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# Jesus and Judas

*“While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, ‘Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.’ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, ‘Hail, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him” (Matthew 26:47–49).*

With the lonely time of beseeching God in prayer behind Him, and with His resolve to give Himself completely to His Father’s will firmly fixed in His mind, Jesus left the quiet garden to meet the violent world that would crucify Him. He told His apostles, “Get up, let us be going” (Matthew 26:46a), and He took them with Him to the gate of the garden to meet the crowd that had come to arrest Him. As the angry group approached with their staves, torches, and clubs, He went out to them and said, “Whom do you seek?” (John 18:4b). They were startled by His divine demeanor and by His willingness to yield Himself to them. Some of those who led the group stepped back, hitting those behind them. This caused them and others next to them to lose their balance and fall to the ground. When they arose, Jesus offered Himself to them again with these words: “I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way” (John 18:8).

Perhaps it was at this point that Judas stepped forward to identify Jesus as he had planned to do. Jesus had crafted the situation so that no one was required to point Him out. He had made sure that everyone present knew who He was, yet Judas performed his agreed duty. He said to Jesus, “Hail, Rabbi!” and then “kissed Him” (Matthew 26:49). Jesus said to Him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). Following this pre-planned identification of Jesus, “the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him” (John 18:12).

This act of betrayal is a dark, two-sided drama, with Judas making up one part and Jesus making up the other. Judas represents all that is bad in the story—the avarice, the treachery, the failure to take advantage of the highest of privileges, and the tragedy of allowing the devil to have his way. Jesus represents all that is good; His actions in the garden reflect a love that does not easily let one go, a love that stays when all others—even long-time friends—have left. Jesus did everything that a holy God, acting in concert with human freedom, could do to save Judas.

Let us think about it. What did Jesus, the greatest of all soul-winners, do as He tried to lead Judas to salvation? What did He do in an effort to keep him from falling?

*First, He extended to him a love that continued with him even though Judas’ heart grew continually worse.* The story of Judas can be told quickly. After spending a night in prayer (Luke 6:12), Jesus, by divine selection, had picked out His apostles from the disciples gathered before Him. The Son of God had chosen Judas to be one of His closest followers. During Jesus’ ensuing ministry, Judas had enjoyed a rich and wonderful fellowship with Jesus, living as a member of His band of chosen men. They had walked the dusty roads together and taught the multitudes side by side. Jesus had no doubt sent him out with the others on apostolic missions.

From the first, Judas must have had promise, talent, and the qualities needed in a good apostle. He had even been selected to serve as the treasurer of the apostolic group (John

13:29). However, from the beginning, Jesus had known what Judas was going to do. Judas gave the devil a place to live in his heart; as time passed, the devil's purpose became more and more dominant within him. The other apostles could not yet see it in his life, but Jesus could see it in his heart. Not far into His ministry, Jesus said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). In spite of this fact, Jesus loved Judas and sought to save him.

Jesus did not give Judas harsh or constant warnings about that awful, final destiny that was looming larger and larger before him. He just offered Judas an opportunity to witness the true love He had for him by setting it before him every day. No one on earth has ever had a higher privilege than Judas. For three years, he was able to walk and sit near the Son of God. He saw Him, touched Him, heard Him speak, and observed His perfect love close up. Even though He knew what was in Judas' heart, Jesus did not expel him from His apostolic circle; He hung on to him, loving him and showing him the way to God.

*Second, Jesus sought to save Judas by teaching him the fundamental truths about life and the kingdom.* He taught the lessons that were desperately needed by one who was immersed in a battle like the one that was tearing at Judas' heart. Judas heard, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus said,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19–21).

He had the opportunity to hear Jesus say,

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (Matthew 6:24).

He heard the parable of the sower going forth to sow. In giving that illustration, Jesus explained that "the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it

becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22). Judas also heard the story of Lazarus and the rich man, in which Jesus told of the rich man being in torment (Luke 16:22b, 23a). Surely, when Jesus spoke all these words, He had Judas as well as other covetous people on His mind.

*Third, He sought to save Judas by rebuking him for planning to go through with this evil betrayal.* The time came when Jesus did not speak to him in generalities but was specific in warning him about the end that was rapidly approaching. During the Last Supper, He identified Judas as the traitor. After Jesus had pointed out that one of them would betray Him, Judas said to Jesus, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" At this point, Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself" (Matthew 26:25). As he leaned over near His chest, John asked Jesus, "Lord, who is it?" (John 13:25b). Jesus said, in effect, "Watch Me. The one to whom I give this morsel that I have dipped in the dish is he" (see John 13:26). Jesus then dipped the morsel in the dish and gave it to Judas. John wrote, "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly'" (John 13:27).

Jesus was plain, but He was not coercive; He spoke to the point, but He did not prevent Judas from leaving the supper to join the band that would arrest Him. As they gathered for that supper, Jesus knew that Judas had already betrayed Him in his heart. He had already made the agreement, taken the money, and was only waiting for the opportune time to inform Jesus' enemies about the best place and the best circumstances to make the arrest. Even though Jesus knew all these things, He still warned His apostle, giving him obvious, final opportunities to change his mind.

*Fourth, Jesus sought to save Judas by creating a situation that eliminated the necessity for him to step out and identify Him.* When the crowd arrived to arrest Jesus, He went to meet them and quickly told them who He was. The arresting band was caught off guard—and so was Judas, who led them. At first, the party of authorities did not know what to do. Jesus had effectively and powerfully defused their plans. He said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power

of darkness are yours” (Luke 22:52b, 53).

As Jesus worked with Judas throughout His earthly ministry to reclaim him from the clutches of evil, He left us an example of what should be done as we reach out to bring another person into the safety of the fold of salvation. We can bring His actions and heart together and see a composite picture of what we should do for those around us who have become entangled in sin.

Jesus taught us that we must love enslaved people, even when we know they are going the wrong way and even when we know that we may not be able to reach them. We must extend to them a love that will not easily let them go.

In addition, He taught us that we are to teach daily (if we can) those who are wrestling with the devil, putting the truth about life and the kingdom before them. We must not coerce them, but we must teach them.

Jesus showed us how to warn them at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way. He did not badger Judas; He did not constantly embarrass him. When the situation called for it, however, He pointed out what the evil-dominated person was doing and where his sin was going to lead him.

He demonstrated that we should do all we can to provide a circumstance that will make it easy for the one with whom we are working to leave error and embrace the truth. We must continue to show love toward the lost person not only with our words, but also with actions that help to provide an escape for them.

What an example Jesus has left us! We can find no finer description of how to place the constraint of truth upon someone’s heart and appeal to him—within the context of his free moral choice—to renounce evil and commit himself to righteousness.

Eddie Cloer



*In Judas we see that the high privilege of walking closely with Jesus will not insure any man against ultimate spiritual ruin. Here was a man who grew worse in his personal character, while others, under the same divine influence, were steadily growing better. A person can have the highest of all opportunities and still choose to answer the invitation of the devil. We can have a head full of Scriptures and a heart full of sin at the same time; we can backslide with a Bible in our hands.*