actually, Jewish law allowed the death penalty for certain crimes. But the Jews understood they needed to bow the knee to Caesar even more than to the Law of God. Still, they kept up the appearance of conformity to God's Law when it suited them (vv. 28, 29), even as they denied God's Law in yielding to Pilate's authority. They obeyed God's Law as it was convenient, and they deferred to other laws when it was not. What's the danger in living this way? Are Christians ever tempted to make this mistake? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"See how the prediction of the Physician is fulfilled and the presumption of the sick man is brought to the light. For there is no performance of what Peter had asserted, 'I will lay down my life for your sake.' Instead, we see a fulfillment of what Jesus had predicted, 'You shall deny me three times.'" *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Courage like Jesus showed requires complete dependence on God and His Word. Peter trusted in his own word, and when it suited his purposes, he changed that word. God's Word never fails, as Jesus knew, and as His trial makes abundantly clear. We must not allow the trials of life to cause us to turn away from God's Word. How can we tell when we, like Peter, are depending more on our word than on the Lord's?

Closing Prayer

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.
Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Psalm 25.4-10

Psalm 25.4-10 (*Festal Song; Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;

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According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

5 Two Trials (Part 3)

Read and meditate on John 18.33-36.

One trial has ended, and one continues. But a new one begins, and all the tables are turned. Jesus' interrogation before Roman authorities began at the point which would have been of most concern to them. Whether He claimed to be God or the Messiah would be of no concern. Rome managed a broad toleration of religion, and was familiar with what they would have regarded as harmless crackpots. But claiming to be a King? That was another matter.

³³Immediately, returning to the Praetorium, Pilate said to Him, "Are You the king of the Jews?" ³⁴Instead of answering, Jesus asked, "Do you speak for yourself of this concern? Or is it more the case that you are only listening to what others have reported unto you?" ³⁵Then Pilate answered, and to Jesus said, "Am I a Jew? Your nation and the head of all the priests have brought You here before me. Just what have You done? ³⁶He said therefore, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My domain were, then My servants all would fight that I might not be handed over to the Jews. But now the Kingdom which I rule is not from here."

- John 18.33-36

Reflect

1. Pilate was at first indifferent to what happened to Jesus (v. 31). The Jews knew just how to get his attention however, as Luke 23.1, 2 makes clear. Why would this concern Pilate, while Jesus' claims to be the Son of God would not? Do you think our secular world today has some "touchy" points when it comes to the claims of Jesus? Such as? Complete this prayer: *Lord, let me not shy away from proclaiming You to others, simply because they might take offense at...*
2. Jesus because a political concern to Rome. Politics is about power – gaining it, wielding it, increasing and preserving it. The Roman authorities had heard about Jesus, but only as kind of curiosity (cf. Lk. 23.6-8). Suddenly, however, Jesus had become a potential political threat, and Pilate was determined to find out more. He invited Jesus to condemn Himself (v. 33). How would you qualify Jesus' response to Pilate's question (v. 34)? *Lord, You frequently answered people's questions with another question, and I can see that this...*
3. Jesus was determined to make Pilate think about this situation, and not to make a snap judgment out of mere political expediency. From Pilate's response in verse 35, how do you think Jesus' counter-question struck him? Was he offended? Piqued? Irritated? What do you make of Pilate's follow-up question, as compared with his first question? Who's on trial here? *Lord, I see that You kept Pilate on the defensive, making him look at himself and think for himself about You, and this makes me think I...*
4. Pilate asked another question: "What have You done?" Jesus ignored that question and returned to Pilate's original question. What did He mean by saying His Kingdom "is not of this world?" Did He mean to say to Pilate, "Oh, hey, don't get me wrong. It's just a spiritual thing. Certainly nothing mighty Rome has to worry

about”? Explain. *Lord, though Your Kingdom is not of this world, as it comes to this world, it...*

