



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 56”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 56

Luke 22:28-34

“Lord, why can’t I follow You now?” Peter said. “I’ll give up my life for You.”

“Will you give up your life for Me?” Jesus answered. “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to have you disciples that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail. And when you have come back, strengthen your brothers.”

“Lord,” said Peter, “I’m ready to go with You even to prison and death!”

But Jesus replied, “I’m telling you the truth, Peter: The rooster will not crow at all today until you have denied three times that you know Me!

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Before Jesus instituted the Communion ceremony, He said, in **John 13:33:**

33 Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.

Jesus is speaking of His Passion experience, His trials and His crucifixion. While many men have been tried and executed for criminal activity, Jesus was about to undergo an experience that was uniquely horrendous in the history of mankind. The Roman procurator Pontius Pilate, who was a vicious man, was warned by his wife to have nothing to do with Jesus, who had actually broken no Roman law. Because of this warning, Pilate did not want to execute Jesus, but he was being entreated to do so by the Jewish leaders, who had the power to make Pilate’s life difficult if they complained to Rome that Pilate’s administration coddled criminals. Pilate’s brutality brought him to the conclusion that if he had Jesus beaten beyond recognition, he might be able to satisfy the hatred of the Jewish leaders for Jesus while keeping Jesus alive.

So Pilate ordered the Roman soldiers to beat Jesus as viciously as they could, short of beating Him to death. The soldiers not only used leather whips, which bruised Jesus’ flesh, but tied iron shards and bone fragments into the leather, which actually tore into Jesus’ flesh as well. Jesus’ nerves were exposed and aggravated, putting Him into terrible pain.



Unfortunately for Pilate, the Jews were not satisfied with seeing Jesus suffer, as they were intent on eliminating Jesus' threat to their authority. The brutality of Jesus' flogging did not satisfy the Jews, as their agenda was to have Jesus completely removed from the scene by having Him executed.

But, as brutal and vicious as they were, Pilate and the Jews were not the main players in the game. That role would fall to God, who was actually the one behind the torture of Jesus. God was punishing Jesus as a vicarious sacrifice; the word vicarious means that Jesus did not merit being punished, but was being punished for the deeds of someone else; Jesus was being punished sufficiently to atone for the sins of all mankind. The "He" to which **Isaiah 53:5-6**, refers is Jesus Christ, as the Scripture tells us:

5 But He [Jesus] was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

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.

Iniquity is another word for sin, and in order for God to punish Jesus sufficiently to atone for all of each of our sins, the punishment had to be as severe as possible. All of the torture that the Jews and the Romans could heap on Jesus was insufficient for the task. God punished Jesus Himself during the three hours, between noon and three PM on that Friday, when Jesus hung on the Cross in the dark.

Joshua Harris graphically explains the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion as he recounts a dream that he was given by God. Josh wrote:

In that place between dreaming and wakefulness, I found myself in this room. The only distinguishing feature in the room was one wall covered with small index card files.

They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endlessly in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read "Girls I Have Liked." I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.

And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a card catalog of my life. The actions of my every moment, big and small, were written here in detail that my memory couldn't match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their contents. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of



shame and regret so intense that I looked over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching. A file named “Friends” was next to one marked “Friends I Have Betrayed.”

The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird: “Books I Have Read,” “Lies I Have Told,” “Comfort I Have Given,” “Jokes At Which I Have Laughed.” Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: “Things I’ve Yelled at My Brothers.” Others I couldn’t laugh at: “Things I Have Done in Anger,” “Things I Have Muttered under My Breath at My Parents.” I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes there were fewer than I hoped.

Could it be possible that I had the time in my twenty years to write each of these thousands, possibly millions, of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature.

When I pulled out the file marked “Songs I Have Listened To,” I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly and yet after two or three yards, I hadn’t found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to a file marked “Lustful Thoughts,” I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detail. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded.

Suddenly I felt an almost animal rage. “No one must ever see these cards! I have to destroy them!” In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn’t matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took the file at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it.

Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore “People With Whom I Have Shared the Gospel.” The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand.

And then the tears came. I began to weep. I fell on my knees and cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it



all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key.

But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. *No, please, not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus.*

I watched helplessly as He began to open the files and read the cards. I couldn't bear to watch His response. And in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemed to intuitively go to the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally Jesus turned and looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands, and began to cry again. He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn't say a word. He just cried with me.

Then Jesus got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.

"No!" I shouted, rushing to Him. All I could find to say was "No, no," as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn't be on these cards. But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, and so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood.

