



Which Slap Hurt Most?
John 18:19-27

19 The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing."

21 "Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

22 And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?"

23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?"

24 Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!"

26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

27 Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

The last words of Julius Caesar are said to have been "*Et tu Brute?*" or "Even You Brutus?" Caesar, of course, was assassinated in the Senate, stabbed by a number of Senators, most of whom one could have guessed would be against him. But Brutus was different, Caesar had forgiven Brutus for fighting against him during the civil war, and had instead made him his friend, defending him against those who were suspicious, and eventually making him first governor of Gaul and then a Praetor. Clearly, Caesar did not expect his friendship and generosity to be repaid with a dagger.

The wounds we receive from our enemies, are to be expected and thus while they are painful, they can be endured. They only hurt our flesh. But to be wounded by a friend is something entirely different, those wounds go far deeper, to be betrayed by a friend wounds the soul, and afflicts us more than anything an enemy can do to us. We see that reflected in the revulsion we have for traitors. We may regard our enemies with compassion, and speak about them as honorable, but have you ever heard of an honorable traitor?

So it strikes me that while we often focus on the many wounds Christ received from his enemies on the way to Golgotha, the slaps, kicks, punches, spitting, crown of thorns, and scourging, we don't often focus on how grievous where the betrayals of his Apostles Judas and Peter. First Judas betraying his Lord into the hands of His enemies with a kiss, and then Peter, vehemently denying Him three times in

the courtyard. Surely those two acts must have hurt far more deeply than the blows of the soldiers, perhaps even more because Christ knew that they were coming.

Now some at this point would say, "***Ok, I can see how betrayal might hurt you or me, but how can it hurt the Son of God?***" Brothers and Sisters the scriptures teach us and show us, that while Christ was perfect and sinless, He was not without emotion. He loved and wept for his friends, he was angry and sorrowful at the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees, he had compassion on the lost, he hungered, he thirsted, he suffered, scripture labors that point:

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

And that is why we confess that while Jesus was fully God He also became a true man, in order to live a life of perfect holiness and die in our place, or as the Westminster Confession puts it:

"The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin;"

So when I contemplate which slap in the courtyard hurt the most, I don't think it was the one the high priest's servant gave Him. I think it was the second slap, the metaphorical slap in the face his disciple Peter gave Him with His three abject denials.

The first slap was absolutely illegal of course. In fact the whole interrogation before the high priest where it occurred was illegal. In a trial before the Sanhedrin, the accused was held to be absolutely innocent and indeed not even on trial until the concurring evidence of two or three witnesses had been given. The high priest should have been bringing forth witnesses, not interrogating the accused in the dead of night. We are told He asks him two things: first he asks about his followers – no doubt fearing a rebellion, and probably envious he asks how many he has, then he asks Christ about what He has been teaching these followers of His, he suspects no doubt that He has been giving them secret instructions. Why else would he come to Jerusalem if He wasn't planning a revolt?

In a million years they would never have believed that Christ had come up to Jerusalem for the express purpose of dying on the cross, just as men today find it inconceivable that God the Son would become a man in order to die for the sins of men. That is because just like Annas and Caiaphas, they do not think of themselves as sinners in need of a salvation that only God himself could win for them.

Think about it, those of you who can remember your state before conversion, or perhaps those of you who are not yet converted. Did you think of yourself as a sinner deserving hell? Or rather did you think of yourself as human, and that God would understand, and let you in, or worse do you think you were just fine with the all mighty.

I had a graphic example of that mindset in the atheist signs that are put up in State Rotundas:

"At the time of the winter solstice, let reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is just myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

The atheists insist these be put up to counterbalance the message of the nativity scenes which they do not approve of: As Dan Barker of the Freedom from Religion Foundation put it: "We atheists believe that the nativity scene is mocking humanity," by suggesting that those who do not believe in Jesus will go to hell"

Annas, Caiphas, and legions have agreed with Mr. Barker.

Well, in answer to his questions, Jesus points out that if they are looking for witnesses who could say what He had taught, it should not be difficult, *all Jerusalem was full of them!* He had taught openly in the Temple precincts and in the synagogues of the surrounding towns.

Now when Jesus says "I spoke nothing in secret" Jesus is not saying that he did not privately teach his disciples but that what he declared in public and what he taught in private were exactly the same. There is no harmless teaching for public consumption, and then the radical revolutionary stuff that is only taught in secret.

But you see Annas and Caiaphas cannot believe that, after all they themselves were men used to hatching plots in secret and the covering them up with a thin veneer of legitimacy, they had for instance long been plotting the arrest, trial, and death of Christ behind closed doors, and were now bringing it about. You will often find that men who love power and live by telling lies naturally assume that everyone else feels the same way and is doing the same thing.

Jesus is also hearkening back to the word of the Lord in places like Isaiah: Isaiah 48:16 "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me."

Christ's teaching was not *Gnostic* or secret, there was no *Taqiya* involved.

It is after that answer that a zealous servant of the high priest seeks to prove his loyalty by striking Jesus. Imagine it, a mere creature striking his Creator who kept Him in being. And keep in mind, Christ could have put an end to all of this. But instead he is meek. Christ is fulfilling to the letter what was written of Him hundreds of years before in *Isaiah 53: 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

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.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

So he bears it, only answering righteously: "*If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?*"

We also see a contrast in that when Christ's servant Peter struck Malchus, the servant of the high priest with the sword, Christ put a stop to it and rebuked Peter, and then mercifully healed Malchus by reattaching his ear. But when the high priest's servants lash out against Christ they look on with approval, he will receive no mercy from these men only scorn and mockery.

Meanwhile, even sadder on the other side of the Courtyard, Peter is denying Him for the second and third time. Christ stands bound, before one of the most powerful men in Jerusalem and is subjected to

interrogation and physical assault and yet he denies nothing. Peter on the other hand, is unbound and unmolested and yet he cannot even stand before a slave girl without denying EVERYTHING.

After He has finally denied his Master, just as Christ said he would, we read this in Luke's fuller account of the terrible exchange:

Luke 22:60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

As Ryle says - "There was a deep meaning in that look. It was a sermon which Peter never forgot." I cannot think but that it was a deeply sorrowful look, devoid of any "I told you so" expression.

Applications: **First, true teaching is open and full of light –**

Secret organizations, gnosis – Mystery Religions, Scientology, JWs
Goals are open not hidden - Islam

Second, given the depth of this betrayal we might be amazed that Jesus would restore Him:

"When Peter disowned Christ, yet Christ did not disown him, though he might justly have cast him off, and never looked upon him more, but have denied him before his Father. It is well for us that Christ does not deal with us as we deal with him." –MH

All of Peter's self-reliance was useless, this was precisely why Jesus had to die on the cross, or Peter and all of Christ's other sheep could never enter into heaven.

Betrayal – Guilt – Restoration

You and I and all men have sinned against a just God, we enter into this world as rebels. John Bunyan – Holy War,

- **SHADDAI:** *The Sovereign of the Universe. Also the builder and creator of Mansoul, whose image it bears.*

- **EMMANUEL:** *The son of Shaddai, who lead the campaign to reclaim Mansoul.
Diabolus*