

“Saved by Grace” John 18:13-27 Shane Hatfield 5/16/21

We are studying the book of John, so if you could open your Bibles up to John 18, we are going to begin reading there. You may have noticed that we normally sing three songs and then we go to the sermon and then we sing one song. This week, we thought we'd change it up a little bit and we are going to go two songs and then the sermon and then two more songs, and the idea is that gives us a little more time to respond to God's word in singing. So, hopefully moving that other song to the back will help you respond. Think about that and let me know, give us feedback.

So, we're going to study John 18 tonight. This series we've titled, "The Glorious Truth." We're looking at the glorious truth that God has revealed through Jesus, specifically His death and resurrection here at the end of John. Last week we looked at Jesus' arrest, and we learned that Jesus is the Great I Am, and the great Lamb, and He was handed over for us when He was arrested. This week, we're going to continue the story, and after Jesus was arrested, they took Him to His Jewish trial with the high priest Annas. And what John is going to do, is he is going to shift back and forth from Jesus' trial with the high priest, to Peter who is outside of the trial. I think you are going to see this fascinating juxtaposition between what is going on with Annas and Peter, and what's happening with Jesus. If you're a young listener, there are three things I want you to listen for: a president, a softball game and a bunny.

Let's hear from God's word. This is John 18:13-27.

<sup>13</sup> First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, <sup>16</sup> but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." <sup>18</sup> Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

<sup>19</sup> The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. <sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." <sup>22</sup> When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" <sup>24</sup> Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." <sup>26</sup> One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" <sup>27</sup> Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed."

John tells us that Jesus did many incredible miracles, but he recorded these that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing in Him, we may have life. So, let's listen to his words.

On the night of June 16, 1972, what happened? Trivia buffs? Someone broke into the democratic national headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C., and the ensuing trial was called the Watergate scandal, or the Watergate trial. That trial lasted over two years and ended with the resignation of President Nixon. Though Nixon never took the stand, his character and his policies and his politics and his power did as scores of his staff and trusted advisors and underlings testified in that trial. The trial became a national spectacle. People were watching it all the time. Businessmen would take televisions to their offices, back before they had smartphones and you could just stream everything. They would take televisions to their offices so they could watch the trial and bars would turn off the sports and turn on the trial so they could watch it. Every night, PBS would rerun the trial so that everybody could see it. It was so successful for PBS. They had over 82,000 letters sent in about the trial, and they raised 1.25 million dollars in contributions. It was the most successful show they had aired up to that point. The Ervin committee was the committee who researched the case. They spent over 1.5 million dollars on the case and received over 1 million letters while the case was being tried. Trials like Watergate, and others, capture our imaginations, and they change the shape of history.

No trial has changed the shape of history like the trial of Jesus Christ. So, this trial deserves more attention than any other trial in the history of the world, even Watergate. Over the next few weeks, we're going to study Jesus' trial. We're going to look at His Jewish trial tonight, and then we'll look at His Roman trial next week. I want us to see that even though Jesus is the one on trial, what's actually on trial is two things: religion and irreligion. What I hope you see is that Christianity is different than both of those things. Christianity is actually a third way to live, because what Jesus reveals here is the glorious truth that religion will not save you, and irreligion will not save you, but Jesus Christ will. The gospel is the good news that the church is a family of people who are sinners saved by grace. The gospel is the good news that the church is a family of sinners who are saved by God's grace. So, we're going to look at that this evening, and we're going to see three things. We're going to see the failure of Annas, the failure of Peter, and the faithfulness of Jesus.

So, the first thing I want you to see in this passage is the failure of Annas. Now, you've got to remember that Annas was the official priest of the Jewish people. The priests were responsible for maintaining the temple. That was where they came to worship God, and the priests were a part of one tribe of the tribe of Israel, the tribe of Levi; they were Levites. They were responsible for performing the sacrificial system and that system was set up so that the people could worship God, and they could be with Him, right? That's how it was all set up underneath the Old Testament and then the old covenant. So, being a priest was a super important job in Israel, and Annas was the high priest. That means he was the highest of all the priests, and the high priest had a special job and that was once a year on the day of atonement, the high priest would perform special sacrifices to symbolize the payment of sin for all of God's people. He had to go through an elaborate process that would cleanse him and symbolize his forgiveness, and then he would go into the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the temple, and

he would sacrifice and come into God's presence to symbolize us coming and being near to God. So, he was arguably the most important man in Israel at this time.

