

1. Let me open with a question. How should we pray when life gets difficult? It is a matter of saying just the right words, or is it about attitude? Before I answer that, let me give you my lesson title: "Trusting in God in difficult times". The answer will be discussed throughout this lesson, but I will give a clue now and say it does key upon our attitude toward God.
  - a) With that said, let me describe the text of this lesson. The main event is describing the events leading up to Jesus being hung on the cross. What God showed me throughout this lesson was how we are to trust in Him when life gets difficult.
  - b) If you recall, we last left off in the middle of Mark Chapter 14. Jesus finished the "Last Supper" with His disciples, which was also the Jewish holiday of Passover. During the meal, Jesus announces that one of the disciples would betray Him. Soon afterwards, the disciple Judas leaves to go do, just that. The other disciples were essentially clueless at this point and thought that Judas left for some other reason and not to betray Jesus.
  - c) After that dinner, Jesus and the disciples went out for a "post-dinner discussion". At this point, Jesus announces in effect that He will be taken away and all of the disciples will be scattered because He is gone. Then Peter speaks up and announces that if everyone else becomes disloyal to Jesus, he never would. Jesus then responds with the famous quote of "Before the rooster crows two times, you (Peter) will deny that you know me three times."
  - d) Again, this is all review from the last lesson. Most Christians are pretty familiar with this story of Peter's denial of Jesus. With that said, here is what I want you to remember from this section: (Clue, it has nothing to do with history from 2,000 years ago.) What we have to remember that even though we are trusting in God for our salvation, as Peter was, it is still easy for us to put our trust in our own abilities to get us through a situation.
    - i) That is where "prayer through difficult times" should come in the picture.
    - ii) Let me explain further. Peter was a man known for boldness. He would speak first and think about it later. ☺ Jesus just quoted scripture about how the "sheep will be scattered". Peter who understood what Jesus meant by that, corrects Jesus to say effect He is wrong about him. There's a sign you are in trouble: When you think that a particular scripture does not apply to our life at this particular time.
  - e) What I am trying to say is beware of the danger of going against God's will for any particular moment in our lives. So how do we know what is God's will? The key to knowing God's will is to spend regular time in prayer and regular time in God's word and then just "go forward" and trusting that God is leading us down the path He wants for us.
    - i) If we are doing something that we know is biblically wrong or our conscious is bothering us about what we are doing, that is a big-clue we are doing something that is unacceptable to God. So what about prayer?
    - ii) The related point is in difficult situations we want to pray for God's will to be done and for God to give us the strength to get through that situation. In other words, we give all the results of whatever we are going through to God.
  - f) This leads us back to Peter. After making the bold statement that he would never deny his relationship with Jesus, he would do "just that" in this part of the story.
  - g) All of this talk about Jesus trials and Peter's denial of knowing Jesus does tie back to my lesson title. The pain Jesus is about to experience in this section of scripture is beyond anything we could possibly have to face in our lifetime. The lessons I want all of us to learn in this chapter is about how Jesus handled the pain and hopefully pick up a few things the next time we have to face a significant problem in our lifetime. At the same time what we learn from Peter's mistakes also has valuable lessons about trusting God when things are going wrong. What that said, we left off at Verse 32 of Chapter 14.

2. Verse 32: They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."<sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.<sup>34</sup> "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."
  - a) Let's set the scene. It is still the evening after the Passover meal. Jesus leads the disciples to a place called "Gethsemane". This is a garden area close to where they ate dinner.
  - b) Jesus tells the eleven disciples to wait there while He goes to pray. Jesus picks out three of the disciples (Peter, James and John) and has them go with Him to pray.
    - i) I suspect that Jesus simply walked a little ways from the other disciples and then started praying. Jesus probably asked these three to pray with Him.
  - c) Think about this from the disciple's perspective: It has been a long day, preparing for and eating the Passover meal. They just finished a big dinner. They went for a walk and now Jesus needs time to pray. The text implies the disciples were tired and I'm not surprised.
  - d) Next, let's talk about the fact that Jesus Himself needed to pray. I believe that Jesus understood His destiny and knew what was going to happen. Still He felt the need to pray to God the Father at this point. The next two verses discuss what Jesus was praying about so I'll include them before typing any further. ☺
3. Verse 35: Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.<sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
  - a) I want to begin this section by discussing the word "Abba" in Verse 36. This is an intimate term for father that might be best translated "daddy" in English. In other words, Jesus is speaking to God the Father in the most intimate of terms.
