



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 18: 1-12

Summer 2023

"Christ In Bonds"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Joe, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in the Gospel of John in chapter 18. And we begin, really, a new section in the book. We've finished the upper room discourse and the high priestly prayer, and now events are moving from chapter 18 through chapter 21 to the conclusion of this book. We'll begin with chapter 18, verse 1 through verse 12,

**18** When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. <sup>2</sup> Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. <sup>3</sup> Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup> So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, *(I think that is something that you might just read over without thinking about, but this is the key to this passage: 'He knows everything' that is happening. And what we see as we expound this passage in some detail is, He is in absolute control of everything. He knows what's happening; for it's been planned out from the ages past, from all eternity)*, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" <sup>5</sup> They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup> So when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew

back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, "I told you that I am *He*; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," <sup>9</sup> to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." <sup>10</sup> Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

<sup>12</sup> So the *Roman* cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

John 18: 1-12

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

LORD, we do come before You, humbly and thankfully that we have this great privilege to be together as Your saints and to open the Word of God, Your precious revelation to us, and read it and then spend time considering the meaning of the text and the application of it all to us. So LORD, we ask You to bless us. You've given us the Holy Spirit as Your children, as believers in Christ. Our hearts are sealed with that Spirit at the moment of faith; He protects us, He guides us, He illuminates our minds, and we pray for that great ministry of illumination—that You might help us to understand and guide us in this text; that we would understand it correctly and make the proper applications individually to each one of us.

So bless us, LORD, spiritually in this time. And we thank You for this privilege of prayer as a congregation: Coming to the throne of grace and that we can intercede for ourselves and we can intercede for others, for we can pray for others in our priestly function.

And bless us with health, LORD, (it's something we take for granted). We take our health for granted, we take our jobs for granted, we take just the good things of life for granted in such an affluent society in which we live—and yet, all of it can go away in a moment. We are debtors to mercy alone—and to Your grace. And so we thank You, LORD, for what You give us daily and pray that You would strengthen us physically, and more importantly, that You'd strengthen us spiritually—strengthen our souls; and You do that through the reading, and the teaching, and the study of the Word of God. May that be the consequence of our time together—that we are strengthened in the inner person and we are fit to go out into the world and be lights in a dark generation.

So LORD, may You bless us this morning as we study together. Build us up in the faith. To Your glory, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* Below the old city of Jerusalem are two valleys. One is the Hinnom Valley; and today it is a beautiful park where families gather for a leisurely day. The other is the Kidron Valley at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where tourists visit a grove of very old trees, considered by many to be the Garden of Gethsemane. Both are pleasant places.

But centuries ago, both were crime scenes. The Hinnom Valley, (where today children play), is where ancient Israelites sacrificed their children in the fire of pagan altars. The Kidron Valley is where God's Son was arrested, bound, and taken off to be sacrificed on a Roman cross. It's shocking and cruel, but that's the world—it hasn't changed over the ages. But that's the reason Christ came into it—to save it. And that's the reason He went to that valley, and that garden; to pray for strength and to meet His enemies.

That's how chapter 18 begins; and throughout the passage and the chapters that follow, He shows complete control over the situation: To protect His disciples and save them—and to accomplish His mission for the world. He has finished His high priestly prayer; and verse 1 of chapter 18 states that Jesus “went forth with His disciples”; and that means ‘He went forth from the upper room.’

But it means something more, because in leaving the house where they celebrated the Passover together, He began His departure from this world to become 'The Passover' for us—because He went forth from that room to die.

Matthew records, (Mat 26:3), that they went out "after singing a hymn." Traditionally, the hymns that they sang, (two of them before, and the rest of them after the Passover), are Psalms 113 through 118, called 'the Egyptian Hallel', which are 'The Psalms of Praise'. So Christ went out singing praises to God—and singing of Himself because these Psalms also prophesied His suffering and His triumph: As with Psalm 118, the last of the hymns that He sang, with the verses, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD's doing, It is marvelous in our eyes." (verses 22-23). So He left the room singing of His rejection and the cross.

