

John 13:1-30  
Christ Bids Satan to Hurry  
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The Peace Child by Don Richardson is a compelling book about the modern mission field. It is the story of Mr. Richardson's missionary effort among the Sawi tribe in Dutch New Guinea. Mr. Richardson learned that the Sawi admired treachery as if it were a virtue. Whenever a member of the Sawi tribe encountered a stranger, he would invite him to his village, and the village would give a feast in his honor. They would periodically invite the guest back to other feasts over a period of months. And then finally, after establishing a bond of friendship, they would kill their guest and eat him. The Sawis found their greatest joy in seeing the terror, the bewilderment, the horror in their victim's eyes when he saw his supposed friends betraying him and preparing to kill him.

Mr. Richardson lived among these people with his wife and their child. He learned their language and began meeting with the men of the tribe in their meeting house. He told them the stories of Scripture, but he found that they had difficulty listening to these events that happened in a culture so different from theirs. But one night, he noticed that everyone began to pay attention to his story. It was when he told them about the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the long time disciple who on that very night had shared a meal with Jesus. One Sawi whistled a bird call of admiration. Others touched their fingertips to their chests in awe. Still others clucked. To Mr. Richardson's dismay,

he suddenly realized that these men who thought treachery was a virtue regarded Judas as the hero of the story. After all, here was a man who had become an intimate associate of a great Prophet, who had traveled with Him, eaten with Him, stayed with Him for three years. And then suddenly, he had betrayed Him to the people who would crucify Him.

The Sawis misunderstood the story. In reality Jesus and not Judas was in control even when Judas betrayed Jesus. The betrayal was all a part of Jesus' plan as well as a fulfillment of divine prophecy. Jesus deliberately and voluntarily went to His death upon a Roman cross.

Before we look more closely at this passage, I might mention that by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel message, this cannibalistic tribe which admired traitors was spiritually conquered and transformed into a people zealous for good works. Great indeed is the Lord, and marvelous are His works!

We will now look at our text under three headings: the sinful discontentment of Judas, the sincere concern of Jesus, and the sovereign control of God.

First, we will look at the sinful discontentment of Judas. Just a few years before, Judas Iscariot had left all to follow Jesus. Now a few years later, he is ready to abandon Jesus and even to betray Him. This would have been a surprise to the other eleven disciples. They were unaware of this. In fact, they probably had a special regard for Judas, as evidenced by their trusting him as

their treasurer and entrusting their group funds to him. Judas was special because he was the only one of the twelve who was from Judea, the religious and political center of the nation. The other eleven were from the cultural backwaters of Galilee. Outwardly, Judas appeared as loyal as any, yet inwardly there was a growing discontentment in Judas' heart.

Probably all of the disciples initially had some misunderstanding of the ministry of Jesus. They were probably all to some degree affected by the common belief of the time that the Messiah would be a military figure who would come to political power and conquer the Roman Empire and rise to world prominence. We see their sinful inclinations in their arguments over who was the greatest among them and who would have the places of honor and prominence in the coming kingdom. The prospect of Christ's shameful death on the cross was at times a stumblingblock for Peter. He had rebuked Jesus when Jesus first began to reveal to the twelve that He would one day suffer a violent and shameful death in Jerusalem. The disciples were at times impatient for the glory of the coming kingdom. James and John, whom Jesus called the Sons of Thunder, at one point wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village which would not receive them. Such was the sinful nature of the twelve, but for the past few years they had been exposed to the ministry of Jesus. They had grown in grace and knowledge; all but Judas, that is. Inwardly Judas was different because He had never experienced the new birth. The Holy Spirit had never used the message of Jesus to transform Judas' heart, to work faith in Judas' heart and to unite Him savingly to Jesus. His heart remained evil, and you can't

gather figs from a thorn bush, or grapes from a bramble bush. If the root is bad, the fruit will be bad. So Judas grew not in grace and knowledge but in sinful discontentment.

Where was the glory and power of this kingdom which Jesus had proclaimed to be at hand? Why had Jesus retreated when John the Baptist was killed rather than avenge the murder? Why, when the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king, had Jesus refused and sent them away?

Judas was increasingly greedy for money and ambitious for power, and the ministry of Jesus satisfied neither of these desires. In his impatience, Judas had begun stealing from the money bag that was entrusted to him.

When Jesus and the disciples had approached Jerusalem just before the Savior's last Passover, they had stopped at the home of Lazarus in Bethany, and there Mary the sister of Lazarus had anointed Jesus with an expensive perfume worth a considerable sum of money. Judas had protested the waste, professing concern for the poor, and yet his true desire was to embezzle the money for his own use. It was after this experience that Judas decided to betray Jesus for money. Luke says that Satan entered Judas, and he went to the chief priests to offer his treacherous service. They paid Judas thirty pieces of silver, the value of a slave, and Judas promised to be on the lookout for an opportunity for them to arrest Jesus away from the attention of the crowd.

Now Judas was with Jesus on the night of the Passover. This was when Jesus took the form of a servant and washed the disciples' feet. Jesus told them that He was doing this as an example, and that they should henceforth wash each other's feet. As Judas heard those words, he knew that this was not the sort of Messiah he wanted or believed in. Perhaps Judas remembered those words of John the Baptist when he had said that he was not worthy even to unlatch Jesus' shoes in order to wash Jesus' feet. That is the sort of Messiah that Judas wanted, not a Messiah who lowered Himself to washing the feet of others but a Messiah whom others held in awe and a Messiah whose feet others were honored to wash. As Jesus washed Judas' feet, the experience probably only strengthened Judas' resolve to betray Jesus into the hands of His enemies.