    - i) And your point is? If we love God and are serving Jesus, then we too, can have that intimate relationship, where we too can call God the Father "daddy". One has to remember that God the Father also sees us in our "perfectly forgiven" state and therefore, gives us the privilege (that's a key word) of calling Him "daddy".
    - ii) I always believe that one of the keys of our prayer life is learning to balance both aspects of our relationship with God. Those aspects are: 1) To see God as a loving father who we can call "daddy" and 2) To remember that He is God, He is holy and He cannot stand any sin whatsoever. That is why confession of sin is best to come before asking for things.
  - b) Jesus makes a prayer request of God the Father. First Jesus states out loud that all things are possible with God the Father. To understand how this applies to our lives, we first need to think about why this prayer is recorded for us. That tells me that Peter, James and John were awake long enough to hear and remember this prayer.
    - i) In this prayer, Jesus requests that God the Father "take this cup from me". Jesus ends the prayer with the reminder that it is not what I (Jesus) want that matters but what God the Father wants to do in any given situation.
    - ii) This prayer also teaches us that it is acceptable to ask God for anything, but to remember that the point of prayer is to get God's will done, not our will.
    - iii) I take the simple view that I can pray for anything, but God will not grant what is not His will to accomplish. Every now and then, I will remember to pray with the words, "Not my will, but yours be done". Those words do not make it more likely to get my prayer answered but they remind me what is the purpose of prayer.
  - c) Now let me focus on Jesus specific prayer request. He says in effect, "If there is any other way for people to get saved, then don't let me die on the cross". I don't think Jesus minded the physical pain as much as the idea of being separated from God the Father.
    - i) One of the concepts that one has to accept is that there is a moment in time where God the Father in effect, "Turned His back on Jesus" in order that Jesus could literally become sin for us. (See 2nd Corinthians 5:21 on that point.)

- d) We will read that Jesus prayed three times for the cross to be avoided. That teaches us that it is acceptable to ask God for something more than one time. At the same time, to keep asking for the same thing "over and over again" will eventually be a pointless exercise and Jesus stops asking after three occasions.
    - i) Well, what about the people we have been praying about for years? Does that mean we should stop praying for them? I would argue no, and here is the difference: The difference is that Jesus understood there was a decision to be made "now" and further prayer would not change that situation.
  - e) This leads us to the key point being emphasized here: There is no way to be saved other than through Jesus. One of the important ideas to be grasped here is that Jesus is praying for the answer to that question: Jesus is asking in effect asking, "Is there any way for people to be saved other than me dying on the cross?" Because God the Father said no to that prayer request, there is no other route to salvation other than through Jesus.
    - i) Well what about those who die as children or people who come from cultures who don't know Jesus? The answer is that God the Father will judge people based on what we they do know. Therefore, I hold the view there will be people saved who never heard of Jesus. However those situations work out, I live with an understanding that the God I worship is "fair" and will judge accordingly.
    - ii) If what you are saying is true, are you therefore saying you don't have to know Jesus in order to be saved? No I am not. If we are old enough to grasp the concept of Jesus dying for our sins and have been exposed to that knowledge, God holds us accountable for that knowledge. At the same time, there are people who have never been exposed to that knowledge and the only way a "fair" God could judge such people is to judge them based on what information they do know.
    - iii) Am I positive that is how it works? No, and truthfully, I don't worry about those situations, but I focus on what I do know: I am aware of Jesus and God calls on me and other Christians to spread the word about Him.
  - f) Meanwhile, we left Jesus praying that He could get out of this situation.
4. Verse 35: Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
- a) Let me personalize these verses for a moment. Most of us understand that Jesus was praying to get out of going to the cross, but that prayer request was denied. The more interesting question to me is, "Why else does God want me to know these details?"
    - i) Let me put this another way: How many of us have been in situations where we have prayed in effect, "God, I know that all things are possible for You, but I don't know what tomorrow is going to bring, and I don't know what to do next".
    - ii) What is to be learned from this prayer is about mentally "letting go" of a situation. In other words, God wants us to stop worrying about the outcome as He is in control. Notice that God the Father does not make it easy for Jesus. There is no escaping the pain and the separation that Jesus is about to go through.
    - iii) Now think about our own life: Sometimes the plans God has for us calls for us go through difficult times in order to accomplish some goal He has for us.
    - iv) What God does promise, is that He will see us through our situations and He has a wonderful destiny for us, if we are willing to trust Him. Let's face it, it is easy to pray for God's blessings when we don't have any significant problems. It becomes much more of a "trust issue" when things are falling apart.
