



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“Sovereign Grace in the State of Humiliation,” Matthew 26:47-56

TRANSCRIPT

Now will you turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 26, and will you listen as I read beginning at verse 47 for our Scripture reading, and in the midst of it I want to turn and read a few verses from the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John. Matthew chapter 26 verse 47. Now this is, remember the context of the completion of our Lord’s agony in Gethsemane and now the evangelist and the apostle continues in the 47<sup>th</sup> verse by writing,

“And while he yet spoke, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs (or staves), from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. (That means simply arrest him.) And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, why art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.”

Now I would like at this point if you will to turn with me to the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John, because a conversation ensued at that point that John records for us, and since the message will

revolve around certain features in it, we should read it for our Scripture reading, and so in John chapter 18 and verse 4 we read these words,

“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him,  
went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him,  
Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am.”

Now that probably means, I am he, in this context, and in my edition of the New Testament I do read I am he, but I want you to notice that lying back of it is the simple expression, I am, because that is an affirmation of the essential deity of the Lord Jesus, and an expression of his self-existence and the evidence of that follows in the impact that this makes on those who are there. Now we continue in verse 5,

“And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then  
as he had said unto them I am (or I am he) they went backward and  
fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And  
they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am  
he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying  
might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Of them whom Thou gavest me  
have I lost none.”

The 10<sup>th</sup> verse is important too I will read that also,

“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the High Priest’s  
servant, and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)”

Now let’s turn back to Matthew chapter 26 and we continue with verse 51. In Matthew 26:51 we read,

“And, behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the High Priest's, and smote off his ear.”

One of the striking things about this is the fact that this man was a servant, and his name was Malchus, which is related to the Hebrew word for king, which is *melek*, so his name was something like “king” but nevertheless he was a servant of the High Priest.

Now when you read the Old Testament, you notice a number of interesting things that pertain to Israel’s civil law, and of course, if you’re reading the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, you know that those Old Testament institutions were designed to be foreshadowings of the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One of the most striking, and I think one of the most interesting things about the law of Moses was its law concerning the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee occurred every fifty years.

Now we know from reading the Old Testament that every seventh year was a sabbatical year and the children of Israel did not till their ground. In the sixth year they had a promise from the Lord that they would receive enough from the land to do them for the sixth year, and the seventh year when they did no sowing but rested, and the eighth year when they would have been sowing. So they would have enough for three years in the sixth year if they obeyed and did not till the ground.

Now when the fiftieth year came around when then seven sabbaths came around forty-nine years, the fiftieth year, was a year of jubilee and the distinctive thing about this was that on Tishri, which was the month of the Day of Atonement, a trumpet was blown on the Day of Atonement and the liberty, or liberty was proclaimed throughout all the land to the inhabitants of the land.

Now in Israel, nobody owned land. God owned the land. There were no deeds to the property it belonged to him. It was parceled out when Israel went into the land and every family had its particular piece of property. Now it might be that due to difficulties, due to financial setbacks and various other types of thing that a person would lose the use of his property, so the result would be that his property might be mortgaged. But when the fiftieth year came around it reverted to its original owner according to inheritance. In the land of Israel land was inherited and only inherited. There was no buying and selling of property. Ideally it belonged to God.

So on the year of jubilee all of the slaves went free. All of the property reverted to its original owners and various other things took place in that year. It was a year of liberty; it was a year of freedom. Now the reason for this evidently was that God desired to prevent the accumulation of property in the hands of few, of the few, and the prophets inveigh against this considerably. If you remember what they say about this and also to ensure the existence of independent free holders throughout the history of Israel.

Well, what happened in later years in the land? Well the custom lapsed with the destruction of the temple and according to modern Jewish law – relatively modern, I mean; modern from the standpoint of the Mosaic law. That only applies, the law of the jubilee only applies, when every Jew is living in Israel and every tribe is in its own territory. It is in this way that those who are supposed to obey the law of Moses have erected traditions by which they are disobedient to those traditions. Now the law of jubilee has significance with reference to some of the things that I want to say this morning in the message, and so that’s why I’ve engaged in this rather lengthy exposition of features of it, because Malchus was a slave and that’s important, and the fact that his name was something like “king,” makes it even more significant.

Well let me finish the Scripture reading with verse 52 through verse 56. Then said Jesus unto him,

“Put up again thy sword into place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and clubs to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”

May God bless this reading of his word.