5. Jesus said His Kingdom is not “from here,” not “of this world.” How then should we “seek first” this Kingdom (Matt. 6.33), or take it up as our primary calling in life (1 Thess. 2.12)? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“What in fact is Christ’s kingdom? It is simply those who believe in him, those to whom he said, ‘You are not of this world, *even as I am not of this world.*’ He willed, nevertheless, that they should be in the world, which is *why he prayed to the Father, ‘I ask you not to take them out of the world but to protect them from the evil one.’* So here also *he did not say, ‘My kingdom is not’ in this world but ‘is not of this world.’* And when he went on to *prove this by declaring, ‘If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have fought to save me from being handed over to the Jews,’* he concluded by *saying not ‘my kingdom is not here’ but ‘my kingdom is not from here.’* Indeed, his kingdom is here until the end of time, and until the harvest it will contain weeds.” Augustine (354-430 AD)

As He stood before Pilate, Jesus possessed all authority in heaven and in earth (Jn. 13.3). Where was that authority lodged? How was it wielded? How can you see that Jesus was exercising His Kingdom authority, even as He stood before Pilate? What can we learn from Him?

Closing Prayer

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.

Psalm 33.13-21

Psalm 33.18-22 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

6 Two Trials (Part 4)

Read and meditate on John 18.37-40.

Pilate's trial ends in a complete failure. Jesus' trial turns from one form to another, as He enters more deeply into His passion.

³⁷Then Pilate said unto Him, "Are You then a king?" "Yes, rightly you have said I am a King," said Jesus. I was born for this cause, and for this cause I have come into the world, to testify concerning truth. Everyone who My voice hears is of the truth." ³⁸Then Pilate said to Him, "Truth. What is truth?" And when he said this, he went out again and said unto the Jews, "I find no fault in Him. ³⁹But you a custom have, that at this feast I should release one prisoner. Does it thus seem good to you that I release your 'King?'" ⁴⁰They said together, "Not this Man. Release instead Barabbas!" Now he was a thief.

- John 18.37-40

Reflect

1. Pilate questioned Jesus about the kingship claim. This would be a serious charge, indeed. In one sense, this interrogation is going on at two levels, Pilate thinking one thing, and Jesus answering another. Explain. Is there a sense in which this is true of us and our unbelieving friends as well? Complete this prayer: *Though the world may not recognize You as such, Lord Jesus, You are King, King of...*

2. Jesus said He was born to be King, and came into the world to bear witness to truth. He made a direct connection, in Himself, between kingship and truth. How does this help us in thinking about the Kingdom He taught us to pray for and seek (Matt. 6.10, 22), and to which God has called us (1 Thess. 2.12)? How do we seek that Kingdom? How can we know when it is coming in and through us? *Lord Jesus, help me today to seek Your Kingdom as I...*

3. In what sense was Jesus using the word *hear* in verse 37? What does it mean to *hear* His voice? What does hearing His voice accomplish in us, and how does this relate to our Kingdom-and-glory calling? *Open my ears, my mind, and my heart, Lord Jesus, to hear Your voice, as You speak to Me in...*

4. "Oh, this is about *truth*?" Pilate might have said. Instead, he cast doubt on *truth* itself, suggesting that truth is an unknowable concept, which means that truth is merely relative and pragmatic. Compare Pilate's view of truth with Jesus' view of truth. Which one most represents our times? Should that affect our way of being-in-the-world, our view of *truth*? Explain. *You are the truth, Lord Jesus, and as long as I look to and cling to You, and hear Your voice, I...*

5. Pilate's trial comes to a disappointing end. He finds no fault in Jesus, but he refuses to act on that decision. Instead, he will choose the pragmatic solution. Everybody will be happy, his "Jesus problem" will go away, and the Empire can continue its efficient functioning. For Pilate, this was "truth." How can you see this approach to "truth" in our own day? What's wrong with living this way? Bring together into one your prayers

from questions 1-4.

Summary

“In order that he might show that the difficulty in Pilate’s perception came from his stubborn heart and from his reluctance to admit the truth, Christ appropriately adds, ‘Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.’ For the word of truth is readily accepted by those who have already learned and love it. But it is not the same for everyone. In fact, the prophet Isaiah said to some, ‘If you will not believe, neither shall you understand.’ Pilate showed at once how true this was when he said, ‘What is truth?’ For there are those whose sight has been injured or who have entirely lost the use of their eyes and their sense of color has been entirely annihilated. They would not even be able to tell if someone placed gold before them or a brilliant precious stone. In fact, even the very light of the sun’s rays does not engage them in any kind of wonder since they have lost all perception and can gain no profit from any of these things. In the same way, to people whose minds have become warped, truth seems a foul and ugly thing even as it instills a spiritual and divine brilliance into the minds of those who behold it.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Truth in Jesus is unchanging and absolute. As King, Jesus administers truth through His subjects, who will thus necessarily cross swords with our pragmatic and relativistic age. But the Sword we carry into this conflict will never fail. What are the implications of this for your daily life?