    - v) I believe that is what Jesus is trying to teach through this prayer. Yes, I am not ignoring the fact that Jesus is about to die on the cross, and He is pleading with God the Father if He can get out of this "deal". At the same time, these verses do teach us the importance and necessity of trusting God through the difficult times.

- b) That leads me back to my lesson title. Life is about trusting God when we don't know the outcome for our future. It is about trusting God when life is getting difficult.
  - i) While that may sound like an obvious cliché, that is a reality as well. When things are falling apart around us, I can't imagine turning "elsewhere" other than to God. I can't imagine trying to trust in my own resources or thinking that if I just work at the problem "hard enough", I can get through my problems on my own.
  - ii) This reminds me of a person I recently heard on the radio who argued that God does not really exist and people just "imagine" about Him in order to get through the pain in life. My response is the bible is too full of literal events to support the reality that God exists. I have seen way to many miracles to even consider the possibility that God is not real. If you ever come across this argument, tell them to consider the "alterative". Is it better to live with the possibility that there is a God, or should we just "bear with" whatever life throws at us, and not consider a higher source to see us through whatever we are dealing with.
- c) Meanwhile, Peter is sleeping through Jesus' prayer. ☺
- 5. Verse 37: Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."
  - a) As I read these verses, I kept thinking about them from Peter's perspective. Remember that Peter is Mark's main source for this gospel. The way I visualize this scene is Jesus was with the eleven disciples in this garden, and then Jesus tells three of them to follow Him a "little bit further". Then Jesus asks three specific disciples (Peter, James and John) to pray with Him. Maybe those three men are sitting or lying next to Jesus. Remember that Jesus said he fell "flat on his face" (Verse 35) to pray this prayer.
    - i) Also remember, it was late at night, and the disciples had a long day. Jesus is getting repetitive in His prayer and these disciples were probably thinking, "I understand the point of Jesus' prayer so I don't have to pray with Him."
    - ii) In other words, they did not understand the importance of praying prior to knowing what is going to happen to them in a short time span. The disciples didn't have the strength to stand up for Jesus because they didn't make the time to turn the situation over to God prior to the event happening.
  - b) Let me explain this text another way: I don't know what God has planned for me in the future. I do know that God wants me to pray to avoid sin, as our human nature does not have the strength by itself to face the temptations of sin.
    - i) Getting back to Peter, do I believe he sinned (a short time later) when he denied Jesus three times? Yes I do. Do I believe Peter would have the spiritual power to not deny Jesus if he just prayed with Jesus at this moment? Yes I do.
    - ii) The point for us to learn is some of the mistakes we make in life could be avoided, if we are simply willing to pray for God's protection and guidance prior to facing whatever challenge we have to face.
    - iii) Jesus knew what was in store for Him, yet He still felt the need to pray about it. That need to pray was so strong, that again, that Verse 32 says that Jesus "fell to the ground" to pray about it. The point is we need to be serious enough about prayer that we are willing to turn the events of the next day over to God.
      - a) My point is also that the way we get through our "situation of the moment" is to pray prior to the event and pray through the event for God's strength to get us through whatever the "event" is.
    - iv) The reason God wants us to pray for our future is we don't know what will happen in our future, but God, through prayer gives us the strength to face it.
    - v) God never promises He will make it easy for us. What God does promise is to see us through the situation and keep us from temptation.

- c) This leads me back to Peter. I believe the reason Peter remembered these details of what Jesus said is that Peter knew Jesus wanted him to stay awake and Peter later knew he blew it. Sometimes when someone wakes us out of a deep sleep, we remember the words that they say as those words remind us of what we should have been doing.
    - i) So given the fact that we need God's strength to get us through life, how should we be praying? The answer is to make part of my regular prayer life to pray for God's protection and guidance through whatever is about to come "our way" or whatever I am facing that moment.
    - ii) Do I specifically pray those words every day? No, the exact words are not as important as the idea of making the commitment to pray for God's protection.
  - d) The final line of Verse 38 says, "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."
    - i) In other words, the Spirit of God lives inside all believers and that Spirit can guide us through whatever situation we are in. However God still never violates our free will, which is why we should pray for His help. We can't face our current problems the way God wants us to handle them without invoking His help.
    - ii) In other words, if we want the Spirit of God to be stronger than our own ability to handle a situation, we need to pray for His help to deal with that situation.
