

Have you noticed that: WHENEVER THE GOING GETS TOUGH – THE TOUGH BECOME LEADERS...? Hard times call for strong hearts... don't they? Every notable leader that I can think of... accomplished great things and established themselves *as memorable* – because of the hard times that they faced.

Winston Churchill summoned England to courage in standing against Hitler from the Basement of White's Hall... while London suffered persistent bombing raids every evening... and the rest of Europe crumbled. ...

Abraham Lincoln faced fierce opposition and shouldered the burden of holding a nation together – without tolerating slavery. ... George Washington led his woefully inferior and ill-equipped troops through a harsh winter and then into battle against the greatest world power of that time.

Going back (even further) in time... let me call to your attention another strong-hearted leader... who proved himself in hard times. Martin Luther was not yet 40 years old... when he stood before the most powerful religious authorities in the world. They tried to force him to renounce his teaching. If he would not do so... he would be excommunicated. After a long night of agonizing deliberation... he faced his examiners and said:

*“Unless I am convinced by Scriptures and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of pope and council... for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything... for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”*

Luther's quotable words are those from the Diet (Assembly) of Worms (1521). ... Luther... of course went on to lead what became known as “The Protestant Reformation.”

## WHENEVER THE GOING GETS TOUGH – THE TOUGH BECOME LEADERS

In the most dire of circumstances that you and I will ever face... we can only hope and pray... that if we are confronted with the choice between standing upon truth – and enduring an agonizing execution... God will give us the courage to stand firm. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

Today... in our study through Luke's gospel... we come to a passage where we find two examples of men who faced the same situation of life-threatening opposition. One faltered and linked-up with the enemies ... the other peered into the inky-black abyss of evil... and took commanding charge of the situation. ... Judas Iscariot and Jesus Christ will serve as our examples.

## WHENEVER THE GOING GETS TOUGH – THE TOUGH BECOME LEADERS

Judas is a great question mark in history. Many books have been written about him... who he was... and why he did what he did. ... I think there are a lot of people who (simply) cannot see themselves standing up and confronting sheer evil. They know that they have caved from such pressure in the past. So they identify more with Judas... than with Jesus.

This could be why we see so many books and writings that try to put him in the best possible light. Some authors portray Judas as loyal to Jesus. Loyal...??? ... THEN why did Judas betray Jesus...? - Because of his concern that things were not moving fast enough... Judas wanted to force Jesus into revealing His power. He thought he understood more about the world and the kingdom than Jesus did.

It is a rationale that harkens right back to Genesis 3... and man's first sin... and every sin thereafter – including every sin you and I have ever committed. Adam and Eve disobeyed in an attempt to be as wise as God. We view ourselves as knowing better than God of what we need. (God is holding out on me... so I better take matters into my own hands.) This is the dark underbelly of all sin. We delude ourselves into thinking that we know better than God does. – And some say Judas' sin was no worse than Adam and Eve... or you or I.)

There are many variations on this theory about poor (misguided) Judas. Some take it much further. ... In 1971... Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice opened their rock opera on Broadway in New York... and one year later it opened in London. Jesus Christ Superstar smashed all previous records for musicals in Europe and America.

I was a clueless High School student at the time when its music peeked on the radio. I loved it! I wasn't paying attention to the words of the songs. I just loved the rhythm and beat – and that Jesus' name was being mentioned over and over. His name (I thought) was being made popular.

It wasn't until my youth pastor (at the time) brought a copy of Time Magazine to a youth group meeting and read portions of an interview of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice (the authors and producer... of Jesus Christ Superstar.) They made clear their belief that Judas got a bad wrap. Their rock opera (rather bluntly) directed society to see Judas as a hero – not a villain. So they depicted Judas as an honest... but dissatisfied disciple. His frustration grew in time... over the wrongful direction that Jesus was steering His disciples... so he heroically stopped Him.

I don't buy ANY of the "*poor misguided Judas*" theories. ... Or any that ascribe to: "he meant well... his intentions were good." I think Judas knew exactly what he was doing... and he is judged (as we are judged) by his actions. John 12:6 says that Judas was a thief. He carried the money for Jesus and His disciples... and was stealing from it. No. His heart was corrupt!

But lets assume for a moment that he did have good intentions. You and I might prefer that God would judge us by our intentions... But that doesn't even work in MAN's court before a judge and jury. We can't explain a traffic violation (for instance)... by claiming "*I didn't mean to do it. I meant well.*" We must pay for our offense.

