

“A Tale of Two Failures, Part 2” Matthew 27:1-10, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
October 11, 2020
Morning Worship Service

“Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death;² and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor.³ Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!”⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.⁶ And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.”⁷ And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers.⁸ For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.⁹ Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel;¹⁰ and they gave them for the Potter’s Field, as the Lord directed me.” (Matt. 27:1-10 NAS)

Introduction

What is the difference between the failure of Peter and the Failure of Judas? Repentance

- We will explore this idea more this morning

It was important for us to see how Peter got to the place where he turned against all of his training and gave into sin

- We saw this last week
- Peter rejected the Word of God when it was plainly spoken to him
 - He did not humble himself and come under the truth
 - The Word of God did not match up with the perspective he had of himself
 - The Word of God did not align with his understanding or even his desires
 - So he rejected it and held on to his own wisdom and understanding
- He trusted in his own experience, desires, and perceptions more than the revealed truth
 - When Peter could not reconcile truth with what he believed to be true about himself he rejected the truth
 - Vs 33, vs 35
 - *The authority in Peter’s life was his view of himself*
- He then failed to prepare for the day and hour of trial
 - He fell asleep instead of prayed
 - He was warned to prepare himself, but he did not heed the warning
 - He was confronted in his failure and did not listen to the confrontation

Now I want to make one more observation about Peter's whole experience. He was not alone but the Holy Spirit targeted him

- By this I mean the Scripture is focused on Peter. I am not saying the Holy Spirit took him into the trial. I am saying the Holy Spirit inspired the record of Peter's failure
- Vs 35 all the disciples agreed with Peter that they would not fall away from Christ

All three men fell asleep but Peter was targeted when Jesus woke them up

All of the men doubted that they would fall away from Christ, but it was Peter who was actually put to the test

Why?

1. God wanted to work particularly in Peter (Over-confidence)
 - a. God prepares his leaders and sometimes that is by bringing them low to prepare them for the great work they have ahead
 - b. Peter was vulnerable to pride and over-confidence in his ability
2. Satan targets leaders Luke 22:31 (Spiritual war)

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;" (Lk. 22:31 NAS)

So Peter was targeted because Satan targets leaders to expose them and discredit them. He targets those who are going to be useful. And God allows it. God allows certain men to fall so far. He allows certain trials to reveal certain flaws that one would be brought low

- At other times God allows Satan to come to destroy. In these cases, he targets a leader and exposes the leader as a fraud
- We see an example in Judas

BTW Satan was working behind the scenes in both Judas and Peter

"And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve." (Lk. 22:3 NAS)

"And he went away and discussed with the chief priests, and officers how he might betray Him to them." (Lk. 22:4 NAS)

You see Satan was at work behind the scenes in both Peter and Judas. And certainly God allowed it. He allowed Satan to carry out His purposes

- *In Judas Satan's work revealed a hypocrite and liar*
- In Judas Satan's work revealed an unbeliever who denied the truth and used Christ for personal gain and when he saw the train coming to an end, he sold Christ for one final pay day
 - BTW John 12:6 tells us that Judas used to steal from the money box
 - "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." (Jn. 12:6 NAS)
- Judas did not have a bad day and betray Christ
- Judas was in the practice of using the Lord as a means of personal advancement
- *He would take money from the collections and use it for himself*

- *Judas had cultivated his deception over a long period of time*
- Maybe this is why so many warnings about the future events were given to Judas and the other disciples
- Maybe this is why Jesus warned that he would be betrayed by one of his own. Jesus was warning and warning Judas of what was coming
- But Judas in the hardness of his heart would not listen
 - He would not see his sin
 - He would not believe the scripture
 - He would not hear the truth
 - He would not soften his heart
 - He would not come under conviction
 - He would not be persuaded to pursue righteousness
 - He would not delight in holiness
- You get the picture right? Judas habitually pulled away from the truth, while living under it

This is the scariest condition of the human heart. While being around the truth, hearing the truth, seeing the truth practiced, and being under the direct application of the truth, one can pull away from it

- All external signs point to having spiritual life but internally one is pulling away
- Privately one is rejecting what is right
- Inwardly one is rejecting and opposed to the truth
- Privately he does not believe and acts out his unbelief
- This is the scariest condition of the heart when it has been given over to the hardness of sin

In these cases Satan is a tool used by God to bring out the evil and unbelief in a hypocrite. Satan stirs the heart to evil and entices the godless to turn away from God and when he does turn the man's evil deeds reveal his heart of unbelief

But Satan was also at work in Peter's life. Satan was directing the scene. He was bringing the pressure. He was setting up the difficulty. God had allowed Peter to be under the pressure

- Satan would not let Peter run and hide
- Even though Peter moved locations around the High Priest's house
- The challenge followed Peter no matter where he went to hide