    - iii) That is what Jesus is pleading with Peter to pray with him and that is what Jesus is pleading with us to pray for His protection in our lives.
6. Verse 39: Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. <sup>40</sup> When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.
- a) Meanwhile, back in the world of Jesus and the disciples, Jesus went and prayed a third time for the very same thing. When it comes to the issue of salvation, we all wonder at times if there is another way other than the "way of the cross". Know that Jesus Himself asked that very same question three times in these prayers.
  - b) At the same time, the disciples didn't get it. They still thought they were saved because they were "good Jews" and believing in Jesus as the Messiah simply meant that He would rule the world from Jerusalem. The disciples didn't get the important idea, which is that one needs to regularly prayer in order to avoid whatever temptations life throws at us.
  - c) It is interesting that these verses are talking about staying awake to pray. For this section of my study God woke me up in the middle of that night to write about it. God wanted me to learn that there are times when God wants me to sleep and there are times where God wants me to pray about things.
    - i) So John are you saying we have to wake up in the middle of the night and pray to avoid whatever temptations come our way the next day? No, I'm just saying that before we take on a new day, it is a good idea to dedicate that day to God and ask for His protection and guidance through whatever comes this day.
    - ii) If you do wake up in the middle night, and can't figure out why you can't sleep, instead of just tossing and turning, try praying for a few moments and ask God what it is He wants you to pray about. If we do know something is bothering us, give that situation to God and say in effect, "The results are now His problem".
    - iii) We never know what God has in store for us the next day, but we do know that praying, (and sometimes writing ☺) through these situations gives us the comfort and the strength to face the next day.
7. Verse 41: Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
- a) While we don't know what God has planned for us the next day, know that Jesus is aware of our situations and in the case here, He is aware that His betrayal is about to happen.
  - b) What is to be noticed here is the disciples failed to pray with Jesus and now they have to face whatever is about to happen without the strength of prayer.

- c) An important thing to grasp here is that none of the disciples lost their salvation due to their failure to pray here. This comes back to the idea that when we fail to pray, we may lose "the best" that God has planned for us that day, but it does not affect our salvation. Yes, the disciples are about to "mess up", but they are still saved.
    - i) This leads us back to something I mentioned in the last lesson, which is the topic of our accountability before God. I explained in that lesson that we cannot use the excuse before Him that "You God, know all things and therefore, You knew I was going to mess up here, and therefore, You can't blame me".
    - ii) The point is God does hold us accountable even though He knew we were going to blow it in that situation and still used the situation for His glory.
    - iii) When we mess up, like the disciples are about to do in this situation, we should simply confess our sin and then trust that God has forgiven us. What about the "damage" caused from that sin? That is something we have to live with and deal with the consequence of those actions.
      - a) If that happens, then we need to pray for God's help to deal with those consequences for our sins.
  - d) Jesus at this point calls Himself "The Son of Man". That is simply one title for the Messiah. It refers to the fact that the "Promised Messiah" would be a human in that He was the "Son of Adam" as well as God-Himself "in the flesh".
  - e) He also says the "Son of Man is betrayed in the hands of sinners". What does that mean?
    - i) It means the people who are arresting Jesus are those who refuse to look to Jesus' sin payment for the forgiveness of their sins. It is not that the people arresting Jesus are any worse sinners than say, you or I or the disciples. It is just that we as Christians are forgiven of our sins due to our trust in Jesus. Those who refuse to accept such forgiveness are seen "eternally" as sinners.
  - f) In Verse 42, Jesus says, "rise, let us go". Jesus is not saying, let us go run for our lives, but He is saying in effect, "Let us go greet them and get on with this".
    - i) So why is that? Jesus could have said in effect, "let's go make a run for it". He didn't do that as Jesus knew that God the Father's will was for Him to pay the price for sin and now was that time. That is what Jesus' prayer was all about.
    - ii) Further, Jesus knew it was God's will to meet Judas here at this spot. My point is if we know something is God's will, no matter how difficult it is to deal with that, we can handle it better if we know that God will give us the strength to get through that situation.
  - g) Also note in Verse 42, Jesus states that His betrayer is at hand. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that Judas was the one who betrayed Him. Why is that? What Jesus is trying to teach is that He is in control of all things and even knows when the bad things (that happen to us) are going to happen and who is "behind" those bad things.
