

Offended Because Of Jesus

It is not certain what hymn Jesus and His disciples sang together though it was usual for the Jews at the passover feast to sing sections from Psalms 113-118 called the Hallel. It would be very appropriate and applicable if some of these passages should now be sung by the Lord as He looked forward to Gethsemane and anticipated the events of the coming night and day.

Praise and prophecy

For example, may we not with benefit hear upon the lips of our Substitute and Surety such words as, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow' (116:3)? Or view Him, whose death for the redemption of His people is of the highest value, being spiritually comforted in His own soul while singing, 'Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds' (116:15, 16)? I do not see why not.

Crossing Kidron brook

Then out into the night goes the Lord towards the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. He is followed by His disciples – Judas apart, who makes his way to the chief priest to arrange Jesus' arrest. John tells us the group cross Cedron Valley and the Kidron brook, a channel between the hills into which the sewage and filth of Jerusalem now flowed, and into which the blood and dirt from the animals slain in the temple was deposited. Even the Lord's route to Gethsemane this night is full of spiritual application.

The Shepherd slain, the sheep scattered

As the little group makes the two mile journey the Lord has more to say. He tells them He is about to be betrayed and killed and they would all be filled with such fear and dread that every one of them will forsake him and flee. The word 'offended' suggests they would be so stumbled at this event they would begin to waver in faith, doubting whether he was the Messiah, or not. The Lord applies a passage from Zechariah 7:13 to support His assertion.

Bold protestations

The response of the disciples is uniformly defiant and Peter, often the spokesman, insists he will never be so offended, even if all other men are. He would go to prison, he would lay down his life for the Lord rather than deny Him. His pride having been pricked at the Lord's suggestion he seems to have heard little else the Saviour told him, but continues to protest that the Lord must be wrong, as did they all.

Are you listening?

Mark tells us the Lord promises to meet his disciples in Galilee after He is risen. Luke says Jesus told Peter, 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat' and continued, 'But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not'. The Lord also tells Peter he would have a particular responsibility for strengthening the other disciples in the coming days. Peter, however, is more concerned with asserting his loyalty and these other statements seem to pass him by.

A humbling lesson

Do not miss how even in our Saviour's most trying moments He was thinking of His disciples; preparing and supporting His friends. How He cared for these men! Peter's lesson was that he did not, and could not, stand in his own strength no matter what he resolved, asserted and intended to do. 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' The prediction made by the Lord concerning the cock's crow and Peter's denials was so specific Peter would be obliged to acknowledge the Lord's truth.

All we receive

It is a lesson we all need to learn. Men and women talk confidently of their plans, and casually about their faith, as did Peter and the other disciples. However, we need to know and remember we have nothing of a spiritual kind that is not first given and thereafter sustained by the grace of God in Christ, and except the Lord pray for us, we too, being sifted as wheat will lose our faith.

Sifting of believers

This sifting goes on still, by which Satan shakes the Lord's people by sowing uncertainty about our salvation, instilling doubt about Jesus being the Christ our Redeemer, and by frightening us with the spectre of enemies and death. Lord allows us to be humbled thereby, showing us our weakness in the face of trial. Yet even hard times have a purpose. Trials, as Peter would learn, make us more dependent upon our Lord and equip us to strengthen our brethren.

Amen

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