BTW all of this was allowed by God in Peter's life for a good purpose

"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Lk. 22:32 NAS)

- Peter was going to fall but he was only going to fall so far
- Peter when he fell was going to return
- He was going to be set back on the right path and be useful

Now let me be clear here we are talking about the faith of Judas and Peter not the ministry usefulness

- In this context both men fell. And as we are going to see in our text this morning Judas will take his own life, having never demonstrated repentance, he dies in unbelief

- Peter on the other hand falls and rejects Christ. He gives into his fears and unbelief and pulls away
- *But that is not the end of the story. He returns as Christ promises, is restored, and is used to build the Church*

Now there is another question we ask when someone falls and that is, are they useful again for ministry? That question is beyond our scope here. Once someone has sinned in some way and has demonstrated they are not an unbeliever who has pulled away but instead they repent and return, then we can ask the question of usefulness in ministry. *That is a question for the Pastoral Epistles and in particular 1 Tim 3 and Elder qualifications*

- One can fall and not disqualify themselves
- But one can also fall and bring disqualification
- And another may fall in a way that does not bring a public disqualification
- That is an important discussion for another time

What we can say at this point is this. Peter fell but his faith was not lost. He repented and returned. *And he fell but not so far as to lose credibility or to tarnish the way of truth.* For this reason his fall did not disqualify him from the work Christ used him for

Now let us return to our look at Judas and his decline and see what lessons we could learn from his fall from grace

Body

In verses 1-2 Matthew establishes the context

“Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death;² and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor.” (Matt. 27:1-2 NAS)

- We are now on Friday morning
- Jesus has faced this Third trial at the hands of the Jews
- The first was with Annas, then Caiaphas, and finally an early morning trial
- The trial Friday morning was perfunctory
- This was their attempt to make the whole proceedings legal. The Sanhedrin had already found him guilty of blasphemy. Now the matters of making it legal to stand up. They held their official meeting early Friday morning. I am sure to mask their unjust practices hours before

They then sent Jesus to Pilate to begin His trial before the Gentile court

- Pilate was the one with the authority to carry out capital punishment
- The Jews now needed to convince Pilot that their trial of Jesus was just and that He deserved to die
- We will uncover more details in verse 11 and following

Let us put our attention on Judas

The reason is this, when we look at Judas we see the steps of a person who is penitent but not repentant

The heart of man will naturally go so far in the process of repentance but not actually repent. He will feel bad about his sin. He will try to distance himself from his behavior. He will even inflict harm upon himself because of the sin but this is not repentance

And BTW that is our outline for this text. In our text we see three shallow expressions of penitence

1. Lonely Remorse
2. Superficial Separation
3. Self-Affliction

When someone thinks they are repentant but they are not doing what God commands they run to these false expressions of repentance. We call it penitence

- Penitence is feeling sorrow over sin
- But Penitence alone is not repentance

We can spot in Judas an Penitence which does not lead to repentance

1. Lonely Remorse

“Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,” (Matt. 27:3 NAS)

Remorse is not a clear sign of repentance. It can go either way

- Remember Peter showed remorse in 26:75
 - He went away and wept bitterly
- Remorse might indeed demonstrate repentance
- Listen there is a healthy sorrow that leads to repentance

“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.” (2 Cor. 7:9 NAS)

- There is a good sorrow
- A kind of sorrow that leads to a genuine and true repentance. A kind of sorrow that goes down deep and finds an inner resolve to do what is right
- A kind of sorrow that breaks pride, crushes selfish ambition, kills sins in the heart and seeks after God

But the word remorse is not speaking of tears and sorrow. It is not speaking of the idea of outward signs of grief. It is actually speaking of regret

- This same word is used in 2 Cor 7 2x in verse 8
- μετεμελόμην (1) *feel remorse, become concerned about afterward, regret* (MT 27.3); (2) *change one's mind, think differently afterward*

Here is what happened: Judas saw what he did and realized that was a bad decision

The same word used here “remorse” is used in 2 Cor 7:8

“For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not **regret** it; though I did **regret** it-- *for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while” (2 Cor. 7:8 NAS)

Paul said he wrote the Corinthians a letter that when he wrote it he felt bad. He regretted having to write it. Once he sent it he wondered how it would be received, if it would have its desired effect, or if it would be received. He had to write it and when it was sent he regretted it

- But after it was received well he did not regret it
- It produced the fruit needed and so Paul’s regret was replaced by rejoicing

I know what this is like. Having to say something or write something that I know is going to be hard. I know it is going to hurt. I know it is going to press in and I am not sure how someone is going to respond

- I do not regret having to speak truth and minister
- But I do regret that being clear and ministering truth exposes areas of unbelief or confusion and it shocks people
- I don’t want to bring distress. I do not want to bring harm or pain. I want to protect and love. But at times we have to address the error to get to do what is right