8. Verse 43: Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.
- a) One has to remember that it was only a matter of "hours ago" that Jesus told Judas in effect, "I'm on to you and I know what you are going to do". Remember from earlier in this chapter (previous lesson, Verse 2) that the Jewish leadership did not want to arrest Jesus during the holidays, as they were afraid of how the crowds would react to any attempt to condemn Jesus.
  - b) Therefore, this specific crowd that came to arrest Jesus was hastily organized, as Judas and the Jewish leadership did not want to perform this act on this particular day.
  - c) One also has to remember that the Jewish leadership had no idea how Jesus would react to being arrested. They also knew that Jesus had a band of followers, and therefore, this group came armed to this encounter.

9. Verse 44: Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>46</sup> The men seized Jesus and arrested him.
- a) Imagine staring at a group of men, and all of them were roughly the same age. All of them had long beards and all of them were dressed in similar clothing. It was also dark out. How can one tell which person is which, given that situation?
    - i) I am reminded of a conversation I once had with an Orthodox Jew. I noticed that he, and all of his friends had long beards. I stated that, if someone in his group were a thief, it would be hard to identify the thief as everyone has a beard and it makes it more difficult to tell them apart. He laughed at that one.
    - ii) In a sense, that is the situation we have here. Therefore, even though some of the arresting crowd may have seen Jesus before, it would be difficult to pick Him out of the crowd, given the beards, similar clothing and a lack of light.
    - iii) This also tells me that Jesus wasn't anything special to look at, any more than the other disciples. (That's just my guess, based on the text).
  - b) Given those circumstances, Judas had a plan where he would kiss Jesus to identify Him to the armed guards. So why a kiss? Why not just grab his robe? I suspect that Judas needed to show them who Jesus was and that is a good signal.
10. Verse 47: Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.
- a) Here is one of those situations where it helps to study all four gospels to get details:
    - i) John 18:10 says that it was Peter who drew the sword. I have to admit I find it interesting that Peter did not want to admit that little detail in this book. ☺
    - ii) Luke 22:51 says that Jesus healed the man's ear that Peter latched off.
  - b) Peter was probably trying to cut off the man's head and missed. Since Peter "missed" and Jesus healed the ear, that probably saved Peter's life. In other words, if Peter had killed the guard, he would have been on a cross next to Jesus for the crime of murder.
  - c) So why did Jesus heal the cut off ear? He wanted to show that He was in charge of the situation and He knew He was going to be arrested and He didn't want anyone else hurt.
    - i) So, if this group saw Jesus heal the cut-off ear, why did they still arrest Him? I suspect that the hatred by the Jewish leadership was so great at this point, they didn't care that Jesus had the power to heal people, and they just wanted Him dead as they saw Him as a threat to their political power base in Israel.
  - d) OK, why do I have to know about a healed ear? It is not just to learn history. It is to know that God is in charge of all situations and has a purpose for all that happens. Jesus is in control of how much damage happens and how much healing happens.
    - i) I think the "healed ear" is also making a point of how Jesus still wants these people who are arresting Him to hear about Him even after the sins they have committed.
11. Verse 48: "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?" <sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."
- a) Jesus is pointing out to the arresting crowd that He taught publicly in the daytime in the main temple and all during that time He was never arrested.
  - b) So was Jesus saying all of this to avoid being arrested? No. Jesus understood His destiny and the purpose of why He was being arrested now. I believe Jesus is still working on the salvation of others. He wanted others to see the "ridiculousness" of how He was being arrested in the middle of the night. Hopefully some of them thought about later and asked for the forgiveness of sins.
  - c) The text says the "Scriptures must be fulfilled". What scriptures is He talking about?
    - i) Most likely, this refers to Isaiah 53:7-9 and Verse 12. I'll let you look that one up if you are interested and see how it compares to the events described here.

- d) The reason Jesus mentions Scripture here is so that people in the future can clearly see that the prediction about Jesus dying for the sins of the people was clearly written out centuries before the actual event took place. This gets back to the underlying purpose of bible prophecy: It shows that God knows all things in advance and lays out through bible prophecy, key times in human history as it relates to our knowledge of God.
12. Verse 50: Then everyone deserted him and fled.
- a) If you recall from earlier in the chapter, (Verse 27) Jesus predicted that when He was being arrested, all of the other disciples would flee. Notice that the guards did not chase after other disciples, as the sole point here was to arrest Jesus. It is just another small piece of evidence how God is in charge of all things and God controls all things. In the Gospel of John's account of this story, John states that Jesus gave the order to let the other disciples leave (John 18:8) and the guards followed Jesus' order.