Peter’s unforgettable words in Acts chapter 2 when he says that the Lord Jesus was delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that the Israelites and others had with wicked hands taken and crucified him, make it very plain that the Lord Jesus died at the hands of God and at the hands of men.

The struggles in our Lord’s life were struggles that were struggles with the will of God and struggles with wicked men. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus had struggled with the will of God and had emerged triumphant. He had prepared the apostles for the future in the upper room discourse, and now he must face the ultimate struggle with men. So he contends with God, and he is triumphant. He is now beginning his final struggles with men, and that struggle he will apparently lose, for he will be crucified upon a cross at Calvary.

Now we who are believers know that that struggle was not lost but rather won, and the evidence will be the resurrection of the body from the grave. But we notice as we read these chapters in the gospels that the power of darkness is rapidly encompassing him as Satan continues his fierce attack upon the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as a man. In fact, he calls this, your hour and the power of darkness.

As the events unfold the prophesies of the Old Testament find their true focus in the things that happen in the life of our Lord, but there is one unique test to which our Lord is exposed now that will reveal again what is truly in him.

You may remember that back in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and in the 28<sup>th</sup> verse he had made a certain prophesy himself. He had said that in the future those who followed him will in the kingdom age, which he called the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now will you notice that word, twelve? He said that the apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But now it is becoming evident – and our Lord knows that is transpiring – that Judas is going to prove that he is not truly an apostle in heart. You could call Judas apostle of Jesus Christ, but nevertheless it will become evident that he was an apostle in name only.

Well then how is the ancient prophecy, and how is this specific prophesy of our Lord to be fulfilled that the twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? One of the commentators in a chapter on this point has entitled his chapter “The Harmony Profaned.” The perfect round, that is the number twelve, the perfect round is broken. For we shall not only we shall not have twelve apostles, but we shall have eleven apostles. How is it possible, then, for twelve apostles to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel if one of these apostles is to apostatize from the faith and ultimately be cast away? You can see that even our Lord must believe in resurrection, and he must also believe that God somehow will bring that prophecy to its ultimate fruition in success even though one of the twelve defects.

Now we know how this was ultimately solved because after the crucifixion of our Lord, the apostles met and by the direction God cast lots, and Matthias was chosen to join the twelve, the eleven, so that the twelve apostles truly did become twelve apostles and twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

I must confess that when I think of our Lord as a human being – mind you, it is human nature as a divine person – he knows the end from the beginning. Do I have to keep saying that? In his human nature he had to struggle, just as we struggle with the will of God, with this difference: that he had no flesh within him that was evil, no sinful principle within him. His struggles were with the will of God, and the difference also is that when he came to know the will of God, he always perfectly obeyed that will. When we know the will of God, then sometimes our troubles just there begin.

I am reminded I say of a passage in the Old Testament in which God spoke to Abraham and said Abraham I want you to take Isaac your only son and I want you to take him over to the land of Moriah and there I want you to offer him up as a sacrifice. Now that was a startling thing to Abraham, because he had been told by God that he was to have a seed, and through this seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, and finally after a lengthy period of time. God in a supernatural way brought Isaac into being, and now God is asking Abraham to take the promised supernatural son, Isaac, born by the promise of God, and offer him up on an altar – the one through whom the promises would come to pass. It was a test again of the faith of Abraham, and a test of his faith in resurrection as the Apostle Paul explains in detail in Romans chapter 4.

And so he went to the land of Moriah, and he climbed the mountain with his son Isaac, and he put him upon an altar and was just ready to put him to death, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead – from which also the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “He received him again in a figure.” God stopped him with his upraised arm and there was ram caught in the thicket, and the ram was offered in the place of Isaac and Abraham’s faith in a God who brings life out of death was confirmed. Our Lord Jesus must follow in the same path.

Now this account is remarkable, not only because of the betrayal and arrest and Judas’s part in it, but it’s also remarkable in that it presents us with a sublime picture of a sovereign Savior, who even in humiliation displays his majesty when he utters those great words: I am he. Bowling over the men who were in his presence as if they were ten pins, and at the same time in his last miracle

accomplished while he was in the days of his flesh, healing Malchus, the man whose name was king, a servant of the great High Priest but still a slave. The House of David is not without its ancient power even as our Lord faces ultimate crucifixion.

Gethsemane has just finished and the Lord Jesus with the apostles has left the garden, and while he was still speaking to them, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now we have noticed, and I have made mesh mention of this at least once before, that the Precian account of our Lord finds two men extremely prominent. They are Judas and Peter. Peter, the leader of the Twelve, but yet an equal of them, and Judas one of the Twelve who is to betray our Lord.