Jesus gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile and continued to sign the cards. I don't think I'll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but it seem as though it was the next instant when I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. Jesus placed His hand on my shoulder and said, "It is finished."

I stood up, and Jesus led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written.

The Bible teaches that one day we'll each stand before God to be judged.

Romans 14:12 tells us:

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

All the "cards" from our life will be dumped out before Him for review.

Although I know I'll be ashamed on that day, I'm not afraid, because I've put my faith in Jesus Christ, God's Perfect Son. On the Cross, He wrote His name on my cards and paid the penalty for my sin. Even though I deserve to be punished, even though I'm guilty, in the judgment, the name of Jesus will be on those cards. That is what Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross is all about.

But Peter had not had the dream, had not seen the cards and did not realize that having his own life in his own hands was a losing proposition. But we are all guilty of wearing rose colored glasses when we consider our own



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

behavior; we all think that we are better than we actually are until we are faced with our personal sinfulness.

Although it is of the utmost importance that we recognize that we are sinners and that we need to be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, many of us find it difficult to do so, because we share the disease of Peter. When Jesus told the disciples that they could not follow Him to the place to which he was going, Peter's disease kicked in and he had to say something. In **Mark 14:29-30**, **Luke 22:28-34** and **John 13:36-38**:

Simon Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, where are You going?"

"Where I am going you cannot follow now," Jesus answered. "But afterward you will. You disciples have stayed with Me through my trials, and just as My Father granted a kingdom to Me, so I am granting one to you: that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel."

"Lord, why can't I follow You now?" Peter said. "I'll give up my life for You."

"Will you give up your life for Me?" Jesus answered. "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to have you disciples that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail. And when you have come back, strengthen your brothers."

"Lord," said Peter, "I'm ready to go with You even to prison and death!"

But Jesus replied, "I'm telling you the truth, Peter: The rooster will not crow at all today until you have denied three times that you know Me!

Peter said to [Jesus], "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."

Peter, Jesus said, you are going to fail. All men are failures, and you are no exception.

If we were strong enough to resist the wiles of the devil, there would be no need for Jesus to save us; we could just save ourselves. But, none of us are powerful enough, none of us are prepared enough, none of us are strong enough to live the life that Jesus lived and to die the death that Jesus died. We all have that card catalog, and the cards in the catalog reveal our weaknesses.

What we need is not strength of will, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What we need is not strength of will, but the ability to rely on God. What we need is not strength of will, but the ability to avoid sin by recognizing our weaknesses and staying away from those things that can trip us up.

I am no paragon of virtue, nor am I immune from temptation. When I go into the world and enjoy my new pastime, ballroom dancing, I do it with my wife, and only with my wife. We were at a party just last weekend, and we talked to a



female dance instructor from Detroit. She is a pastor's daughter, and, by her testimony, a church going woman, but she is also a dancer, and I don't mean someone who picked up dancing like my wife and me. She is a real dancer, one who grew up taking dance lessons, one who has the curves, contours and steps of a professional dancer, one who could easily fit in with the dancers on a Broadway stage. She and her husband dance so elegantly that I don't dance when they are on the floor, because I get distracted watching her and forget what I am doing.

Marie and I took a dancing class from her and her husband, and when she suggested that the three men in the class take turns dancing with the seven ladies, the other ladies in the class let her know that I only dance with my wife. One of the ladies was particularly emphatic about it, so much so that she even surprised me.

Marie and I were good students. We practiced our lessons at home, and learned the dance steps that she and her husband taught. Near the end of the class, she asked me to dance with her as a test to see how well I could actually dance. I turned down her request, telling her that she could tell how well I dance by watching me dance with my wife, since my wife is the only person with whom I dance. She makes it a point to ask me to dance with her every time we see one another at a function, and I make it a point to refuse. Now, if I agreed to dance with her, I'm sure that nothing untoward would happen. She and her husband live in Detroit and Marie and I live here in Lansing, we are both Christians, and so we are probably pretty safe together on a public dance floor. However, as my Dad told me, a long time ago, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The Apostle Paul agrees. He tells me, in **1Corinthians 7:1**:

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Why would Paul say that? Was Paul actually inspired by the Holy Spirit, or was he just talking?

It is my opinion that Paul said that because of the ability of man to rationalize sin. "After all, what could one dance in public hurt?" said the devil. Well, let me ask you, have you ever touched an adult member of the opposite sex? There is a bioelectric difference in potential between a man and a woman.