Bruce Larson wrote about a friend of his who went for a drive one day with his wife in the country. They came to some apple orchards and watched a man picking the apples and filling a bushel basket. The couple stopped and asked the harvester if they could buy some. "*Just help yourself,*" he said. ... They climbed out of the car and got some paper bags and filled them with the choicest apples. On leaving... they asked again: "*Are you sure we can't pay you?*" "*Oh, no,*" he said. "*I'm stealing them too.*"

Now... if the law or the orchard owner had come along at that point... good intentions would be irrelevant. They were stealing apples. ... I do not think Judas (even) had "*good intentions.*" (John says that he had a corrupt heart.)

We do not need to identify with Judas or try to build a case for him. He is guilty. He is a scandalous traitor. We can't even claim that it was Satan's fault.

Another warning before we read the passage is this: Jesus was not trapped by Judas. As we read it... notice how much Jesus was in full charge of everything. ... Jesus gave mysterious directions to Peter and John for knowing where to go and prepare the Passover meal. Why? ... Given the context of where we read it... I believe Jesus was keeping the location a secret – from Judas!

Jesus was determined that His arrest would take place at the time He had chosen - and **not** before! ... Peter and John were to enter the city and look for a man carrying a water jar. ... Only women carried water jars in those times - men carried waterskins. This unusual sight of a man doing women's work would be a sign. ... They were to follow that man and say certain words to him — words which are (in effect) passwords. ... Jesus had pre-planned and carefully arranged it all. He knows His betrayal time is at hand. Judas was looking for a time Jesus would be isolated from the crowds. This would be such a time... but Jesus made careful plans so that this important Passover feast would not be interrupted.

Jesus was preparing to celebrate Passover with His disciples... and fulfilling another event in God's plan. At Passover... the nation reflected on its deliverance and birth as a free nation. ... Another era of salvation (true freedom) is about to be established — this one would also be inaugurated with death.

Peter and John were to prepare a Passover lamb (another innocent life was to be readied for death)... but first must come one last meal... a time of intimacy... and a time of instruction with the disciples. ... Meanwhile... the nation's leaders were preparing to kill Jesus – the True Passover Lamb. The setting is full of irony. In the midst of this holiday season that

celebrates life... the leadership schemes to end the life of One Who came to bring life.

It is incredible that during Passover... the Jews were expected to remove all leaven (yeast) from their houses as a reminder that their ancestors left Egypt in haste and had to eat unleavened bread. But it also portrayed them cleansing themselves of evil. ... The religious leaders had cleansed their homes... but **not** their hearts. ... Back in Luke 12:1... we read that Jesus warned His disciples about the “*leaven of the Pharisees*” (their vile hypocrisy”)... and now we see this hypocrisy at work.

### **Luke 22:1-2**

The chief priests and the scribes did not fear **God**... but they did fear the **people**. ... They are not afraid to kill the Son of God - they just had to find a way to do it in a politically wise manner. For a long time now... they had wanted to arrest Jesus and get Him out of the way - but they had not been able to work out a safe plan that would protect them from the people. ...The leaders decided not to nab Him during the feast... because they feared a popular uprising. AND THIS is another irony. ... Even though they had a position of power... they are not really in control. (Jesus – most certainly – was!)

During the day... Jesus taught in the temple... surrounded by many thousands of witnesses - so they couldn't seize Him in public. ... Each night... Jesus (wisely) left for an undisclosed location (somewhere east of the city.) This made ambushing Him in private - impossible. They had to figure something out. ... Judas would solve the problem for them.

### **Luke 22:3-6**

In John's Gospel... we see Judas's long... slow... deliberate slide into evil. But (here) Luke offers no background... no explanation... no rationale. We don't need any – it doesn't matter. So Luke summarizes the reason Judas betrayed the Lord in three words: "*Satan entered him.*"

The meaning of this expression is not entirely clear... but its significance is: Judas came under the control of the spiritual personification of evil - Satan. Judas acts and is responsible... but Satan is the energy.

It may well be that (*all along*) Judas followed Jesus from selfish motives... expecting to receive a position of great status and prestige when Jesus came triumphantly to Jerusalem as Messiah. ... But when Jesus came... and it was evident that He was not going to be the Messiah Judas hoped for... Judas may have lashed out against Jesus... and opened his heart to Satan. Judas chose to serve Satan's purposes (possibly out of spite.) ... Jesus didn't give Judas what his selfish nature wanted... so Judas looked upon his ties to Jesus as broken. ... In essence... Judas may have thought: "You betrayed me by not being the kind of Messiah that my corrupt heart wanted. You betrayed me – first!"

(But) why did **Satan** want Jesus killed...? (Stop and think!) The death of Jesus on the cross would bring Satan's defeat. Wouldn't Satan know about the prophecy in Genesis 3... that the Messiah would crush the head of the serpent? Why play along? Why fulfill it?