I made reference to our Lord Jesus that Peter would be sifted. Now Peter is sifted and he is found to be part wheat and part chaff. He will deny the Lord, but at the same time, after his denial, he weeps bitterly, for regardless of what we say about Peter’s failures, he really did have trust in the Son of God. His failure was the failure of a true Son of God, not the failure of one who was not a member of the family.

Now Judas was sifted and found to be all chaff, for while he was an apostle of Jesus Christ by profession, when the tests revealed true character, Judas is a man who had no trust in our Lord, and for thirty pieces of silver – for a suit of clothes – he sold the Lord Jesus Christ. And ultimately, because of that which was going on in his own heart and mind, anticipations of the fire, of the lake of fire, he took his own life, hanging himself and evidently accounted that the loss of fellowship with the Son of God made all life absolutely worthless. The Lord Jesus is tested or sifted during this period of time and he is found to be all wheat.

Now isn’t it striking that in the 47<sup>th</sup> verse here we read, “And while he yet spoke, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve. Now what is striking about that is that in each of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the expression “one of the Twelve” is found, and so it is evident that the authors of the synoptic gospels think that it is important to make the identification between Judas and his place

in that group of people who had spent those years with the Lord Jesus. So the expression, one of the Twelve, emphasizes the horror of the deed – oh the horror of it we might say – oh the shame of it, that one of the Twelve is the betrayer of the Lord Jesus. But then that, too, fulfills prophecy, because in the Old Testament it is said, “Mine own familiar friend with whom I have had food has lifted up his heel against me.”

Now when Judas comes he had already made provision for the recognition of the Lord Jesus, and I would imagine that the reason for this is that the soldiers and the servants of the chief priests and scribes did not really know our Lord, and since this was a feast time and there were countless thousands of people in the city of Jerusalem, and since Judas already know something of the power of our Lord Jesus to escape, they agreed that as they approached the Lord Jesus, Judas would be the one to identify him, and he would identify him with a kiss.

Now the kiss was nothing unusual in itself, because students greeted their rabbis with the kind of kiss on the cheek that Judas used with our Lord. The striking thing about this, however, is that this was not simply that kind of kiss. He said, now I’m going to give you a sign by which you will know the Lord Jesus. Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he hold him fast, but Matthew says, “And forthwith he came to Jesus and said Hail master, and kissed him.”

Now in the original text, the first word used for kiss is the simple word, to kiss, *phileo*. It is a word that expresses an ordinary kind of greeting. But the next word is an intensive word, and occasionally it means, “to kiss repeatedly,” but probably on this occasion and also in some others in the gospels, it means to kiss fervently. So evidently Judas, when he came to the Lord Jesus did not give him a simple kiss, but a rather fervent kind of kiss. One of the commentators said, “It was a heartless overdoing of that.”

What is so interesting about it to me is the irony of it. In the Old Testament we are told in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, “Kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” What a beautiful expression that is. Kiss the Son. One of the old Bible expositors who used to preach the word over the South quite a bit and

was extremely effective in the preaching of the word used to say, “That’s the Old Testament way of saying, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou shalt be saved.” Kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way.

Now when we turn to the New Testament and begin to read it, we discover that in the New Testament there is no person who kisses our Lord Jesus on the face except Judas. It’s a remarkable, ironic fact, but nevertheless it is true.

Now the woman who was a sinner did kiss his feet, but Judas is the only person who kisses our Lord on the face. What an ironic thing in the light of that great text of Scripture. Kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish in the way. Judas is the one who kisses him, and it is the ultimate expression and fulfillment of Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

The Lord Jesus when Judas came to him and kissed him said, “Judas betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” Well you notice the expression that he uses of himself, it is Son of man. Not Judas, betrayest thou me, not Judas betrayest thou thy teacher, or betrayest thou thy friend, but Judas betrayest thou the Son of man. It was not only the lowest depth of insincerity for Judas to come to the Lord Jesus and to kiss his cheek fervently, but it actually was a profaning of the Messianic office. Son of man identifies him as the King, so his statement is a statement that Judas has not only betrayed his friendship – that’s unimportant in the light of the real heinous character of his deed. It is a profanation of the office of the Messiah by which Judas and all of the rest of Israel might enter into relationship with God that would mean eternal life with them. Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Strange irony.

