

Close to the Enemy's Fire *Mark 14:53-64*

Good morning.

Solomon asked in *Proverbs 6:27*, ***Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? NKJV***

According to bibleref.com, “*This passage of Proverbs warns of the dangers associated with adultery.*”

This statement is echoed by a common proverb in modern English, which says "if you play with fire, you're going to get burned."

In much the same way, those who dabble in sexual sin don't need to wonder "if" there will be consequences, only "when" and "how drastic" they will be.”

I would add, “*all sin comes with some sort of consequence.*”

Please open your Bibles to **Mark 14**, as we go back to our line-by-line study of **Mark**.

Last time we were in **Mark**, we learned about how Judas brought a massive group of armed soldiers and temple police to falsely arrest Jesus in the middle of the night.

Then Judas identified Jesus with a kiss. It seems as if Jesus was fairly ordinary looking, even to the point that those soldiers had to have someone point Him out to them.

After the kiss of betrayal, the mob laid their hands on Jesus.

During the arrest, *John 18:10* tells us, “***Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.***”

Jesus healed Malchus but He also allowed these atrocities to take place as He humbly **submitted** to the Father and showed His love to those for whom He was about to die.

Warren Wiersbe said, “*Our Lord’s struggle in the Garden can be understood only in the light of what would happen to Him on the cross.*”

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NKJV

Today’s passage covers the trial before the High Priest as Peter was warming himself at the enemy’s fire.

I. The beginning of the trials.

Read ***Mark 14:53***

As Warren Wiersbe said, “*The Jewish trial was opened by Annas, the former high priest (John 18:13–24).*

“*It then moved to the full council to hear witnesses (Mark 14:53–65), and then to an early morning session for the final vote of condemnation”, in Mark 15:1. (Warren Wiersbe)*

Last time in *Mark*, we learned the religious leaders were known as the Sanhedrin, and they were made up from three groups.

The Chief Priests who led the nation in worship, the Scribes who were the Bible scholars of the nation, and the Elders who were charged with the spiritual welfare of the nation.

We also learned that Jesus was subjected to six illegal trials; three illegal trials by the Jews: one before Annas the High Priest, and then one before Caiaphas, and one before the Sanhedrin.

Jesus was also subjected to three trials before the Gentiles: one before Pilate, then one before Herod, and finally back to Pilate.

As we said last time, these trials of Jesus were terribly illegal according to Jewish law.

In today's passage, a group of religious leaders were at Caiaphas' house waiting for Jesus to arrive and begin the first illegal trial, after all of His followers forsook Him.

Jesus was at the beginning stages of the illegal, immoral treatment and trials from the religious leaders. Soon the Gentiles would be involved, which will culminate with His brutal death.

But where are His Disciples? They have all forsaken Jesus...

II. Peter tries to fade into the crowd.

Read *Mark 14:54*

Let's talk about Peter's progression forsaking Jesus.

1. Peter's pride and self-confidence led to his denial of Jesus.

Peter's denial began after Jesus' arrest, but his denial was a **slow fade** into sin which began when Peter **argued** with the Word of God that came through Jesus.

Remember several weeks ago when we studied *Mark 14:27*?

Mark 14:27 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'

Mark 14:28 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Mark 14:29 Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." NKJV

Peter in essence told Jesus he knew better than Him as he proclaimed that even if all the others will stumble, he would not.

Peter was prideful and didn't realize how weak his flesh was; we should be careful of pride, as *James 4:6* says, "***God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.***" NKJV

2. Peter's **prayerlessness** led to his denial of Jesus.

Earlier, Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying.

Mark 14:37 Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? NKJV

And finally, here in *Mark 14:54*, we see...

3. Peter following Jesus from afar led to his denial of Jesus.

If we try and follow Jesus from afar, we will ultimately end up denying Him as well.

Before GPS, if you needed to follow someone else somewhere...

...you would stay as close as possible and not allow too much distance between you and the other car. You would not want to allow others to come in between you, so you would not get lost.

So it is with following Jesus, we need to stay close and not allow things to come in between us and Jesus, so we don't get lost.

When we think of the first sin in the Bible, we often think of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden.

In reality, there was another sin in the Bible that happened just before Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Genesis 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

Genesis 3:3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Genesis 3:4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

Genesis 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." NKJV

Note the differences between what God had told Eve and what Eve said the Lord had told her.