When they brought Jesus to him, he had a very important job. His job was to analyze Jesus to see if he was the Messiah. The high priest would always have to analyze the sacrifices to make sure that they were without blemish. The sacrifice had to be perfect. So, when Jesus comes in, He is coming in so Annas can inspect Him to see if He really truly is the Messiah, the Savior, the Lamb. What's interesting about it is the Jews had an incredibly elaborate process for trials that they had to follow, very strict guidelines to make sure that you had a fair trial. There had to be a notice of charges. There had to be multiple witnesses. The trial had to take place during the day, it couldn't take place at night. If a guilty conviction was given, then they actually could not render a verdict that evening, they had to go sleep on it. They all had to go home, think about it overnight, and then come back the next day and deliberate again. They did absolutely none of that in Jesus' trial. They broke every single rule possible in the Jewish code of law for trials. He didn't do any of it, and in the end, he failed. He failed in his job as a high priest. He failed in his job as a judge. When Jesus comes in, Annas is face to face with God in the flesh and Annas doesn't see it!

To make that even more incredible, the entire Jewish religion in the Old Testament was all set up to point to Jesus. Every sacrifice, every celebration, every miracle, the deliverance from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the conquest of the promised land, the development of the kingly system, the tabernacle, and the temple, everything was supposed to point to Jesus! Here Jesus is, the fulfillment of all those things; Annas misses it! He didn't see it. They missed Jesus and he represents all of Israel missing Jesus. They failed to see that He was the Savior.

What does that mean for us? I think it's a warning to us. It means that we can be religious, we can have good theology, we can have good worship practices, we can come from a good, moral family, and yet, we can miss Jesus and be as far from God as someone who never steps foot in a church. You can be religious and miss Jesus, and not be Christian. I once heard a pastor say that one of his favorite questions to ask new members when they come to his church and they want to join is "Are you a Christian?" He says he can tell a lot by their response. He says, when he asks that simple question, "Are you a Christian?" sometimes what he'll get is a scoff and "Yeah!" Kind of like, "Why are you asking me if I'm a Christian? Of course I'm a Christian!" And he'll say, "Well, okay, why are you a Christian?" And they'll say, "Well, I grew up in a Christian family, and I grew up going to church all my life and I was baptized in the church and I made a profession of faith and I went to VBS and then I really tried to live a good life and do all of the right things and follow the Bible and..." And what are they doing? They're laying out their resume for why they're a Christian! And they don't say anything about Jesus. That sense of offense that anyone would even ask if they're a Christian, sort of has underneath it this assumption, 'Of course! I've done all these religious things, so of course that makes means I'm a Christian!' You can do all those things and miss Jesus.

Everything we do in this service is what we call a means of grace: the prayers, the songs, the scripture reading, the sacraments. They're all a means of grace! They're all meant to point to Jesus. But, if they don't point you to Jesus, then you miss the point of all of it and all you end up

doing is trying to build your own righteousness, and you actually end up farther from Jesus than when you originally came.

So, the failure of Annas just shows us the failure of trying to save ourselves through our own religion, through religious traditions, right? And so, what some of us, what we do with that is, we swing to the opposite direction and we go, I'm going to throw out all tradition, I'm going to throw out all ritual. I'm a Christian but I'm going to be sold out for God. It's all about me and my passion and my faith. Be careful! Because that's exactly what Peter did, as well.

So, we look at the failure of Peter. Let me remind you of who Peter is! Peter is one of the original disciples that lived with Jesus for three years. He spent all of his time with Jesus. He saw Jesus feed the 5,000. He saw the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. He correctly guessed that Jesus was the Messiah. He was the leader among the disciples, and he was Jesus' beloved friend. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, what did Peter do? He said, 'You're not taking my buddy,' and pulled out his sword and cut off somebody's ear. Peter was sold out for Jesus! He was so sold out that whenever Jesus was arrested and everybody else fled, Peter said, 'Not me, I'm going to follow Him.' He followed him all the way to His trial, found a way to sneak into the trial. John may have been there. This disciple, that's not named here, that knew the people, is probably John, but we don't know. We do know that Peter was there. Peter was committed to Jesus.