Now having said that, we read that the Lord Jesus also said to Judas, “Friend why art thou come?” That I think is designed to stress the meanness of Judas’s deed and warn him of the consequences. You know we have stressed as we have gone through the Gospel of Matthew that the God of the Bible is a sovereign God. That is, that he accomplishes the things that he accomplishes according to the Old Testament Scriptures. We’ve stressed the fact that the Old Testament

Scriptures are fulfilled in all of their details, because this God being a sovereign God is able to arrange the circumstances of life so that they are fulfilled.

In fact, we laid stress on a text in verse 24 which says, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” We’ve stressed the sovereignty of God, and we have stressed the other side of that doctrine the responsibility of men. We should never forget that God is totally sovereign and man is totally responsible.

Now you can see something of that here. He knew and he has already said that he is to go in this way. All of the things that are happening to him are happening in accordance with the Scriptures. All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. He will say in just a moment, he will say, “How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be if this should not take place?” But at the same time he is free by his doctrine of the responsibility of men to say to Judas, Judas, why have you come? So we should never forget when we proclaim a sovereign God that we also have men who are responsible before this sovereign God, and we cannot ever stand before the throne of God, ultimately and say, O God you cannot punish me because you are sovereign, and we only did what the Scriptures said that we would do. We are responsible for our sin and for our unbelief, and we shall be condemned rightfully and justly if we refuse the message of the New Testament.

Now there is an interesting conversation that takes place, and I want you if you have your New Testaments to turn with me to the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John again, because we want to notice the words that were said by our Lord and by those who had come to take him. It is a passage that glows with the sovereign glory of the Son of God, and I think it’s very important that we notice it. We read in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse of John chapter 18,

“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him,  
went forth,”

Incidentally, you’ll notice that he went out to seek them, even when he knew they were coming for him, he took the initiative all through this account. We notice that the initiative in the things that are transpiring is always with God and evidence of his desire to bless us in grace, he went forth and said unto them,

“Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am. Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them.”

Isn’t that a striking commentary on the apostasy of the twelfth apostle? He stood with the enemies of our Lord Jesus. The ancient commentators said that the reason that Judas is said to have stood with them is because when the Lord Jesus said, I am, expressing the term that referred to the self-existence of Israel’s God, that he was paralyzed and unable to move due to that expression. Well the Bible doesn’t really say that, and that probably is only a traditional interpretation. It may be that John, who loves this kind of thing, just wants to stress the fact that Judas has made his wicked decision and stands with them because he is on the side of the unbeliever.

Now when the Lord Jesus said, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground. There was a time when the moral ascendancy of the Lord Jesus shone forth in the earlier stages of his ministry. When he was in the temple, you’ll remember that he took a scourge of small cords, and he drove out the money changers out of the temple, and I think I commented on the fact in one of the other messages that this would have taken superhuman strength to drive those traders out of the temple who made all of their money by the trade that they were carrying on in that particular place. And the fact that one man could do it with a scourge of small cords, is evidence of the fact that there must have been glowing from his countenance something of the glory of the triune God.

Well we surely see that here, because when he said, I am, he said something that was so powerful that they went back and fell to the ground at the very words. What was it back of these words that caused them to do that? Well if you will trace through the meaning of the expression, *egoame*, or I am, inevitably you will come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Book of Exodus, and there you will read that Moses asks God, who is the one who is sending me to deliver Israel? What’s his name? You tell me your name, and I will be able to tell the children of Israel who are in bondage, and they will follow me if you tell me your name.

You’ll remember that God said, Moses I don’t have any name by which I may be defined. As a matter of fact, I have no, there is no way in which you may give anyone an absolute definition of God. Incidentally, this is very true even today, even though we have in the Shorter Catechism the excellent definition of God. It’s only an excellent definition that’s inadequate. There is no possible way for us to have an absolute definition of God, because you cannot define God by human terms. To define God by human terms is to limit him, and he is the unlimited one. That’s why you never find in the Bible any definition of God. No absolute definition of God is possible. He is beyond all of our definings. We are finite beings. We are creatures. We are men and women. But he is God, and the difference between us is infinite.

Now it is possible to give a relational definition, and in a moment Moses is given a relational definition. He is told, you tell them that I’m the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. That relates him to those promises, those ancient Messianic promises, but that does not define him. He’s the God who gave those promises. But that’s no absolute definition. That’s only a relative definition of him. That’s all that’s possible. Our God is so great that we cannot possibly define him.