Eve omitted God's name when recording the freedoms, He had given them, but she recited His name while speaking of the one restriction. The world does this today as well.

Eve added to and subtracted from what **God** had said.

- Subtraction = left out "*of every tree you may freely eat*"
- Addition = she added, "*and you must not touch it*"

Deuteronomy 4:2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. NKJV

Satan **questioned** the Word of God when he said, "***Has God indeed said?***"

Satan contradicted the Word of God: "***you will not surely die.***"

Satan made sin and disobedience look **attractive** when he said, "***Your eyes will be open and you will be like God***"

Satan often uses **half-truths** to sugarcoat things to get us to swallow his poison.

Next week, we will study the ultimate denial of Jesus, from the Apostle Peter.

A question we could ask is, how Peter descended so rapidly into the sin of denial. As review, first Peter questioned the word of God when Jesus warned His Disciples that all would stumble.

Then Peter followed from afar instead of staying close to Jesus.

And Peter hung out with the enemy and warmed himself with their fire, which is a picture of being comfortable with sin.

III. False witness testimonies.

Read *Mark 14:55-59*

The religious leaders were not seeking a witness to reveal the truth, they were seeking people who would tell the same narrative they had made about Jesus.

The same thing is happening today. People who are opposed to Jesus only listen to the voices of others who affirm their low view of who Jesus is and repeat their **hostility** towards Jesus.

Notice what these false witnesses say, "*We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands."*

However, what Jesus actually said in *John 2:19* was, "***Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.***" NKJV

Jesus never said the words “*this temple made with hands.*”

Essentially, these false witnesses accused Jesus of being a terrorist who wanted to destroy the temple.

“The accusation was utterly serious, for throughout the Graeco-Roman world the destruction or desecration of places of worship was regarded as a capital offense.” (William Lane)

Notice, “***But not even then did their testimony agree.***” The accusers of Jesus could not put together a good case. The false witnesses kept disagreeing with one another.

Alan Cole said, “*It was harder to agree on a consistent lie than to tell the simple truth.*” (Cole)

This mockery of a fake trial was beginning to fall apart, even as all of the other players had the same goal of discrediting Jesus.

IV. The final charge against the Lord.

Read *Mark 14:60-64*

F.F. Bruce said, “*That the high priest arose from his seat and advanced into the semi-circle of the council towards Jesus (is) the action of an irritated, baffled man.*”

The trials had proven no guilt for our Savior and the religious leaders were baffled and irritated, but imagine this...

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Matthew 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. NKJV

There is coming a day when Jesus will judge the entire world but here during this time, these unrighteous religious leaders think they are judging Jesus with these illegal trials.

But if the truth were told, Jesus wasn't the one on trial at all, instead the religious leaders were on trial and if they never repented, one day they will have to account for their actions.

Apart from receiving the free gift of salvation, everyone will have to give an account for their actions before the Lord.

However, for those who receive Jesus for salvation...

Timothy Keller said, "*The cross is the place where the Judge takes the judgment. This was the Father's plan, and it was also the Son's willing sacrifice.*" (Keller)

And notice as they questioned Jesus, He would not respond to the ridiculous charges brought against Him.

800 years before this scene, the prophet Isaiah predicted this.

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. NKJV

But once the High Priest plainly asked Him, “*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*”, Jesus tells them the truth.

The Christ, the Son of the Blessed is a Messianic title. These religious leaders asked Jesus plainly if He was indeed the promised Savior of the world and Jesus answered them.

Christ is the Greek word *Christos*, which means “the anointed one,” or “the chosen one” and is used in reference to the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

Blessed means the One who is blessed or praised and is only ever used of God (YHWH).

So, they asked Jesus, “*Are you the Promised Messiah?*”

The question behind the question from the High Priest is, “*Are You the King who will reign on the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish justice and righteousness forever?*”

In Jesus’ answer in *Mark 14:62*, He clearly identified Himself, and left little room for doubt about what He meant.

First Jesus said, “*I am*”. We have defined this title before.

Remember, the Greek word for “*I am*” is *ego eimi*. It literally means, “*I am who I am*”, the self-existent God!

Then Jesus called Himself the *Son of Man* which is a direct title of Messiah and is quoted from *Daniel 7:13*. Jesus is called Son of Man, roughly 80 times, within the four Gospels.