13. Verse 51: A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, <sup>52</sup> he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.
- a) Only Mark's gospel records this incident. Many commentators believe that the young man was Mark himself, and Mark included this subtle reference to himself. So other than to possibly include himself, why is these verses here? It may simply be to show that others, like Mark had witnessed the scene and knew the truth of what happened.
14. Verse 53: They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. <sup>54</sup> Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.
- a) Well, we're moving along at a good pace here and should get through the whole chapter in the usual 12 pages, at this rate. ☺ With that said, we now come to another famous scene where Peter is warming himself by a fire right outside where Jesus is being tried.
- b) Again, one has to remember that this whole trial was arranged "hastily" as the religious leaders did not plan to have Jesus arrested that night. I suspect this group had to work fast to organize a formal hearing against Jesus. For what it is worth, almost every aspect of this trial was illegal by either Jewish law or Jewish tradition. This trial was in the middle of the night (not permitted) and as we will read, the witnesses against Jesus could not even agree on what Jesus did wrong.
- c) This is also the time when Peter was going to deny Jesus. I am fully convinced that if Peter agreed to pray with Jesus a few hours earlier, he would have not denied knowing Jesus at this point. We'll get more into the "why's" after a few more verses.
15. Verse 55: The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. <sup>56</sup> Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.
- a) Let me explain what is the "Sanhedrin". In any Jewish town at that time, the town leaders had a committee (for the lack of a better word) to put on trial anyone who violated the Jewish law. The Romans permitted the locals to judge their own people, with the exception of the death penalty. An interesting side note is that there are religious factions in modern Israel today that are attempting to reorganize the Sanhedrin's for judgment.
- b) At this Sanhedrin trial, there were false witnesses against Jesus. Why were people willing to lie about Jesus? If you recall through the Gospels, Jesus in effect, "ticked off" a lot of religious people who disagreed with Jesus' views. I'm sure there were enough people willing to speak false testimony against Jesus, even on this short of notice.
- c) OK, I know that Jesus was falsely tried and convicted of crimes. Other than my salvation, why are these details important? For starters, there may be times in our life when we are falsely accused of something. Do you think that Jesus who has gone through this pain can relate to whatever pain or injustice we have to face in our lifetime?

16. Verse 57: Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: <sup>58</sup> "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' "<sup>59</sup> Yet even then their testimony did not agree.
- a) If you have ever wondered what was the "false testimony" given about Jesus, the answers are in these three verses. It dealt with the fact that these false witnesses claimed Jesus was going to destroy "the" temple. They took Jesus words about His own body being lifted up after three days and thought Jesus was talking about the literal destruction of the Temple. (A cross reference (pardon the pun ☺) on this point is John 2:19.)
17. Verse 60: Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.
- a) A key point here is that Jesus kept His mouth shut while false accusations were made. OK, why is that significant? If the false witnesses could agree that Jesus was going to lead a rebellion to destroy the physical temple, that would be enough "cause" to hand Jesus over to the Romans for punishment. However, Jesus never claimed He was going to do that. The point is not Jesus' intent; the point is the accusations that Jesus' faced.
  - b) Over and above the idea that Jesus can relate to the pain one can experience by a false accusation, I believe Jesus is also teaching a lesson here about dealing with such false testimony. If Jesus had responded to any of the false charges, He would be "legitimizing" those charges. When we respond to false charges, those false charges can make us appear guilty by simply responding to them. By Jesus keeping quiet, He is saying in effect, there are no grounds to these accusations.
  - c) So if we are on trial based on a false accusation, do we keep silent or do we go through the legal proceedings to defend ourselves? I think that depends on the case and if entering such a situation, pray about what God wants you to do. It may be a matter of keeping quiet or it may be a matter of speaking in one's defense. Just know that sometimes silence speaks a lot louder than any words we might say.
18. Verse 61 (cont.): Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" <sup>62</sup> "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- a) This is significant in that the High Priest is asking Jesus to swear an oath as to whether or not He is the promised Messiah. Jesus says yes by saying effect He is the "Son of Man", which is again a Jewish title for the Messiah.
  - b) The reason Jesus is not more blatant about being The "Messiah" throughout the gospels, is He wants people to figure that out by themselves. Because the High Priest specifically asked Jesus under oath that question, Jesus gave the High Priest a specific answer.
    - i) The reason Jesus did not give a straight "yes" answer, but instead stated that the High Priest would see Jesus (i.e., "The Son of Man") at the right hand of God. This was Jesus giving the proof to the High Priest that He is who He claimed to be.