So when he said, I am he, it was if God or as if the Lord Jesus drew the curtains open just a little bit, and they were given a picture of the glory of God in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ – the glory of the triune God. The one of whom in the Old Testament it is said, there is no man who shall see my face and live, but there was just a little bit of the drawing of the curtain open so that they

caught some sense of the majesty of the eternal God, and with that they went backward and fell to the ground. An overwhelming impression of his majesty gripped them.

An old poem my old Bible teacher has said, has recently reappeared. Like a hardy perennial, it comes up again and again, and the undiscerning will find it good, since they read it through sentiment and not through the word of God. Richard Watson Gilder wrote these words: “If Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, I say that of all mankind I cleave to him, and to him I will cleave always. If Jesus Christ is a God, and the only God, I swear I will follow him through heaven and hell, the earth, the sea and the air.”

Now when you read the Bible that all may sound good to sentiment, but if you read the Bible you’d have to change the first stanza. Because you see if you say if Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, you cannot follow him at all. What that should read is, if Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, I say that of all mankind, he is a liar for leading so many astray. For you see, he claimed to be God, and for us to say, he is only a man, is to point out that he is a liar.

In the final analysis, it is so clear that our Lord claimed to be God, that it is impossible for us to have any position concerning him but these. He is either what he said that he was—God—or else he is not what he said that he was. And if he is not what he said that he was, then he either purposefully or purposely deceived us, or he was deceived himself. And so it is true that if he was only a man, then he was a liar, either by intent or by accident. But we could not follow someone who’s a liar.

Now we who are Christians and who know him and who know the salvation and liberty that he has given, we know that he is what he said that he was, and those men in the garden who went back and fell backward to the ground, while they did not understand exactly what had happened to them, they knew that something had happened.

Now the Lord Jesus at this point steps forward, and according to the 8<sup>th</sup> verse of John chapter 18 said, “I have told you that I am he; if therefore you seek me let these go their way.” A kind of acted parable of John chapter 10 verse 11. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd

giveth his life for the sheep. Come take me, but let them go. And that of course is the way we go free. They did come and take him, and they put him to death, but as of by virtue of what they did to him, in making him the sin offering, we who have believed in him do go free.

Now then this little incident occurs with Malchus, and I think this is one of the most striking things in the gospel. It is very rarely ever expounded, because it’s a very simple miracle when Peter struck off Malchus’s right ear. The Lord Jesus, the Lukan account says he healed the man, and so does the Johanne account, I believe.

This man Malchus was the servant of the great High Priest Caiaphas, and he is a man who is a slave, and yet he comes, and by the irony of the New Testament, he takes captive the emancipator of slaves, the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s almost as if a slave should have taken captive President Abraham Lincoln in the War of Northern Aggression, [laughter] back in the 19 Century.

This morning when I finished I made reference in the message simply to the Civil War ,and someone afterwards came up and said, you’ve forgotten the name that you gave to the Civil War back in 1969, and I said, I certainly have; what was it? He said, well, I was listening to a tape this morning at 4 o’clock – that startled me. [Laughter] I told this to someone at the breakfast table, and they said that undoubtedly he thought that if there was anything that could put him to sleep at that hour, [laughter] it’d be would be one of those tapes. I had no reply to that, incidentally. But he reminded me that in 1969, I had called the Civil War, the War of Northern Aggression, so it slipped out again as a result of his words.

Well this incident is a most striking little incident. Peter – why he had the sword I do not know – but nevertheless he pulled out his sword, and I understand (I’ve never done any investigation of this) but I understand that ancient Roman helmets were welded in the center, so that as a man stood before you with a helmet on his head, the weakest spot was right in the center of the head, and so Peter evidently pulled out this sword and since he struck off the right ear of Malchus – it’s possible he was left handed, but that’s not spoken of in the Bible. We perhaps ought not to surmise that he was a southpaw [laughter] – but anyway he took out this sword, and evidently trying to strike

this man before him in the center of his head so that he just might divide him to two, being unhandy with the sword, he managed only to strike his right ear. And his right ear fell off onto the ground. The Bible doesn’t say that, but I presume it did.

And our Lord Jesus reached over picked up that ear and put it back on the head of that bleeding man and healed him. And he turned to Peter and he said, “Put up thy sword again into its place for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” This is not a verse for pacifism, but simply a verse that says that when you want to defend Christianity, you don’t defend it by the use of the sword. Richard the Lionhearted evidently never read this text in that way. So Peter is a typical illustration of a person who, when the time comes for him to confess the Lord Jesus, he doesn’t do what he should do, but now he does something that he should not do. Imagine a lamb like Peter trying to defend the lion of the tribe of Judah. It was ridiculous. But nevertheless it is like so many of the things that we do – foolish. The Lord Jesus said, “The cup which the Father hath given me to drink shall I not drink it?” This is an incident not an accident; suffering may be the will of God for me.