I think this shows us that Satan is not all-wise! ... Even if he did know that the death of Jesus would *crush his head*... his hatred got the best of him. Since Satan is the great deceiver... he has (no doubt) deceived *himself* — and may actually believed that he could win over Jesus.

But it all plays into the plan of the One Who **was** in charge. ... This was the **appointed** time for Jesus to go to the cross... but only when Jesus said to Judas “*Go and do what you are going to do...*”

Jesus is just as much in control of end time events. Satan knows what is going to take place. He knows what prophesy says. But he will not be able to thwart ANY part of it. He will not be able to out-maneuver the Lord. Just like what we are reading in Luke... everything Satan does will play into God’s hands. Take courage by what we are studying today!

### **Luke 22:7-13**

As I have already stated... these events show that Jesus is in control. The two disciples go out and find that things happen just as Jesus had said.

Once Peter and John located the room... they arranged everything for the meal. By midday on the fourteenth... all work came to an end as a representative of each family carried their lamb to the temple. ... At about 3 p.m. ... a Levite blew the ram’s horn... worshipers filled the temple court... and the massive gates closed behind them. ... Each representative then killed his family’s lamb... skinned it... and drained its blood into a basin.

While this mass killing of lambs is hard for the twenty-first-century reader to imagine... we must keep in mind that ancient people didn’t have the luxury of packaged meat from the grocery store. They kept meat fresh by keeping it alive. (As Chuck Swindoll points out)... Killing a lamb and preparing it for supper was as ordinary a task as driving to the supermarket is for us.

For Passover... the lamb was killed in the temple to consecrate it as a substitute. ... Worshipers drained the animal’s blood into a basin held by a



priest who then splashed it against the base of the altar to signify the family's atonement for sin. The fat and kidneys were burned on the altar as a part of the "peace offering"... reaffirming good relations between God and the worshiper's family.

After the sacrifice... each household representative took the lamb home before sunset and roasted the meat. ... In keeping with God's instructions to Moses... the disciples smeared some of the blood on the doorposts and lintel of the main entrance. ... Once Peter and John had done all of this... Jesus and His entourage were ready to celebrate Passover together – as family.

### **Luke 22:14-18**

This was a passionate moment for Jesus. It wasn't so much that He was saying "goodbye" to His disciples... as much as now He arrived at the central reason why He came to man: to institute a new covenant with men... based on His own sacrifice. This is not the beginning of the end; it is the beginning of the beginning.

Jesus will not again sit at the Passover table until his return. Jesus' refusal to eat such a festal meal until the consummation signals a new stage in God's plan.

The kingdom reference (here) is clearly future. The setting of eating the Passover lamb pictures the banquet time of consummation... when the full results of Jesus' sacrifice are realized. I shall never eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God," that is, "I shall never eat it again until its typical and symbolical meaning has become fully realized in the new heaven and earth." It is there that the deliverance of His people... not from

Egypt... but from all sin and evil... will have been fully accomplished. It is there that they will (at last) have been fully redeemed. After the Tribulation on earth and after the Jews are reconciled with the Messiah that they originally rejected... the deliverance of God's people will be fully accomplished. They will be more fully redeemed than they were when they left Egypt... at the very first Passover.

### **Luke 22:19-20**

When Jesus said: "*Do this in remembrance of Me...*" the verb "do" means **keep** doing it. He is telling them to do it (not just once) but do it at regular intervals. This is why we celebrate communion once a month – We are obeying this command. ... Some churches do it every time they meet. That is OK... they are obeying it too. Jesus just said "*keep doing it*" – but He didn't specify how often. We would be obedient if we do it once a week... once a month... or even once a year. It is important that we do it on a regular basis – not just ONCE.

There are two things that Jesus commanded believers to do. Therefore we call them "ordinances." Jesus (Himself) ordained that every one of His disciples observe two rituals. They are not conditions in order to be saved. They are to be obeyed – if you have been saved... It is a symbol of submitting to Jesus as Lord. He asked us to do it – so we do... in obedient love.

The other ordinance is baptism. Just before He ascended back into heaven... He commanded that His followers obey Him in that.

### **Luke 22:21-23**

Throughout the evening... as Jesus solemnly celebrated God's faithfulness to Israel and prepared His disciples to receive a miraculous new covenant... Satan sat nearby in the presence of Judas Iscariot. Judas had followed Jesus for more than three years as a trusted member of the Twelve. The time had come for him to carry out his sinister mission. So... Jesus announced that one among them would betray Him. His declaration that the hand of the betrayer was with Him on the table is simply an expression to say, "*One of you dining with Me will betray Me.*"

He did not do this just for the sake of the disciples... but more for the sake of Judas. Jesus had kissed Judas and washed his feet... and now He was giving Judas another opportunity to repent. ... It is most significant that Jesus did not openly identify Judas as the traitor... but protected him until the very end. More than one commentator wrote that if Jesus made it clear who the betrayer was... the other 11 would have probably pounced on him and snuffed the life out of him... before he could finish his task.