Then He led His disciples out of the city, headed east across the Kidron Valley, and entered a garden on the western side of the Mount of Olives where the final events would be set in motion. Matthew and Mark call the garden, '*Gethsemane*', and Jesus and His disciples went there "often" we're told. (vs2). During the Passover week they probably slept there in the open air under the stars—and it may have been the place where they spent private time together during their visits to Jerusalem.

*Gethsemane* means 'olive press', indicating that the garden was an olive grove containing an olive press. It was there that Jesus' soul was so pressed and crushed as He considered the sufferings He was about to experience that His sweat was mingled with His blood and fell in great drops to the ground. The details of that are found in the other three Gospels. The author of Hebrews wrote of that *passion* in the garden in Hebrews 5, verse 7.

But John didn't record the Lord's agony in the garden. He certainly knew about it; he was there, nearby the Lord. The reason for not including it may be due to the main purpose of this Gospel, and that is to set forth the deity of the Messiah, Christ. And so he didn't mention the struggle the Lord had in His human nature because he wanted to stress His *control* over the entire situation.

We see it as *control* in the fact that He chose to lead His disciples to the Garden; for it was a well-known place to Judas, as verse 2 states. The Lord knew that after leading the soldiers to the house where they had been, Judas would know to come to the garden with reasonable certainty of finding Him there. And that's what happened, verse 3 states, "Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons."

John is the only Gospel writer to record that the Romans assisted in the arrest—but clearly the Jewish priests wanted to be sure that Jesus was brought to them and they looked to Rome for help. Back in chapter 7 you'll remember the temple police were sent to arrest Him, and they came back empty handed, saying, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." (vs46). So to insure that this time they got their man, they requested Rome's help.

And the Romans were willing to help; likely from concern that the arrest of so popular a person might cause a revolt. So they sent troops to support the Jewish guard. They sent a "cohort", John says. Now normally a *cohort* was 600 men; it's a lot of soldiers. If it wasn't that exact number that were included in this group, it was still a sizable number of men, and well equipped for the arrest. And the fact that they came armed as they did with lanterns and torches and weapons indicates that they expected trouble, and that they were prepared to search the mountainside if Jesus tried to escape.

All of which shows how little these men understood who Jesus was, and what He came to do. Think of it. They brought lanterns and torches in search of "the Light of the World", (Jn 9:5), and bore weapons in order to capture "the Lamb of God", (Jn 1:36), "the Prince of Peace". (Isa 9:6). It was all unnecessary; the Lord wasn't hiding and He wouldn't resist. Had He chosen to do either, their torches and weapons would have been completely useless—but He came to suffer and serve.

Now the Gentiles, (the Greeks and Romans), had some idea of a god that *served* and *suffered*. The ancient Greek play, *Prometheus Bound*, is the story of one of the gods,

*Prometheus*, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to man. As punishment, Zeus chained him to a rock. *Prometheus* means 'forethought', but in one line of the play he said, "I did not expect such punishment." Now what kind of a god, whose name is "*Forethought*", doesn't know the future? It's a god of man's imagination, no different from us—as all of the false gods are.

How different Christ is from that. Mankind could never invent Him. He knew exactly what would happen in the Kidron Valley. That's why He went there, to meet Judas and the soldiers and fulfill Psalm 118—and give to mankind real *fire* and *Light*. And that's where we have it, in Christ: *Light* is life and truth; and *fire* is that zeal that it causes within us.

And if we lack it, that's what we need to pray for. And that's why we read our Bibles, and that's why we study, because there we learn of the Lord; and as we learn of Him, as we truly learn of Him, it kindles within us that fire, that zeal, that love for Him. And if we have love for Him, we'll have love for one another. And if we lack that, we need to be praying for that, and looking to Him.

Well, He came, as I said, to give what some false, mythological god could not give to man anyway: Fire that is genuine—and Light that is eternal. And to insure that, He had prayed earnestly to His Father—and He *controlled* all of the events that happened there in that valley.

