

Patience In Times Of Preparation

Matthew 26:14-19

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It may be difficult at times to realize, but God is preparing you daily (through all of the waiting) for events that you will face down the road. Are you growing in the godly grace and fruit of the Spirit of patience? Will you be ready to face those events that lie ahead of you (whether you consider them trials or blessings)? That depends to a large extent upon whether you are leaning upon the Lord, trusting in His grace, and being faithful in the little things (as well as in the big things) right now in these days of preparation.

The Lord Jesus Himself even went through times of waiting and preparation as He looked to the goal of purchasing ungodly sinners (like you and me). From our text this Lord's Day, let us consider the following aspects of preparation leading up to the Lord's sacrificial death: (I) The Preparation Of A Traitor (Matthew 26:14-16); (II) The Preparation Of The Passover Lamb (Mathew 26:17-19).

I. The Preparation Of A Traitor (Mathew 26:14-16).

A. Let us consider for a moment this man who betrayed Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot. His name, like that of Benedict Arnold (in American history), is synonymous with traitor. Iscariot means "a man from Kerioth". Kerioth was a town in the south part of Judea. He was the son of Simon (according to John 6:71). It would appear that Judas had natural abilities as a leader, for he was chosen to be the treasurer among the disciples that Christ had called (the only "official" position of leadership among the apostles, John 12:6, during the earthly ministry of Christ). When the disciples debated among themselves who would be greatest in

the Kingdom of God, the name of Judas would likely have come up due to his position as treasurer among the apostles. Judas, no doubt, had the same ability to perform miracles that the other apostles had (Mark 3:13-15). Judas was even sent out two-by-two to preach the good news concerning Jesus Christ being Israel's Messiah, and yet he never truly embraced Christ as His only hope of eternal salvation (the Lord even called him a devil in John 6:70). Judas was so close to Christ (as to his outward profession), and yet so far away from Christ (as to having a saving faith in Christ as his God and Savior). Judas was like those to whom Christ referred in Matthew 7:21-22. Here we learn that hypocrites may be found in the best of company, even among the very apostles and ministers of Christ. A hypocrite like Judas blended in so well with the other apostles that no one seemed to suspect his sincerity.

B. Before looking more closely at our text, let us first consider two likely catalysts that Satan used to tempt Judas to betray Christ.

1. **Christ's Rebuke** (Matthew 26:6-10). The woman who expressed this act of love was Mary, the sister of Martha and of Lazarus (John 12:3). It was Judas who was the primary culprit in criticizing Mary's great act of devotion to Christ (John 12:5-6). The Holy Spirit has placed Christ's rebuke of Judas's sinful criticism immediately before his going to the Jewish Sanhedrin to make arrangements to betray Christ into their hands. Was this one catalyst that led Judas to betray Christ?

a. Dear ones, do the loving rebukes of Christ that are found in His Word, or found on the lips of your pastor, your parents, your husband or wife, your children, or your fellow Christians, offend you to the point of wanting to get even with that person in some way? None of us may jump up and down for joy at receiving correction or a rebuke. But a Christian learns from the correction and rebuke of others (even if he finds it difficult to receive), while bitterness and resentment churns

beneath the surface of one who despises correction and rebukes (“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” Proverbs 6:23). Christ’s rebuke (it would appear) was the catalyst in leading Judas to actively betray Christ, whereas it was the catalyst in instructing and training the other disciples.

2. **Christ’s Burial** (Matthew 26:13-14). When Christ referred to His burial, He implied his suffering and death, which had no place in the plans and dreams of Judas. The plans and dreams of Judas focused upon him being a prince as Christ defeated and conquered the Romans and as Christ ascended to the throne to rule from Jerusalem. Judas had no place for a suffering and dying Christ. Judas did not understand his own desperate need of a Savior and Redeemer. Judas wanted to lead, and he saw his opportunity to lead evaporating with a suffering and dying Christ. Judas was an opportunist in simply using Christ to achieve his own personal goals. And as long as his goals were looking bright, Judas was outwardly loyal. However, when his goals began to look gloomy (in light of Christ’s suffering and death), Judas proved to be a traitor to Christ, and joined with the Jewish Sanhedrin, where he saw more opportunities to advance his goals of power.