What happened when he got into the courtyard? A servant girl, one of the lowest people on the social ladder, comes up and says, 'Hey, aren't you one of His disciples?' And Peter says, 'No, no, I'm not with Him.' Now, maybe Peter was being shrewd. Maybe Peter was thinking, 'Hey, I'm going to tell a little lie here, and this lie will get me in and then I can get in and I can see the trial and I can get close to Jesus.' But we all know something about lies, don't we? One lie turns into another lie, that turns into another lie, and that's what happens to Peter. He comes in and he thinks, 'Oh, I'm just going to go by the fire,' and the trial's probably going on over there, and Peter is with religious people. These are religious people that arrested Jesus and put Him on trial, and he's over there warming himself by the fire, and he probably thought, 'I'm just going to get warm. I'm going to be with these people.' And then they ask him again, 'Hey aren't you with Him? Aren't you one of His guys?' What does Peter say? 'No, I'm not with Him.' What was he scared of? Was he scared of being persecuted? Was he scared of being arrested? Maybe he thought, 'Man, if I say yes, they're going to put me on trial like Jesus, or they're just going to kill me right away.' So, he says, 'I'm not with Him.' And then, somebody sees him and says, 'Hey! I saw you. I know you. You cut off my cousin's ear in the garden, didn't you?' And Peter says, 'No. Not me.' And then, the rooster crows. The most sold-out man for Jesus that ever lived, arguably, at least up until this time, the closest to Jesus, the most zealous for Jesus, denied Him three times. Do you think you would have done any better? I wouldn't have.

Peter failed. He shows the failure of the new covenant people, and the disciples to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah and to follow Him faithfully. All of his passion, all of his knowledge, all of his faith, were no match for a servant girl and a few questions. Why? Maybe he was afraid of losing approval. Maybe he was afraid of being arrested. Maybe he just wanted to be comfortable. I don't know! But rather than standing with Jesus, he stood with those who opposed Jesus. We have to ask ourselves a question. Do we deny Jesus like Peter did? Do we

choose acceptance and approval over rejection? Do we choose to unite ourselves with religious people because they look good, rather than aligning with the poor and the marginalized and the broken and the persecuted, like Jesus did? Do we choose to try to justify ourselves, to save ourselves, out there, the way the world does, rather than trying to save ourselves through Jesus? Guilty.

I was reminded of that this week. When Shari and I first got married, I was a baseball coach at the time, and she came to one of my baseball games. It was a summer league game, there was bang bang play at the plate, the umpire called my guy out, I ran out of the dugout and I started arguing with him and I started yelling at him and I just made him look like an idiot, and I proved that I was right. I proved it so well he apologized to me at the plate. He said, 'I'm sorry, it was just a hard play.' I said, 'You get paid to make hard calls.' I came home that night, and Shari said, 'You know, you were pretty hard on that umpire.' I said, 'Yeah, he deserved it.' She said, 'You know, umpires are people too.' I said, 'You're right.' So, I called him, and I apologized, and I said, 'I want to do better.'

This week, Emmarie had a softball game. Somebody hits a pop-up, there was a coach pitcher and then a player pitcher. They hit the pop-up, it's right in front of the mound, the pitcher goes to get the ball, but she can't get the ball because the coach is in the way, so she hesitates and the ball hits the ground and the girl is safe at first base. And I, like Peter, can't keep my mouth shut and I start yelling, 'Interference! Interference! Obstruction! He's got to get out of the way!' And the umpire takes off his mask, looks at the dug-out, says, 'Are you going to let me call the game?' I said, 'Yeah, I'm sorry.' And I heard the rooster crow. I can't do it on my own. Willpower, knowledge, desire, it will not keep me from trying to save myself through sports. It will not keep you from trying to save yourself through your performance at work, or at home, or on the ball field, or in the classroom or anywhere else. The failure of Peter is the failure we all have to save ourselves. The failure of Annas and the failure of Peter shows us that our religious teaching can't save us, our religious passion can't save us, there is nothing that can save us aside from the person and work of Jesus Christ. We cannot build our own righteousness. We have to have the faithfulness of Jesus, and John masterfully shows us that, right?