Closing Prayer

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.
Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149.4-9

Psalm 149 (*Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*)

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!
Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!
Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him
Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!
To be so praised is God’s one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;
Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!
Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand;
Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

7 Arrest and Trial

Read and meditate on John 18.1-40.

The passion of our Lord Jesus begins. Betrayed in the garden, denied in the court of the high priest, scorned by religious and civil authorities alike, He bore up nobly and resolutely as God set the stage for His greatest work of glory.

¹And when He had thus prayed and spoken, Jesus went with His disciples over Kidron Brook. There was a garden there, and Jesus took His friends into it with Him. ²Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place, for Jesus used to meet there with them. ³Judas came there then, and with him, officers and soldiers sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. And they had lanterns, weapons, torches to display and wield. ⁴So Jesus, fully knowing all that was about to happen to Him, saw the mob approaching, and He went to them and said, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵They answered Him, "We're seeking Jesus, He of Nazareth." He answered, "I am He." And he was with them who betrayed Him, Judas. ⁶When He said unto them, "I am He," they, full of dread, drew back, and fell down to the ground. ⁷Then He inquired of them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus." ⁸Jesus answered, "I have told you I am He. So therefore, why should you detain these others; let them go, since you seek Me." ⁹Now Jesus said this so that what He prayed might be fulfilled, "Let none Whom You have given Me be lost." ¹⁰Then one of His disciples, Simon Peter, drew a sword, and struck the high priest's servant, who was Malchus, and cut off his ear. ¹¹So to him Jesus said, "Put up your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My own Father has assigned Me?" ¹²So they tied His hands, arrested Him, ¹³and led Him to a man named Annas, who was kindred to the high priest, Caiaphas. ¹⁴And was he, this Caiaphas, who spoke unwittingly the prophesy that it was better that one man should die for all the people.

¹⁵And so Simon Peter followed Jesus, and another of His friends, also. And that disciple, since the high priest knew him, went

along with Jesus as the soldiers led Him to the high priest's court yard. ¹⁶Peter stayed outside; but that other disciple made it possible for him to enter. Since he knew the priest, he managed to convince the keeper of the door to let him in.

¹⁷The servant girl, who kept the door, said when she let him in, "Aren't you one of this Man's disciples?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸So then, since it was cold, they made a fire to warm themselves. And Peter stood there, too, to warm himself.

¹⁹The high priest questioned Jesus then of His disciples, and His doctrine. ²⁰Then He answered, "I have spoken openly to all the world, in synagogues, to meet where all the Jews do, in the temple. I in secret have said nothing. ²¹So then why do you ask Me? Ask those who heard Me what I said to them. Indeed, they really ought to know." ²²And when He said this, standing by, an officer struck Jesus, saying, "Why do you speak thus to the high priest?" ²³And He replied, "If I have spoken wrong, show Me the evil; but if well, then why do you strike Me?" ²⁴Then Annas bound and sent Him to the high priest, Caiaphas.

²⁵Now Peter stood and warmed himself. Then someone said, "You should be one of His disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ²⁶Then one who served the priest, a relative of him who had his ear cut off by Peter, said, "Were you not there with Jesus, in the garden?" ²⁷Peter then denied again that it was so, and when he did, a rooster crowed.

²⁸So after this the Jews led Jesus out from Caiaphas to the Praetorium. The day was just beginning. They did not go in there, lest they be defiled, and kept from joining in the Passover. ²⁹So Pontius Pilate then went out to them and said, "What charge do you bring here against this Man?" ³⁰They said unto him, "We would not be here at all if He were not an evildoer, nor would we deliver Him to you." ³¹Then Pilate said, "Take Him and judge Him by your law instead." They said to him, "Our law does not allow

us to put Him to death," ³²and this is how the word of Jesus was fulfilled, when He explained how He would die.