Such was the sinful discontentment of Judas. And that brings us to the next point, the sincere concern of Jesus. Just after washing the disciples' feet, Jesus made this statement:

John 13:17-19

- 17 "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.  
18 "I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'  
19 "Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He."

Here we see Jesus' concern for the eleven other than Judas. Jesus knew what was about to happen. He knew that Judas would soon betray Him. And He wanted the eleven to know that

He wasn't taken by surprise, that His arrest wasn't something beyond His control. Jesus wanted them to know that this was a part of His plan and a fulfillment of divine prophecy.

Jesus also used this announcement that one would betray Him for the disciples' spiritual benefit. Look at verses 21 and 22:

John 13:21-22

- 21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."
- 22 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

Jesus gave this warning for the spiritual benefit of the eleven. The eleven didn't say, "Once saved, always saved. We don't need to worry about that!" No, they each said in response to the warning, "Is it I?" The disciples recognized the sinful potential still within them, and they said together with the Psalmist:

Psalm 139:23-24

- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties;
- 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

That should be our response also to the warnings in Scripture, the warnings to stay away from temptation, the warnings to stay in close fellowship with the Savior and with His people. We should take them seriously, and we should examine ourselves

before God. Yes, we believe in the perseverance of the saints, but we also believe that God uses these warnings to enable the saints to persevere.

Jesus meant this warning as a means of grace to the eleven, who were regenerate, but He also meant it as a sincere offer of grace to Judas, who was not regenerate. This warning was a sincere call for Judas to reconsider the sin that he was then planning to commit.

Here we come to one of those teachings in Scripture that humbles us and reminds us of the limits of our understanding. We know that God has sovereignly planned all of history for His glory and for His people's good. And yet at the same time, history is a real and meaningful process. It is not an impersonal, mechanical process like the playing of a player piano with a pre-punched roll of music. People make real decisions, and they are rightfully responsible for them. How can this be? How can God be genuinely in control of our decisions, and yet these decisions are so truly our own that we are rightfully responsible for them? We don't know. All we can say is that God's ways are higher than our ways, and God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His ways are inscrutable and His judgments past finding out.

The historical process is real. Judas had a real decision to make. Would he or would he not betray Jesus? Even as God had warned Cain against killing his brother Abel, Jesus warned Judas against this sinful betrayal. Jesus later dipped some bread into the sop, and offered it to Judas. This was a sincere offer of friendship and acceptance. This gesture was also in context a

sign to Judas that Jesus knew what Judas was planning to do. This was a real opportunity for Judas to repent and to accept this offer of acceptance. Judas took the bread from the hand of Jesus. Judas accepted the token of friendship and ate it. And then Judas responded to it by opening his heart not to Jesus but to Satan. Satan entered in and Judas hardened in his sinful resolve. Judas left the room and went out into the dark night, a symbol of the darkness of his decision. And he would soon offer Jesus his own token of friendship, the kiss of a friend. Only it would be not a sincere gesture but a tool of betrayal.

That brings us to our last point, and that is the sovereign control of God. Judas made a real decision, and yet this is what God had planned from before the foundation of the world. The event was prophesied. It had to happen. And yet this was no blind and impersonal act of fate. Jesus' warning and offer were sincere, and Judas' decision in response was real.

Now that Judas had made his decision, now that Judas had opened his heart to Satan, now that Judas was hardened in his resolve, the time of opportunity was over. Jesus then gave Judas over to his debased mind to do that which was not fitting. Jesus said, "What you do, do quickly."

We see again that Jesus was in control. He always had been. You know, Judas probably had wanted to have Jesus arrested then and there in that room during that Passover meal. That would have been a perfect time, when others were preoccupied with their own Passover meals. But that had not been Jesus' plan. So Jesus had arranged for the Passover to be in a mystery

house. You remember that Jesus had sent two disciples to prepare for the Passover. He had instructed them to go into the city and when they saw a man carrying a pitcher of water, to follow him until he went into a house, and then to ask the master of that house for its use in the name of Jesus. Because of this miraculous and mysterious method of preparation, Judas had not been able to tell the chief priests where Jesus would be that night for the Passover. Jesus was in control. He did not want to be arrested before or during the Passover. He wanted time to institute the Lord's Supper, time to give last instructions and counsel to the eleven, and time to pray with them at Gethsemane. But Jesus did want to be arrested later that night. Jesus did want to be crucified the next day, which was Good Friday, so that He could be in the tomb three days and arise on the first day of the week. Jesus' time had now come, so He told the hardened and determined Judas to do his work of betrayal quickly. And Judas obeyed.

The Sawi tribesman misinterpreted this story when they thought that Judas had successfully deceived Jesus through his act of betrayal. Rather it was Jesus who had used Judas in fulfilling His plan to go to the cross and to pay for the sins of His people.

Jesus today knows about your sin, and He today offers to save you from it. The offer is sincere. The offer is genuine. The offer is real. Don't make the mistake that Judas made. Don't respond to Christ's offer to save by opening your heart to Satan. Don't respond to the gospel by hardening your heart and resolving to continue living a life dominated by sin. Come to Jesus while there is yet time, before the day of opportunity ends, before

Jesus gives you over to your sin. And once you have come to Jesus and have received Him and have rested upon Him alone for your salvation, praise the Savior for enabling you to come. You would never have come had Jesus not raised you up from the lethargy of your spiritual death. Don't try to figure it out. You can't fully understand it. Just rejoice in your salvation that is all of grace from the very beginning to the very end.