

Call to Obedience #246
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The Necessity of Judas and the Bitter Cup

Lessons from Gethsemane

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I have two distinct lessons for you today. They all came out of the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane has much to teach us. You can learn far more at your Gethsemane than in a hundred books. Do you have a Gethsemane? Do you frequent it often? Do you stay there until God bids you leave?

Lesson 1: You Need a Judas in Your Life.

“And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons” (John 18:2–3).

It is our natural tendency to run from arrests and to crucify our Judases, but Jesus surrendered to the arrest since he did not come to save his life but to lose it. Jesus had himself crucified rather than crucify Judas who betrayed him.

We are never called upon to crucify anybody—not even our worst enemies—but only ourselves. Did you get that? When we judge people, when we criticize people, when we talk about the faults of people, we crucify them. Jesus did not ask us to crucify people. The only person to whom you and I must apply the cross is to ourselves, for from the Self-life within us comes judging, criticizing, fault-finding, and every evil thing. This is also a lesson that you will learn in the garden of prayer that gets you on the way of the Via Dolorosa.

Jesus needed Judas as much as all the rest of the apostles. Following are several reasons why:

1. Jesus needed Judas to fulfill Scripture. It says in Psalm 41:9, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Who does David refer to here? Who was a familiar friend who ate bread with Jesus and who turned against him? It was Judas, for so says Jesus himself at the Last Supper, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me” (John 13:18). Jesus needed Judas to fulfill prophecy, to be a part of the divine plan of God for his life.

Do you know that God has a plan for you for everything, for every hour of your life, as he had one for Jesus? Paul tells us so in Ephesians, “For we are God’s [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live]” (2:10 AMPLIFIED).

Are you getting it? Was this day made for you to choose as you please or are there foreordained steps for you to follow as you go through the day? Wake up, my friend, we are not our own, but we are bought with a price! How dare you plop yourself in front of that television set and gratify the flesh—how dare you think it is up to you to choose what you can do with your

life! How dare you ladies gossip on the telephone over the weakness of men of God. Is that ordered by the Lord? Oh, what all we are going to be ashamed of on the great Judgment Day. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Ps. 37:23).

2. Jesus needed Judas to show us the power of God. My friend, if you can live for three years with a person who claims to be with you but is not, you need the power of God. If you live with a person who is a thief and a liar, whose intentions are nothing but totally selfish, you need the power of God. For three years, Jesus never said anything negative about Judas. That takes the power of God. Do you have a spouse, or a co-worker, or a classmate who is like a Judas? Do you have a Judas in your church? If so, can you keep your mouth shut? Can you love him as you love all the rest? Yes, there are occasions when evil men must be exposed, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. But for the most part, we must live with the Judases, and we must love them even as Jesus did. Jesus needed Judas to show us the power of God.

My friend, if we have what Jesus had, will there be any divorces? Aren't all divorces caused by unsanctified lives? Do we see from this that if only one person in a marriage gets sanctified, most often divorce becomes unnecessary? And if both become sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit, it will be like a little bit of heaven on earth.

Jesus was the only one who knew what was in Judas, and he was the only one who could endure it. Had Jesus told the other eleven disciples who Judas was, what would they have done with him? Do you remember that James and John wanted to call fire from heaven to burn up the Samaritans because they did not receive Jesus? Do you remember that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant who helped in the arrest of Jesus? Oh, how many pieces would they have made out of poor Judas had Jesus told them what he was all about? Can you see what carnality does when it hears about the faults and weakness of someone?

Jesus loved his disciples to the end—all of them (John 13:1–2). You can do likewise, if you are sanctified. The Christ of Calvary is the Christ of today. And if he is in you and you will let him do his work in your heart, you can handle your Judases as he did.

3. Jesus needed Judas to nail him to the wood. We all have put Jesus on the cross, because we all have sinned. But Judas was one of those men who put Jesus there in a more direct way. Our Judases also help us to stay on our cross. They help to define our true spiritual state for us. They are just one part of “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, **and take up his cross**, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24, emphasis added). We need our Judases to help nail us to our cross.

On the cross, Jesus won victory for the remission of all our sins. In the end, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). When it is all said and done, you will someday thank God for your Judases.

Lesson 2: We Need the Bitter Cup.

“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).

The bitter cup is “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). That's Christianity. Christianity is nothing more nor less than doing the will of God. Man's way is to cut off ears or to split heads—God's way is the cross. We must all drink of this bitter cup. If we don't, we have no part with Jesus, for Paul says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). Does it look like suffering is optional, or is it a necessity? Can we reign forever with Christ in the heavens if we don't suffer here as he did, if we don't drink our bitter cup as he did?

Drink your bitter cup. Jesus has a bitter cup for all of us. He gave one to the rich young ruler who came running to him, asking, “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18). And Jesus responded by saying, “sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the

poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (v. 22). That was a bitter cup. It did not taste good to the rich young ruler. Does it taste good to you?

Jesus asked many men to drink the bitter cup. One said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," and another said, "Lord...let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house" (Luke 9:57-62). In the parable of the Great Supper, one responded to the master, "I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come," and another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them," and still another said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused" (Luke 14:18-20). Jesus then stated that none of those that excused themselves was worthy of the feast prepared for them. We find out if we are worthy to eat at the Great Supper and to reign with Jesus forever when he gives us the bitter cup! How are you doing with this cup?

Well, let me tell you a secret! To the mouth, this cup Jesus gives us tastes bitter. But once it gets into our stomachs, it is sweet, it is enlightening, and it is energizing. Yes, my friend, the cross leads to life, a new life, a better life, and a full life.

One reason why Christians are so weak, so wishy-washy, is because they refuse to drink the cup Jesus drank. They would rather chop off ears. Every time they are offered the bitter cup in their marriage, at work, at school, and at church, they react carnally. Churchgoers want a sweet cup. The cup of the world is sweet; it is pleasant to the taste buds—the love of the world, the things of the world, and the lust of the flesh. Oh, they all taste so good. But let us realize that what tastes sweet to the mouth will become bitter in our stomach. That which tastes sweet, once digested, carries with it disappointment, heartbreak, anger, self-pity, jealousy, pride, envy, and there is no power in it to endure in the day of trial. The sweet cup causes men to fail in the battles of life and to be buried in the wilderness outside the camp of God.

Aren't you glad Jesus drank the bitter cup? Aren't we all better off because of it? And so it is true that untold people will be better off if you drink your cup of suffering every time Jesus gives it to you. It will be honey in your stomach and life to your soul.

These are just two lessons of the Via Dolorosa: you need a Judas, and you need the cup that Jesus drank. Indeed, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. Amen!