a. Dear ones, we, too, will find faithfulness to Christ relatively easy and comfortable as long as the picture of reformation looks bright (as long as people are embracing the gospel, showing interest in joining us in worship, and growing with us in promoting a covenanted reformation). However, we will find ourselves tempted to be unfaithful when the picture looks more gloomy to us, when it involves our suffering in various ways for the truths which we embrace as Covenanters (perhaps the ridicule of family and friends, perhaps the isolation of being alone, perhaps the desire to be married with no faithful candidates on the horizon). Dear ones, we all face such temptations from the devil when it involves our suffering for and with Christ. The thought

of a suffering Christ and suffering with Christ did not appeal to Judas, and led to his betraying Christ. Beloved, faithfulness to Christ is taking up our cross daily, denying ourselves, and following Him (even if it means following Him will lead to estrangement from family and friends, persecution, isolation, or loneliness).

b. Satan will so often tempt us to betray Christ in the very areas of our gifts or strongest desires. Be watchful and pray. For frustration and impatience over the time it takes to see godly goals reached of loved ones and friends coming to Christ, of becoming a leader in the Church, of finding a faithful spouse, of locating the right job or home to provide for your family, will only lead to betrayal in some form. Dear ones, there are no shortcuts in being faithful to Christ. Every day is a day of preparation in our road to being faithful and loyal to Jesus Christ.

C. Let us now consider the arrangements that Judas made with the chief priests in betraying Christ (Matthew 26:14-16).

1. What I want you to understand about this conspiracy on the part of Judas is that as sinful and wicked as it was, it was a day of preparation ordained by God from all eternity in the redemption of God's people. It was no accident. It was ordained of the Lord. For we find in Matthew 26:15 these words: "And they [i.e. the chief priests--GLP] covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." Why is that significant? It is significant because it is the fulfillment of a prophecy in Zechariah 11:12-13 wherein the exact price of 30 pieces of silver is prophesied. Christ was not a helpless victim. He was fulfilling the eternal plan of God to save even betrayers and haters of Christ who will come to Him as their only hope of righteousness, forgiveness, and life. The almighty God takes even times of betrayal and turns them into times of salvation, redemption, and love for His people.

2. Now knowing that, did not make the suffering that Christ

would endure painless. But it did make His suffering full of meaning and purpose. And dear ones, when suffering is pointless or when suffering is meaningless, we will all take the easy or comfortable way out of compromise and being unfaithful. Christ suffered according to the eternal and prophesied plan of God. He endured the suffering, the mocking, the beating, the scourging, and the agony of the crucifixion for the joy that was laid up for Him (Hebrews 12:2). If we would reign with Christ, we must also suffer with Christ (through times of persecution, isolation, loneliness, even to the point of giving up our lives for Him). If we do not suffer **for** Christ (and His truth), then we will not suffer **with** Christ. Christ and His truth must be the reason why we suffer, or our suffering will be meaningless. Suffering for and with Christ is preparing us to reign with Christ. Do not, therefore, despise days of suffering, for they are days of preparation—even as the conspiracy of Judas to betray Christ was a day of preparation to manifest the glory of Christ in saving unworthy sinners.

II. The Preparation Of The Passover Lamb (Mathew 26:17-19).

A. We now turn from The Preparation Of A Traitor to The Preparation Of The Passover Lamb. For we learn now that the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb was come (according to Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12), which was then followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover you will recall was commanded by the Lord to be kept holy in succeeding generations, because in it God delivered His people from bondage in Egypt by means of the blood of a lamb, which was sprinkled upon the doorposts of the house. The sacrifice of that Passover lamb caused the Lord to turn away His avenging wrath from those covered by the blood of that lamb. As we come to the New Covenant revealed in Christ Jesus, we learn that Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and

that He is our Passover Lamb who was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Thus, the Passover was an annual appointed holy day, which not only looked backward, but even more importantly looked forward to the only Lamb who could atone for man's sins—Jesus Christ our only Redeemer. Thus, it is not an accident that the Passover was intended to prepare the hearts of the disciples for the upcoming sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. That is why the Passover reached its full meaning and gave way to the Lord's Supper on this very same night when the Lord met with His disciples at this Last Supper.

B. The Passover lamb had likely been picked out and purchased earlier in the week by Christ or the disciples as was taught in Exodus 12:3. The lamb was then slain on that Passover afternoon. Afterwards, the slain Passover lamb was roasted and eaten by family or neighbors (who could do so with knowledge and understanding as we see inferred in Exodus 12:25-27), and it was eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (as taught in Exodus 12:8).