According to the book Applied Bioelectricity by J. Patrick Reilly, the electrical charge radiated from a man is 6.7 kV/m, as compared to 17.5 kV/m radiated from a woman. The difference in voltage between two objects in contact with one another will cause an electrical current to flow between them. That's what you see when you drag your feet over a carpet that is not grounded. Since your personal electrical potential is different than that of the carpet, current flows between you and the carpet, and if the electrical potential of that current is great enough to overcome the resistance of the air, an electrical spark is produced and you will get a shock.



When men and women touch, there is a difference in electrical potential, which causes current flow. By design, the effect of the current flow between men and women is both stimulating and pleasant, which is why men are attracted to women and vice versa. Paul recognized this fact, and his admonition to not touch a woman advises us to not allow the current to flow between us, with the one exception that he gives in the next verse of the lection, **1Corinthians 7:2**, which says:

2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

God designed the genders to be physically attracted to each other, but He admonishes us to pick one individual of the opposite sex out to be our exclusive partner. Satan tempts us to try to enjoy more than one mate, and we may find ourselves disobeying God if we overestimate our strength and fail to heed the admonition of God to avoid temptation rather than to try to resist it. Paul tells us in **1Corinthians 10:12-13**:

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The way that we can bear temptation is that we can escape it.

Billy Graham, the evangelist, is revered as a man of God. There have been many evangelists that have fallen in disgrace; it is the fondest desire to the devil to cause trouble in the church because of the weakness of the shepherd, and the devil has been successful in tempting many. But Billy Graham has withstood the test of time, and never been caught in a compromising position. He explained his success in one of his books, in which he said,

“It has been my policy since I started preaching to avoid temptation by never being alone with a woman other than my wife. I and the members of my staff have dealt with hundreds of women concerning the logistics of our crusades, but it is our hard and fast rule to never, under any circumstances, be alone with one of them.

“On one occasion, I flew to the location of a particular crusade, and the pastor of the church that was spearheading the crusade was unavailable to pick me up from the airport as planned because of an emergency that arose while I was on the plane traveling to his destination. He sent his wife to pick me up, and when I got off the plane and went into the terminal, she was standing there holding a sign with my name on it.

“I greeted her, ‘Hello, Mrs. So and So. How are you today?’ Then I asked, ‘Is your husband here?’



“She told me that he was detained by an emergency, but that she had come in his place to take me to my hotel.

“ ‘Well, ma’am’, I responded, ‘I appreciate your hospitality, but if you don’t mind, I’ll take a taxi to the hotel. Nothing against you, you understand, but it is our policy that men in our ministry are never alone with women other than their wives, even just for short periods of time being transported. I hope that you understand that I am not casting any aspersions on your motives or your virtue, but if I don’t stick to the policy, I will be setting a bad example for my junior preachers that may not be able to handle being in a woman’s presence alone as well as I can handle being in yours. Please thank your husband for his hospitality and please excuse me.’

The easiest way to maintain morality is to avoid situations in which we can breach it. “

Paul does not tell us to overcome temptation, but to flee temptation. The devil can certainly devise a temptation that we lack the strength to overcome, so we must simply avoid being available when temptation comes. When Marie and I go out dancing, the place is full of temptation; the vast majority of the women there put their best foot forward; they dress attractively, wear perfume to create an aromatic ambiance, present themselves in good physical condition, with womanly contours and lotion softened skin over firm muscles to create an attractive visual and a pleasant physical sensation when they are touched. The point of dancing is for the man and woman to enjoy themselves physically with one another, and most of the women prepare themselves to do so. Thus, it is prudent of me to avoid the physicality of women to whom I am not married in favor of enjoying the physicality of my wife, to whom I have pledged fidelity, even as Billy Graham finds it intelligent to not be alone with women to whom he is not married. It is a wise man that knows his limitations.

God tells us, in **1 Corinthians 6:18-20**:

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Satan can sift us when we lack awareness and put ourselves in compromising situations. God instructs us to be aware of potential temptation so that we can flee rather than trying to withstand it. If we consider ourselves strong, we may very well find ourselves in trouble, even as was Peter, who honestly thought that he had the power to protect Jesus from the wiles of the devil. But we



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

have an advantage over the Peter that fell in disgrace. Jesus reveals our advantage to us in the next lection, **John 14:1-6**, in which He says:

Don't let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. In My Father's house are many permanent residences. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with Me that you may be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way."

"Lord, we don't know where You're going," Thomas said. "How can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

We have seen the completed work of Jesus Christ and Peter had not. We know that the power to overcome sin is not in us, but also that Jesus has prepared us a place for us with the Father and has made a way for us to get there. To do so, we have to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We have to understand that we can only avoid sin by the power of the Holy Spirit transmitted to us because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Peter didn't recognize these facts; he thought that as long as he had his good right arm working and his trusty knife in his hand, he could protect Jesus. But all of the physical or mental ability on earth is not sufficient to allow us to resist the wiles of the devil; we can only do so by relying on the Word of Jesus Christ given to us in the Scripture and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ given to us on Calvary's Cross.