Before He chose His 12 Apostles... Jesus spent a whole night in prayer. (We saw this in Luke 6:12–16.) ... So we must believe that it was the Father's will that Judas be among them. ... But (somehow) the selection of Judas did not seal his fate. Rather... it gave him opportunity to watch the Lord Jesus closely... to believe... and to be saved.

The issue of God's sovereignty is very much a mystery... and I caution you to be very leery of anyone who thinks they have figured it all out. ... (Here we see) that God in His sovereignty had determined that His Son would be betrayed by a friend... (several places in the Psalms even prophesy about it – Ps 41:9... 55:12-14... Ps 69:25... and 109:8). ... **But divine**

**foreknowledge does not destroy human responsibility or accountability.** Judas made each decision freely and would be judged accordingly. God's ways far exceed my simple comprehension.

(And) here is something else that I think is bewildering. The fact that the disciples were puzzled by this strange announcement reveals that: **1)** they did not know Judas' true character... and/or **2)** they did not know their own hearts ("Which of us could do such a terrible thing?")... and/or **3)** they did not know the prophecies in the Psalms. One thing is certain... they did not remember the Lord's multiple statements when He told them that He would be betrayed into the hands of the enemy. (We see it in Matt. 17:22; 20:18).

### **Luke 22:24-27**

Soon after the Lord's somber discussion about His suffering, His atoning death on behalf of His followers... the institution of the new covenant — which every Jew identified with the Messiah's kingdom of God — and the betrayal that will set everything in motion... the remaining eleven apostles began arguing over rank. Jesus had to explain that they were thinking like the unsaved Gentiles and not like God's children. It was not their first argument of this sort (we saw it before... when we were in Luke 9:46). They compared their relative worth and jockeyed for position in the Messiah's future court.

Jesus interrupted their argument to correct their view of the coming kingdom... which operates according to completely different rules from the present world order... the dominion of evil. One cannot simply observe how government works here and apply it to the new kingdom. Furthermore... He had to address their selfish concerns about authority... rank... greatness...

position... titles... entitlements... privilege... and all the perks of holding government office in the ancient world.

How sad and alone Jesus must have felt at that moment... having just unveiled the coming of God's kingdom and the terrible price He must pay to be its King!

The King of all creation reflected on the way the kings of earth rule their subjects. He highlighted the irony of their "lording over" others and then giving themselves the title "benefactor" or "servant of the people." In the kingdom of God... "rulers" truly are servants. Rather than taking the positions of highest honor... rulers take the jobs no one else wants. He then used Himself as the prime example of this kind of leadership.

*True greatness means to be like Jesus... and that means being a servant to others. A servant does not argue over who is the greatest... because he knows that he is the least... and he accepts this from the hand of God.*

Since all Christians are to be servants... there is no reason for us to compete with one another for honors and recognition. It is too bad that this competitive spirit is so strong among so many believers today... as people (including pastors) promote themselves and their ministries as "greater because we're bigger!"

Jesus closed this lesson on servanthood by reminding them of their future reward in the kingdom. In spite of their weaknesses and failures... the disciples had stood by Jesus during His earthly ministry... and God would honor them for their faithfulness.

### **Luke 22: 28-30**

Judas had obviously left by this time. Jesus promised those in the room that they would experience true greatness. They would be MORE THAN amply rewarded for remaining faithful to Him... and it will be better than any earthly rank could possibly be!

These 11 will have great power in the coming kingdom. They will sit on thrones and rule the nation of Israel as vice-regents of the Messiah.

... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

As the evening drew to a close and the disciples lingered over the remaining morsels of the paschal meal... a storm gathered overhead. Evil men with evil in their hearts converged on a secret location in Jerusalem to plot the arrest of the Messiah. The Lord (of course) knew this night would be His last. ... Yet... He didn't focus on His own need for comfort or reassurance; instead... He prepared His men for the confusion of the next twenty-four hours. ... Here was Jesus... standing tall in hard times... and also leading others to do the same. He stayed focused regardless of the pressure.

Are you experiencing difficulty in your life right now...? Are you at a crossroads (being tested to see if you will persistently stand for truth... or TURN AWAY BECAUSE OF SOME DISAPPOINTMENT IN YOUR LIFE)...? Perhaps it seems like the Lord has not met all of your expectations...? ... By remaining steadfast your eternal reward will be far greater than WHATEVER IT WAS YOU WERE EXPECTING.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)**

*<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*