This is what Paul faced as he ministered to the Corinthian Church

So Here is the response of Judas. He regretted the choice he made. And that was it. *That regret was lonely. There were no acts of repentance*

- He did nothing to undo the wrong
- He could have gone to Pilate and said he was wrong
- He could have gone to the Sanhedrin and said he was wrong
- *He could have spoken up before the crowds and said he was wrong*
- Yes this was a gross act of unbelief but there were ways to address the sin. Maybe it would not have changed the outcome but it would have demonstrated his true repentance

Regret, sorrow, remorse, grief, or any other emotional trauma alone does not demonstrate repentance. When one’s grief stops in emotional distress they are only practicing penitence

We need to move beyond penitence to repentance when it comes to dealing with the sin in our hearts

- *Remorse and regret lead to sorrow and grief which should give birth to self-sacrificing love for others as we strive to put off the old man and put on the new man in Christ*
- Judas failed to repent because he stopped at regret

He continued in his unbelief. He did not believe Christ to be innocent or the son of God. When he realized later he was wrong he did not believe God to be forgiving

- He knew he was wrong
- He felt bad for his actions
- He suffered greatly emotionally
- But that is it
 - No faith
 - No turning from evil
 - No self-indictment

- No repentance only empty remorse
- No undoing the wrong
- No seeking to fix the transgression and set the record straight

2. Superficial Separation

"Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!"⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; . . . (Matt. 27:3-5 NAS)

Judas knew he was guilty. He admits to the Jewish leaders who were complicit in his activities that he was wrong

- We can even see here another false sign of repentance: The ability to accuse others
 - The religious leaders – This is not our problem. It is not our sin
- Pointing out sin in others does not demonstrate that you are repentant
- Judas heads to the Jewish leaders to distance himself from his crime
- He is going to give the money back

But in this case the religious leaders do not want to take any responsibility at all

- They want nothing to do with the money
- They are not going to take it back
- By taking it back they would have to admit they gave it in the first place to falsely condemn Jesus
- They were not going to own their sin and seek repentance
- They were not going to demonstrate that they were in the wrong
- In their minds Judas is the transgressor and Judas has the guilt
- They are innocent and they want nothing to do with the money

"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that* yourself!"

There is no honor among sinners

- These men were not going to take responsibility for their actions. They were distancing themselves from the actions
 - Judas sold Jesus
 - Judas took the money
 - Judas made the decision
 - Judas is guilty and it is all on him

The wicked man is not going to own his own sin. He is not going to acknowledge what is right

- This is why a politician can lie so easily
- There is no honor among sinners
- There is no seeking to do what is right

So Judas tries to distance himself from the sin but the religious leaders would not take back their part

SO Judas throws the money in the sanctuary

- This is his last desperate act to separate himself from the transgression
- The most he will do is go back to his co-conspirators and give back what he received

He takes superficial steps to distance himself from the transgression. He seeks to give back what he gained

- That is good but that is but simply a start

As the old adage goes sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay

- Judas thinks simply I can give back the money and lessen the guilt
- Or at very least the money only added to his guilt and he wanted to get rid of the reminder by giving it back to the source
- Whatever the case restoration is going to cost a lot more than 30 pieces of silver

Judas superficially responds. He takes superficial steps towards making something right

- This is how you know someone who is not truly repentant, they will go only so far in their repentance
- They will go as far as they are comfortable. Far enough to distance themselves from the disgrace but not far enough to undo the wrong
- They will pull back and pull away from the transgression but they will not work out and fix the wrong

As I said there was a lot that Judas could have done to undo the wrong or at the very least expose the corruption in his fellow conspirators. But he does not do it. He will not go to the courts or make his case heard. He will now reveal his sin and guilt to all. He is contented to hide and privately try to distance himself from the guilt of his sin

“Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.”
(Prov. 20:17 NAS)

Judas thought his spoils would make him happy and they only brought grief. So too with all sinners. Those who sin to get their way think this is good and right only to find no satisfaction in those things when their sin is revealed

- The bitterness of guilt robs the joy and pleasure out of the fruit of sin

Listen superficially pulling away from the guilt of sin will not bring restoration. And it is certainly not repentance

What does a superficial separation look like?

- Accept responsibility while blaming others
- Privately running from the consequences while hiding from public responsibility
- Heaping responsibilities and demands on others while avoiding your responsibility

- Seeking to repent only if others do the same
- No desire to seek restoration
- No desire to protect and honor the innocent
- No desire to love others and treat others as more important
- No self-indicting, no taking the log out of their own eye, no humility and brokenness over the sin
- No anger at themselves and sin

These are some expressions of superficial steps away from sin

Judas was not really repentant at all. He was filled with remorse and penitence but his repentance stopped there

3. Self-Affliction

“And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.” (Matt. 27:5 NAS)

Have you ever wondered why sinners harm themselves after their sin is exposed?