Only by relying on Jesus Christ as our Way, our Truth and our Life will we develop the spiritual caution to follow Jesus' suggestion to flee temptation; if we fail to acknowledge Jesus Christ, we will rely on our own strength, and, like Peter, we tell Jesus that we can hold our own without His help.

And we will fail.

Peter found out that the reality is somewhat different than his boast. When the Jews came to arrest Jesus, Peter pulled out his knife and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus told Peter to put his knife away, and then meekly submitted to the arrest. As they took Jesus away, they began beating Him, and Jesus took the beating without defense or retaliation. Jesus' lack of resistance confused Peter, who expected Jesus to avoid the attempt of the Jews to arrest Him as He had done many times earlier. When Jesus failed to defend Himself and did not allow Peter to use his knife, Peter was at a loss as to what to do. He and John decided to follow Jesus to see if there was anything that they could do to save Him. The Bible records that Peter's reacted as Jesus prophesied, in



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Matthew 26:58, 69-75, Mark 14:54, 66-72, Luke 22:54-62, John 18:15-18, 25-27:

Simon Peter and another disciple, [John], kept following Jesus from a distance, even up to the courtyard of the high priest. [John], the other disciple, was known to the high priest and went into the courtyard with Jesus, but Peter stood outside the door. Then [John], the other disciple, went out and spoke to the servant girl who tended the door and brought Peter in.

Peter was alone in the courtyard without John and Jesus, and found himself conversing with the other people there. The lection continues:

The servant girl then said to Peter, “Aren’t you one of this Man’s disciples?”

“I am not,” Peter replied. *(Peter’s first denial)*

Because it was cold, the servants and temple guards had started a fire of coals in the middle of the courtyard and were standing by it, warming themselves. Peter was standing with them by the fire, warming himself. When they had all sat down, he sat down as well in the middle of the guards to see what would happen.

“Aren’t you also one of His disciples?” they asked him.

Peter denied it. “I am not!” he said. *(Peter’s second denial)*

After recounting that which was happening with Jesus, the Scripture continues with Peter’s story.

Meanwhile Simon Peter was sitting below, out in the courtyard. One of the high priest’s servant girls saw Peter warming himself. She looked intently at him where he sat in the light and said, “This man, too, was with Jesus of Nazareth.” She went closer to him and said, “You, too, were with the Galilean.”

But Peter denied it in front of them all. “Woman, I don’t know Him!” he said. “I don’t even know what you’re talking about.” *(Peter’s third denial)* Then [Peter] went out to the courtyard’s entryway [and a rooster crowed].

A little later, when he had gone out to the gate, another woman saw him and said to those nearby, “This man, too, was with Jesus the Nazarene.”

Another man saw him and said, “You, too, are one of them!”

But Peter again denied it, this time with an oath: “I don’t know the Man!” *(Peter’s first denial after the rooster crowed and before the rooster crowed twice)*

The servant girl saw him again. “This man is one of them,” she began saying to those nearby. Again Peter denied it. *(Peter’s second denial after the rooster crowed and before the rooster crowed twice)*

About an hour later another man spoke up and insisted, “Without a doubt this man was with Him because he too is a Galilean.”



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Then one of the servants of the high priest (a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off) said, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with Him?”

The others standing there came close to Peter and said, “Certainly you’re also one of them! You’re a Galilean—your speech betrays you!”

But Peter denied it again and began to curse and swear. “I don’t know this fellow you’re talking about,” he shouted. “I don’t know what you’re saying!” (*Peter’s third denial after the rooster crowed and before the rooster crowed twice*)

While he was still speaking a rooster crowed a second time, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered what the Lord had told him: **“Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times,”** and, **“Before it crows the second time, you will deny Me three times.”**

Peter went out and wept uncontrollably, with bitter tears.

No one physically threatened Peter. Four of his six challenges were from women, who were certainly no threat to a muscular, Galilean fisherman. But when we rely on our own strength to resist the devil, we find that we can’t overcome even his weakest threat. In **John 14:6:**

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

It is only by our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we can live in the will of God and resolutely avoid compromising situations. When we have faith in Jesus, we also have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us so that we can recognize the temptation to sin and avoid it. And when we are weak and do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, as **John 3:16-17** says:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

So let us avoid temptation and sin by concentrating on the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible and our relationship with the Holy Spirit through Him, recognizing that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and our refuge and strength, and our help in times of trouble.

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