Jesus said in *John 5:26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,*

John 5:27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. NKJV

Matthew Henry said of the *Daniel 7:13* passage, “*The Son of man; for he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, was found in fashion as a man.*

He was to be the Mediator between God and man. He is like unto the son of man but is indeed the Son of God.”

Then Jesus says you will *see the Son of Man at the right hand of Power*. “*The Power*” is a Jewish substitute title for “God” and the right side was always known as the side of power.

Jesus very clearly told the High Priest that He is the Promised Messiah and God in the flesh.

Notice how upset the High Priest was after Jesus’ claims.

Re-read *Mark 14:63-64*

Leviticus 10:6 Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people.

I read an article how priests could not tear their robes which said

“Aaron and his other sons were not to engage in the customary acts of mourning for their brothers who had offended God or else the wrath of God might come upon them and the people.

The priest was foremost a representative of God and set apart for His service.

The robes, which were made according to the design directly given by God, have a symbolic function.

(mathaytes.blogspot.com)

A priest's robes were not just personal garments, they were holy unto God so, a priest had to act accordingly with the garments.

Tearing of their robes clearly shows the High Priest was offended but it also shows how the false trial of Jesus was illegitimate and was itself a violation of the Jewish Law.

The High Priest tearing his robe was also another sign of the hypocrisy and **illegitimacy** of the whole event.

But the religious leaders still accused Jesus of **blasphemy** and condemned Him to death.

Merriam Webster said, "*Blasphemy, in a religious sense, refers to great disrespect shown to God or to something holy, or to something said or done that shows this kind of disrespect.*

"Heresy refers a belief or opinion that does not agree with the official belief or opinion of a particular religion."

The Law clearly taught that anyone guilty of **blasphemy** should be put to death so, these religious leaders pronounced a death sentence on Jesus.

Leviticus 24:16 And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.

All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death. NKJV

V. Practical Application.

I said earlier, “*There is coming a day when Jesus will judge the entire world...*

.... but here during this time these unrighteous religious leaders think they are judging Jesus with these illegal trials.

*“If the truth were told, Jesus wasn’t the one on trial at all instead, the religious leaders were on trial and if they never repented, one day they will have to **account** for their actions.”*

What I would like to end with is another look at Peter being close to the enemy’s fire and some practical steps we can take to avoid falling into that potential trap.

As review, Peter questioned the Word of God when Jesus warned His Disciples that all would stumble.

Then Peter followed from afar instead of staying close to Jesus.

And finally, Peter hung out with the enemy and warmed himself with the enemy’s fire, when Jesus was on trial, illegally.

Some practical steps Christ followers can take to avoid falling into this same trap are as follows:

1. Christians should have a **high** regard for the Word of God, as we read it, meditate on it, and trust it for our guidebook.

The Lord places high value on His Word, *Psalm 138:2 You have magnified Your word above all Your name. NKJV*

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. NKJV

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. NKJV

If the Lord has placed so a high value on the Word of God and He tells us in scripture to rely on it for life and godliness. We should have a high regard for the Word of God as well.

2. We need a **close** relationship with Jesus, while being careful not to lag behind His leading.

Having a close relationship with the Lord is so important to keep our hearts lined up with His will, while studying and praying.

When we allow distance to grow in our relationship with Jesus, sin begins to linger, and a little sin will soon dominate us.

The enemy uses sin in our lives to get a foot hold, then he takes advantage and sin becomes a leg lock and soon it will have a choke hold on us.

3. If we allow sin to go **unchecked** in our lives, we will begin to live for the flesh and the world.

This is equivalent to warming ourselves by the enemy's fire.

Sin's goal in our lives is to become a barrier to our fellowship with the Lord and make us ineffective for the Kingdom and the King's goal for our lives.

For us personally, we can find ourselves in a slow fade into sin the same way.

Our pride and self-confidence lead to our denial of Jesus.

Our prayerlessness will lead to our denial of Jesus.

Following Jesus from afar will lead to our denial of Jesus.

Our proximity to Jesus matters.

Being near to Jesus is the only way to follow Jesus properly, because we will be in trouble if we follow Him from afar.

Our adversary the devil is well pleased when a believer tries to follow the Lord Jesus from afar.

Satan tries to get us to give up our closeness to Jesus through one little compromise at a time.

Jesus very clearly tells his followers that we must abide in Him.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. NKJV