  - c) Time for the hard question: How will that specific High Priest who lived roughly 2,000 years ago see Jesus come back on the "clouds of heaven"? When Jesus went up to heaven (See Acts 1:11), He said that He would come the same way that He left. Please explain:
    - i) For starters, understand that whenever God the Father appears in the bible, there is usually the physical appearance of clouds. The visual idea is that clouds make things foggy. It is a visual picture of the idea that we cannot fully comprehend God. Therefore, Jesus is saying that when He returns, He is coming back in a "foggy way" (pardon the bad pun) in that people still won't be able to comprehend the full power of God.
    - ii) But wait a minute. Jesus has not returned yet and it has been about 2,000 years. Jesus said this specific person (the High Priest of Israel at that time) would see Jesus come back with clouds. How is that going to work?

- iii) OK, it's time for me to weird here. ☺ I believe that when Jesus returns to wrap up the world as we know it, that is when all people other than Christians (who are saved prior to the 7-year "tribulation" will rise from the dead. In other words, Jesus and God the Father live in a world where time does not exist. God is not someone with a lot of time on His hands. God is someone who is outside of time, as we know it. When we are resurrected, we enter this "non-time" world.
  - iv) But didn't Paul say some rose from the dead in 1st Corinthians 15:6? I believe God made an exception here so that some would see "saved" people alive again.
  - v) I hold the view that God in His "outside of time perspective" resurrects those who died 2,000 years ago at the same "time" as those who die today or in the future. From our "stuck in time" perspective, this man died about 2,000 years ago. From God's "non-time" perspective, everyone is resurrected at the same time and therefore this High Priest who died 2,000 years ago will see Jesus return to earth just as Jesus said this man would in these verses.
  - vi) OK, while you are digesting those strange thoughts, I will move on. ☺
19. Verse 63: The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. <sup>64</sup>"You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death.
- a) Among those things that are forbidden in Jewish law is for the High Priest to tear his official garments. (See Leviticus 10:6 and 21:10 on that point.) It's a trivial point, but it is another piece of evidence that this entire trial was against the Jewish own set of rules about how they put people on trial.
  - b) Remember that the High Priest asked Jesus if He was the Messiah. Jesus in effect said yes, so this court found Him guilty of blasphemy. Jesus is claiming to be God and therefore, this group thought Jesus was putting down (blaspheming) God's name.
  - c) This leads to the classic debate about who was Jesus. Since He claimed to be God and claimed to be the Son of God, one has to come to the conclusion that either Jesus is insane or a liar or telling the truth. That question needs to be asked of everyone and we all have to make up our own minds as to whether or not Jesus was telling the truth or not.
    - i) Yes there are days when I have my doubts, but the more I study the evidence of the bible, the more I am convinced Jesus is telling the truth.
    - ii) Unfortunately, this group didn't believe Jesus. I say unfortunately not for Jesus sake, as He knew His destiny, but for the eternal destiny of those in that room.
    - iii) Notice that everyone in that room said Jesus was guilty. I am sure a lot of them saw Jesus do great miracles. Some of them probably believed He had special powers to heal, but that did not (in their mind) make Jesus to be God.
    - iv) So how do I know Jesus is God and not just some "deity" with great healing power? The best answer is I comprehend that "God Himself" is the only fair way of paying the price for sin. If God told say, an angel "you go pay the price for everyone's sins", it may be a nice gesture on that angel's part, but it wouldn't be "100% fair" of God to do that to that "innocent angel". By God Himself paying for all of the sins of the world, He Himself bears the penalty. It is the only way I can comprehend of showing that God is perfect in love and perfect in forgiveness at the same time. Meanwhile, we have to finish the trial. ☺
20. Verse 65: Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.
- a) Imagine being blindfolded and people are hitting you. Those same people say out loud, OK Jesus, guess who just hit you just now?" That is the type of hatred in that room.
  - b) One has to think "Satanic" to fully comprehend this scene. One has to remember that Satan's goal to get people to turn away from Jesus for their salvation. By getting people "riled up" and angry at Jesus, it builds up their hatred. The reason God wants us to know about this scene is to show what happens to people who decide to turn from Jesus.

- c) To put this scene another way, it never shocks me when people make fun of Christianity. I understand there are demonic forces working behind the scenes to keep people from turning to Jesus. It is a spiritual war that is constantly fought and in that sense, it is not shocking to see people "pick on" Jesus.