C. Our text continues to describe the preparation of a room in which Christ and His disciples might meet. The disciples ask where they shall prepare to eat the Passover meal (Matthew 26:17). The Lord then sends Peter and John (according to Luke 22:8) to make final preparations for them all. But Christ does not give the name of the landlord or the address of the landlord's house where they shall meet. Rather Christ demonstrates for His apostles His Divine omniscience and sovereign plan by directing them to follow a servant, who would be carrying water and who would lead them to the house where they were to have the Passover and the Lord's Supper. Peter and John would find a willing landlord (who was likely a follower of Christ) and a guest room in which

to meet for the Passover and the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:13-14). Peter and John were then to make all of the final preparations for the Passover.

1. Dear ones, the Lord of Glory made Himself so poor in becoming a man that He did not even have a house of His own in which to host the Passover and Lord's Supper with His disciples. He who owned everything by Divine right became poor that we might inherit the riches of heaven forever. Let us not fall prey to discontentment when we do not have what we want in this life (whether health, wealth, fame, or success). Jesus Christ had little to nothing in this life by way of material prosperity, and yet He was exalted far above every name that is named upon this earth. Let us learn contentment with whatever the Lord chooses to bless us. Let us be thankful for every crumb that falls from His table to us, and enjoy it to God's glory.

2. Isn't it interesting that Peter could trust the omniscience and power of Christ here in prophesying to him how to find a guest room for the Passover, but did not trust the omniscience and power of Christ in prophesying to him how He (Christ) would die and be raised the third day (as we see in Matthew 16:21-23). It is so typical of us, who are weak disciples of Christ, to trust Him and follow Him when it is what we want and desire. But, oh, how difficult it is for our corrupt hearts to trust Christ when it is not what we want—when it spoils our dreams and plans for success. Dear ones, it is the same Christ who cannot lie, who prophesied the one event as well as the other event to Peter. Christ did not change. It was Peter who changed. It was Peter who did not trust in the Lord, who knows the beginning from the end. In fact, the one event which Peter did not like (namely, the death of Christ) proved to be that which was most profitable to Peter's well being and eternal salvation.

3. The point here is that it is our daily calling to trust Christ regardless of how we perceive we will be benefited or blessed. Let us not second-guess the Lord who knows all. It is our part as Christ's disciples to

trust Him and obey Him, even when we cannot see how all things will work out. This is implicit faith in Christ. We must never have such an implicit faith in any man, but we must have such an implicit faith and even “blind” obedience in Christ, even when we do not know where obedience to Christ will lead us. We should not first figure out where our obedience to Christ will lead us, and then decide whether we will obey Him or not. Rather we should let obedience to Christ lead us wherever Christ will have it to lead us.

D. From our text today, it is clear that each of these events were events of preparation for the greatest demonstration of love in all of history. The conspiracy of Judas to betray Christ (though most heinous and wicked) was an ordained event of preparation in God’s great plan, as was the duty of Peter and John to follow a servant to a room where the Lord would signify and seal the promises of His suffering and death through the Passover and the Lord’s Supper. These were times of preparation in leading up to the death and resurrection of Christ.

Dear ones, we often grow impatient in passing through times of preparation and waiting in our lives. We forget that God is doing a work in our lives during those days, weeks, months, and years of waiting and waiting and waiting. However, all of that waiting is training us to look to Christ for His grace, to be diligent and faithful in the little things as well as in the big things that God brings into our lives. And in preparing to reap all of the benefits of our salvation, God calls us to suffer for Christ and with Christ. Waiting upon Christ and waiting upon Christ and waiting upon Christ is part of our suffering for and with Christ. That is why, dear ones, we must grow in the graces of endurance, patience, and perseverance as we view each day of our lives as a day that is intended to

prepare us to enjoy the glories that Christ is preparing for us (on earth, but especially in heaven).

In closing, dear ones, hear the words of that young but faithful Covenanter Minister, James Renwick, who though tempted to betray the Cause of Christ stood firm when he was martyred for Christ's truth at the age of 26 years:

Tell them from me, not to weary, nor be discouraged in maintaining their testimony. Let them not quit or forego one of these despised truths. Let them keep their ground; and the Lord will provide them churches and ministers. And when He comes, He will make these despised truths glorious in the earth.

Amen. So let it be, Lord Jesus Christ.

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