³³Immediately, returning to the Praetorium, Pilate said to Him, "Are You the king of the Jews?" ³⁴Instead of answering, Jesus asked, "Do you speak for yourself of this concern? Or is it more the case that you are only listening to what others have reported unto you?" ³⁵Then Pilate answered, and to Jesus said, "Am I a Jew? Your nation and the head of all the priests have brought You here before me. Just what have You done?" ³⁶He said therefore, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My domain were, then My servants all would fight that I might not be handed over to the Jews. But now the Kingdom which I rule is not from here." ³⁷Then Pilate said unto Him, "Are You then a king?" "Yes, rightly you have said I am a King," said Jesus. I was born for this cause, and for this cause I have come into the world, to testify concerning truth. Everyone who My voice hears is of the truth." ³⁸Then Pilate said to Him, "Truth. What is truth?" And when he said this, he went out again and said unto the Jews, "I find no fault in Him. ³⁹But you a custom have, that at this feast I should release one prisoner. Does it thus seem good to you that I release your 'King'?" ⁴⁰They said together, "Not this Man. Release instead Barabbas!" Now he was a thief.

- John 18.1-40

Reflect

1. How would you describe the demeanor of Jesus throughout this beginning of His passion? How does He seem to you? Did Jesus practice what He preached? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, truly You are my Rock and my Fortress, so that, in times of trial, I...*

2. Jesus came to earth to glorify God the Father. In His demeanor, and in the response of people to His demeanor, we glimpse the beauty, majesty, strength, purity, and power of God. Explain. When we live like this, to the glory of God in even the smallest details of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31), what kind of responses should we expect? *Give me grace, heavenly Father, to seek Your glory in all things, so that...*

3. Peter's faith was tried in this situation as well. But Peter did not bear up well. Why did Peter fail his time of trial? If you had been there as Peter was entering the high priest's courtyard, how might you have counseled him? German theologian Helmut Thielicke wrote that to be faced with temptation is to be at the point of wanting to be disloyal to God. What can you learn from Peter's failure to help you remain loyal to God at all times? *Thank You, Lord, that when I am tempted, You are there with me, to...*

4. Pilate also underwent a trial of sorts. He was the highest authority in the land. Would he wield his authority for good, as a true servant of God (Rom. 13.1-5)? What seem to have been the guiding principles in Pilate's decisions? Are we ever tempted to make decisions this way? Explain. *Lord Jesus, help me always to weigh my decisions in the light of Your Word and Your glory, and...*

5. Jesus accepted the charge of claiming to be a king, but with a twist. Explain. We are citizens and ambassadors of His Kingdom, and we are not *from* or *of* this world, even though we are *in* it. How would you explain to a new Christian what it means to be called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12)? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“How many were offended ... when they made that dreadful and monstrous assertion that the robber and housebreaker, the man laden with the crime of murder, deserved to be released rather than Jesus. How many were offended when, having received permission from the judge to make their choice, they preferred Barabbas, desiring not only to crucify Christ but also to involve him in infamy? For they thought that by these means they should be able to manufacture the belief that he was worse than the robber and such a great transgressor that neither on the plea of mercy nor the privilege of the festival was it possible to save him. For they did everything for the purpose of slandering his fame. This is also why they crucified the two robbers with him. Nevertheless the truth was not obscured but shone forth all the more clearly.” *John Chrysostom (244-407 AD)*

In this world, Jesus promised, we will have tribulations – trials (Jn. 16.33). Like Peter, Pilate, and Jesus, our faith, our worldview, and our calling as followers of Christ will be called into question from time to time. How can we prepare for such trials, so that in Jesus, we overcome, and do not fail?

Closing Prayer

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,

That He has done this.

Psalm 22.23-31

Psalm 22.29-31 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

All the prosp'rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;
Bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;
Let them to all nations call, "Bow before His holy face!"
Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus' saving worth!

The Gospel of John: John 18.1-40

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How does the glory of God appear during Jesus' arrest and trial?
2. How did Jesus describe His Kingdom? Does this mean His Kingdom is *not* on earth? Explain.
3. Why did Peter and Pilate fail their "trials"? What can we learn from their failure?
4. What do we learn from Jesus about remaining loyal to God in the face of trials?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 18.1-40? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.