Incidentally this text it seems to me makes very plain that there are things that happen in our experiences that are intended to be our experiences. In fact, it is fair to say that everything that happens in a Christian’s life and everything that happens in a non-Christian’s life is the result of the sovereign counsel of our great God.

Now there is a tendency today in the world, and especially in the Christian church, to react rebelliously against the all embracing divine providence taught in the Bible. That’s a startling thing. But recently I’ve had experience of Christians who have rejected the idea that God really does providentially make himself responsible for all of the things that happen, responsible in the sense that he is ultimately the one who does all things according to the counsel of his own will, as the apostle puts it. And there is a tendency today to say that it would be impossible to believe in a God of love if it is true that all things are wrought according to the counsel of his own will, but the Bible says that.

I’ve heard them say they are due to human folly, or they are done due to Satanic intervention and not really ultimately to the providence of God. But God’s purpose is to conform men to the image of his Son. I’m speaking to believers, and his Son died on the cross. To conform them to that image and save them from trouble – even great trouble – are two contradictory ends which not even the providence of God can encompass at one and the same time, for it is our sovereign God’s will that we be brought to our perfection through sufferings. And we should remember that.

All of the things that happen to us as believers are things that have proceeded out of the loving triune God that we have. He works all things together according to counsel of his own will. All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

Well, our Lord has some words for the multitudes. How absurd to attack the world’s greatest benefactor as if he were a revolutionary. And finally we read, “And all of the disciples forsook him and fled.” You, Peter, John, James; even so, alas. What an indictment of Christian believers that in the tests of life they have deserted the one who loved them and gave himself for them. We often say familiarity breeds contempt. I think in Christian churches, familiarity breeds indifference, and there are people who can sit in a congregation and hear the preaching of the word of God in relative purity and sit Sunday after Sunday and the words of God do not really mean anything to them beyond that hour, and as soon as the meeting is over, and as soon as we get out, we’re thinking about other things. Familiarity breeds indifference.

Oh how important it should be to us that the things that we study, and the things that we learn, and the things that evidently mean enough to us to bring us here, should grip us so that when we leave they are the things that really matter in our lives.

Well, we have learned the terrible nature of Judas’s sin it was sin against the Messianic office. But I want to for just a moment if I may, point out one last thing. It was a beautiful evidence of the glorious nature of the love of the sovereign Savior, that he perform this final miracle of the healing of the ear. He did not say, Oh it’s only an ear. Malchus is only a slave; it’s rather insignificant.

Malchus means king, or something very close to it. It’s almost as if he was named “Mr. King,” and he was the servant of the High Priest.

The High Priest was the representative of God and Israel the one who was the mediator, effectively, between God and men in Israel. And here is a servant of the High Priest who evidently, though servant of the High Priest, knows nothing of the grace of God, knows nothing of what God is really doing, but now he comes into the garden, perhaps at the head of this pack of men who are after him, and he stands in front of the Great Emancipator, who will accomplish the all atoning sacrifice that will declare a year of jubilee, so that men may go free through faith in the Son of God.

Incidentally, when the trumpet was blown on the Day of Jubilee, and the slaves went free – like Malchus, the slaves went free – it was blown on the Day of Atonement, because the freedom of the Day of Jubilee was related to atonement. And so here is Mr. King, the servant of the priest in Israel, who should have known what the will of God is, standing in front of the king, the king-priest—the king-priest after the Order of Melchizedek—but a stranger to the truths of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus. What an irony. Malchus, who should have rejoiced in the Day of Jubilee, takes captive the Great Emancipator.

If you’re here in this audience, and you recognize your need of emancipation, the atoning sacrifice has been made. The Lord Jesus has accomplished it. You may go free and enjoy the benefits of forgiveness of sins, sonship in the family of God, justification of life by faith in the Lord Jesus. May God so speak to your heart that you come to him whom to know is life eternal. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity to ponder the things that happened to our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are grateful, Lord for these marvelous events, so beautifully arranged to show the glory of our great God. We worship Thee and we praise Thee.

We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus, the Great King-Priest, the only mediator between God and men, through whom we have come to Thee. O God, may the true spiritual breath of salvation

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blow over the hearts of men. May there be response, and give us Lord, to be zealous in our relationship to him and in our testimony to the grace shown to us.

May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.