As you see the failure of Annas and you see the failure of Peter, you see the faithfulness of Jesus. While Annas was busy failing as a high priest, Jesus was busy being the faithful high priest. All of the other priests came into the temple with a spotless ram or a lamb or something to sacrifice. Jesus brought Himself. He was the priest, and He was the sacrifice. When the high priest would go into the temple, he always wore twelve stones on his garments. Those twelve stones represented the people of Israel and how the high priest was taking them into the presence of God. When Jesus was praying in the upper room, that we studied before, He was praying to God and He had us in His heart. He was taking us before the Lord, praying for us. As He's going through this trial, He is taking us before the Lord. He is taking our sin on Him to pay for our sins. He came to offer Himself for us. He was tempted in every way like us. He was tempted to trust His own righteousness. He was tempted to tell little lies. He was tempted to exchange comfort for persecution. He was tempted to deny God for the approval of man, yet He never did it. He was without sin. While Peter was busy lying about knowing Jesus, what was Jesus doing? He was telling the truth. He was being honest. He was giving an honest testimony. He said, 'I've been teaching in the synagogue the entire time that I am the Messiah. I am the son of God. I am

the Savior that has come to save you.' And they arrested Him and convicted Him and put Him on a cross and killed Him. He could have lied to save Himself, but He didn't. He used His passion, His zeal, His knowledge, everything He had, to save us. He used them all to save failures like us and bring us into God's family. When you see that grace, it changes you. Jesus didn't just come to make bad people, good. He didn't just come to make ignorant people intelligent. He didn't just come to make losers, winners. He didn't just come to make sick people healthy. Jesus came to raise people from the dead, spiritually and to bring them into His family.

I heard a story once about an outstanding elder who was working with an alcoholic and he was trying to get this alcoholic to go to AA so he could get into recovery, and he wouldn't do it. Finally, the elder said 'I will go with you, I will go to Alcoholics Anonymous with you.' Keep in mind, this elder had never taken a drop of alcohol before in his life. So, the guy says, 'Yes,' and they go to Alcoholics Anonymous and they're sitting in the circle and they're going around the circle and when you go to Alcoholics Anonymous everybody introduces themselves and says, 'Hi, my name is so and so. I'm an alcoholic.' And as they go around the circle, it gets to the elder, and what is the elder going to say? He has never taken a drop of alcohol in his life. He looks up and says, 'Hi, my name is so and so. I am a sinner saved by grace.' That's us. That's everybody in this church. This is everybody in the family of God. We are sinners saved by God's amazing grace. It's not our tradition. It's not our family. It's not our passion. It's not anything else. John tells us that all who believe in Him are born of God.

So, how do we keep from missing it each week like Annas? Well, the call to worship tells us, this is what David tells us, that God does not delight in sacrifices or we would give it, He's not pleased with burnt offerings, he says the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, and a contrite heart. God doesn't despise those. So, every week we come in here and we admit that we're sinners saved by grace. We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit. What do we do when we deny Jesus like Peter? We remember what Jesus told Peter. He told Peter, "Satan has asked that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you." Jesus is praying for us. He was praying for us in John 17. He was praying for us on the cross. He is praying for us in heaven right now. He is praying for you! He is praying that your faith won't fail. Even when Peter hung his head and cried and ran away, Jesus was praying for Him. He was looking for him and Peter came back. You can run from God, you can try to hide from Him, but He's going to run after you. Just like the story of the runaway bunny.

Okay, do you all remember the story of the runaway bunny? There once was a little bunny who told his mom, 'I'm going to run away,' and his mom said, 'Okay, I'm going to run after you! You're my little bunny!' And so, the little baby bunny said, 'If you run after me, I'm going to become a fish in a trout stream and I'm going to swim far, far away from you,' and the mom said, 'Okay, if you become a fish, I'll become a fisherman and I'll catch you.' The bunny said, 'Well, if you become a fisherman, I'm going to become a rock on a mountain high above you,' and the mom said, 'Well, if you become a rock, I'll become a rock climber. I'll climb where you are, and I'll come get you.' And the bunny said, 'Well, if you become a rock climber, I'm going to become a flower and I'm going to hide in the garden,' and the mom said, 'Well, if you do that, I'm just going to become a gardener, and I'm going to come find you.' And the bunny said, 'Well, if you become a gardener, then I'm going to become a bird and I'm going to fly far, far away and you'll never find me,' and the mom said, 'Well then I'm going to become a

tree, and when you come home you're going to land in me.' Finally, the bunny said, 'Well, then I'll become a sailboat and I'll sail away from you,' and the mom said, 'Well then, I'll become the wind and I'm going to blow you where I want you to go.' Then the little bunny said, 'Well, shucks, then I might as well stay here and be your little bunny.' So, he did. And the mom said, 'I'll give you a carrot.'

No matter what you do, no matter where you go, Jesus is going to come find you. He's going to bring you home. Let's pray together.