- Why do they cut themselves?
- Why do they threaten suicide?
- Why do they punch, slap, or in other ways inflict themselves with physical suffering?

It is because of the guilt within the penitent sinner. They know they are guilty and they deserve to be punished

- Some may even believe they are not sorrowful enough so they inflict themselves with pain to increase the sorrow over the sin
- Some may believe that their self-affliction will demonstrate that they have suffered enough and God will rescue them
- Others may be like Judas who are filled with unbelief and hopelessness so that death looks like a way of escape for poor choices

Judas was ready to inflict harm upon himself

Many sinners get to this place when they are guilty. Many get to the place of terrible grief and the god of this world seeks to destroy them. The god of this world who is a murderer from the beginning would seek to have the person killed. And would even encourage the person to believe that is the only escape

- Judas thought that to be the case so Judas gave into his sinful fears and grief
- Judas sought to take his own life

Listen friends I would wish that none of you would face a situation like this. But let me address the person who has lost all hope and sees the only way of escape is to take your life

- Taking your life would be your last selfish act of unbelief
 - If you took your life you are running from your pain and sorrow but in a selfish manner

- You are not caring about the grief caused to others. Your family and loved ones for example
- You are not believing that God is gracious, merciful, and forgiving
- You are not believing that God can restore
- It is believing the lie of Satan. There is escape through death

Do not run away from God and seek the way of escape that the devil offers

Turn to God. Turn in repentance. Seek Godly wisdom and walk the path of righteousness. Turn from your sin and turn to God and you will find that God forgives and restores

- IF you doubt that ask the Church
- Each and every one of us are sinners redeemed by the grace and mercy of God
- Each of us are here not by our own merits but by the work of God
- We strive to walk in holiness not to earn standing before God but because we belong to God and we guard His ways

Believe upon God sinner and you will be saved

- Believe upon God you who are emotionally distressed and you will be renewed
- Believe upon God you who are filled with distress and anxiety and you will find peace
- Believe upon God because in our darkest places God finds us and brings us out into the light. You may be lost in the darkness but God will restore you to the light
- Don't run from Him, rather run to Him

Self-affliction is not repentance. It is an attempt to please God by harming oneself. Or it is an attempt to take God's justice in your own hands to inflict yourself with pain for being wrong. Neither of which you are called to do

One who is walking in false repentance will be vulnerable to these three expressions of penitence

- Lonely remorse- regret with no turning
- Superficial separation – pull away from some aspects of sin or sin's pleasure but not abandon it
- Self-affliction – harm themselves because of guilt

Notice how our text ends

"And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." ⁷ And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸ For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; ¹⁰ and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me." (Matt. 27:6-10 NAS)

The hypocrisy of the religious leaders continued. They sought to stay away from the sin of Judas

By this they fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah

- Matthew was demonstrating that all of this was within the plan of God
- There are no surprises

- There is no detail outside of His directing
- They were accomplishing exactly what God had determined

Conclusion

Let us remember that people will fall. We do not always know right away how far they have fallen and nor do they. When someone falls into unbelief and engages in gross sin and is exposed there is no telling if they are truly repentant or trying to cover their tracks by saying the right things. *So what do we do in those moments?*

Here is what we can do:

1. Encourage their repentance and faith
 - a. We call sinners to repentance
 - b. Matt 18
 - c. 2 Cor 2,3 & 7
 - d. Gal 6
2. Point them to practice the truth
 - a. Speak truth and uphold the truth so the person knows the right thing to do
 - b. We don't obfuscate the path of righteousness and make it clear and obvious
3. Patiently watch the fruits of their life
 - a. Watch the person demonstrate real repentance and faith
 - b. Watch for them to own their sin and not make excuses for it
 - c. Watch for them to self-indict. They call out their sin. They do the heart surgery and point out their wrongs. Watch for them to identify their idols and fears
 - d. They seek to undo the wrong and demonstrate they would never walk in that former pattern of unbelief
4. Love and believe the best about God's Work and the power of the Spirit and truth while you wait to see the full fruits of repentance in the person
 - a. Force your heart to put faith in God and His work in someone
 - b. When a person has fallen, and even has done so habitually, the temptation is to think that they will never change or never get better. Your hope then must not be in the person but in God who transforms people into the image of Christ

We will see spiritual failure around us. It should not surprise us. Yes it hurts every time. No matter who or when the falling away of a member in Christ grieves the whole body. But with that we should recognize the Work of God

- God is at work when He allows these things
- *Satan is at work seeking to destroy and God is at work seeking to build and strengthen.* When these things come out we know God is at work and He will do great things for the body of Christ