21. Verse 66: While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup> When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. <sup>68</sup> But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.
- a) For the last seven verses in this chapter, we switch scenes. Instead of focusing on the events of Jesus' actual trial in front of the Jewish council, we move to what is happening just outside of that room. This is the famous scene of Peter denying Jesus three times.
- b) Since almost all of us know this story pretty well, I want to focus on the "why" of this scene. Why is it important for us to know that Peter denied Jesus? Yes we understand by the connection between Peter failing to pray and Peter denying Jesus, but other than the reminder to learn how to pray, what else do we get out of this section?
- i) I was hoping you would ask that question. ☺ The point I am leading to is to note the difference between the people accusing Jesus of blasphemy in the last set of verses and the denial by Peter in these verses. In both cases, we have someone or some people denying their eternal relationship with Jesus. So what makes Peter in that sense better than those who are beating up Jesus a few feet away?
- a) The answer has to do with being "chosen" by God. It's hard to think of an eternal sin worse than Peter's denial of Jesus, yet He does restore Peter's relationship with Himself after He is resurrected. (See John 21:19.)
- ii) My point here is that if you and I are "picked" by God for eternal salvation, I don't believe there is anything we can do to lose that salvation. Yes we can mess up real bad like Peter did here, but we can't lose our salvation.
- iii) So how do we know if God picked us? Since we can't read God's mind, all we can do is truly believe Jesus is God and He died for our sins and He is in charge of our lives. If we do that, then we can (note that) be assured that God chose us.
- iv) This leads me back to my point about Peter. Yes he messed up here really bad. So do we all the time. The point is not to say, "Oh, poor Peter". The point is to look at our own lives, see areas of our lives where we still want to be in charge and not give that aspect of our lives over to God, then confess those areas as "sin".
22. Verse 69: When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." <sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.
- a) The point to notice is how strongly Peter went to deny Jesus. His accent gave Peter away that he was not from Jerusalem but from the Galilee area. Peter even went as far as to start cursing at the thought of knowing Jesus.
- b) Remember what Peter was trying to do here: Peter feared for his own life, which is why He denied knowing Jesus at this point. The servant girl was wondering, "What would someone from the Galilee area be doing hanging around the trial of Jesus in the middle of the night unless that person was one of Jesus' followers?"
- c) So why was Peter there and none of the other disciples? Most likely the other disciples simply feared for their own life and ran. I further suspect that Peter remembered Jesus' words about not denying Him and wanted to "hang around" for the outcome.
- d) So why was Peter so scared of this girl? It wasn't that he feared the girl overpowering Peter, but that she would turn Him in to the authorities.

- e) Finally, I want all of us to think about the "cock crowing twice". I discussed about a page back how some people are called (i.e., "picked") by God and others are not. Let me end this lesson by talking about another way to tell when we are called to follow Jesus.
    - i) It took the sound of a rooster crowing to make Peter realize what he did wrong. Notice Peter didn't just shrug it off and say, "You know, Jesus was right about this one". Instead, the last line of the chapter said, "Peter broke down and wept".
    - ii) Let's put it this way, God finds a way to convict us of our sins. For us, it most likely won't be a rooster, but He will find some way to make us realize how we have turned from Him with our lives for the moment. If that realization of how we have sinned makes us want to turn back to God, that is a sign that one is truly saved. In other words, we care about pleasing God and when we blow it (and we will), those who are saved are interested in changing their ways for the better.
    - iii) Compare Peter's actions to those conducting Jesus' trial. Every aspect of that trial was illegal by either Jewish custom or the Old Testament. Yet, that guilt did not convict anyone who put Jesus on trial to change. Why? Because deep down inside, such people didn't have a heart to look to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin.
      - a) Truthfully I should not speak so fast. It is possible someone in that room could have repented later. Jesus said the only unforgivable sin is the lifetime denial that Jesus is God. That is why Peter wept, because he knew the truth and once that truth hit him (and us) those that love Christ do turn back to Him.
    - f) OK, on that happy note, I'll just end the lesson here. Jesus' trials and what we can learn from those trials do continue in the next lesson. Until then, let's just end in prayer.
23. Let's pray: To our loving daddy, and the God who forgives us of all of our sins. We don't know what You have in store for us this coming day, but we do know that the best way to face whatever it is we are about to face, is to put our trust in You. Give us the strength and ability to do Your will and then trust in the fact that You are working through us to get Your will done. Help us to be good witnesses for You through whatever situation we might be facing at this time. Help us to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.