We see that here: Judas led the soldiers into the garden. John didn't recount the betrayer's kiss, the other Gospels recorded that. John simply wrote in verse 5 that Judas, "who was betraying Him, was standing with them", (with the soldiers). But that really tells us everything. Judas stood physically, he thought, safely in the light of their lanterns and torches—but he really stood in the darkness, spiritually. He stood against Christ, and Christ stood against the world—and the world was no match for Him.

Jesus stepped out to meet Judas and the troops and said, (in vs 4), "Whom do you seek?", (knowing full well the answer). They said, "Jesus the Nazarene." And when

He replied, "I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground." (vs6). Literally, His words are simply, "I AM", signaling that He is the "I AM" of Exodus 3, verse 14, and what we have seen throughout this Gospel. He is the one who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

The effect of this was astounding. Just the mere words, "I AM", (the divine name), caused the soldiers to fall helplessly to the ground—showing that He would not be some helpless victim of them. The One who drowned Pharaoh's army in the sea could have easily crushed this cohort in the garden with just a word. —But that was not His purpose. He was there in the garden to give Himself over to them.

But to make it clear that He went willingly, that it was His will, (not theirs), guiding events, He made them experience a token of His power. Spurgeon said, "He put forth a little finger of His potency to let them know what He could have done if He had chosen to bare the arm of His strength."

So He allowed the soldiers to recover, pick up their swords, and regain their composure. Then He repeated the question, "Whom do you seek?" And again they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." (vs7). Twice now they have said their business was with Him, *alone*. And so this time He held back His power and answered, "I told you that I am *He*; so if you seek Me, let these go their way." (vs8).

His first concern was for His disciples. He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep; and so His first business was to insure their safety. Bishop John Ryle said, "Long afterwards, the eleven would remember that the very last thought of their Master before He was taken a prisoner was for them and their safety."

Well, things haven't changed; His great concern is for our welfare. And as our high priest, He prays for us every moment. Every moment He is praying for us; praying that by His providence He allows us to be released from all kinds of dangers—dangers that we're not even aware of. He's constantly praying for our welfare. Our lives are not governed by chance but by the all-seeing eye of God Almighty Himself. And He protects us every day; otherwise this world would be an unbearable place to be.

If the universe is, as secular man says, 'A mysterious, malicious place, empty of God and empty of meaning; and we are twigs tossed about by fate or chance—and ultimately doomed'; then we must despair, for there's no hope in that.

But we're not: The psalmist said, "With You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light." (Ps 36:9). We understand reality only by living in the light of God's revelation—the One who created reality. And His revelation, the Scriptures, the Bible, the Gospel of John, reveals that God—and He is in control and that everyone *in Christ* has life—abundant life. And He will guide us to safe harbor; we are secure. Jesus is in absolute control of His destiny here in the garden, and He is in absolute control of His sheep, His people—and He cannot fail. The greatest armies of the world will fall down at His word.

Now that truth, that fundamental truth of God's character, His absolute sovereignty, sets us free, (and as Calvin said), "...not only from extreme anxiety and fear, but from every care." Just as Christ controlled His life, He controls ours. He's watching us, praying constantly for us—to free us from danger so that we can serve Him successfully.

Regardless of what your position is; regardless of who you are; as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a priest. We're all priests. We all have a function, we have a gift, and we're to be using it and serving Him—and He's protecting us to that end. As George Whitefield said, "We are immortal till our work is done."

The Lord Jesus knew that to be true; and having fortified His soul with prayer to His Father, and knowing His mission wasn't done, He stood confidently before this armed enemy ready to go to Calvary. That was His mission.

His disciples could not go with Him though. This is His mission; He had to go alone. So He said, "Let these go their way", (vs8)—it was not a request, it was a command; it's in the imperative. And the soldiers yielded to His words and will—and allowed the eleven to go free; which John said, in verse 9, was a 'fulfillment' of the Lord's earlier statement, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." (vs9b).



Now that's John 17, verse 2, and it's been called, 'An inappropriate application of the Lord's words, because in John 17 He was speaking about eternal salvation—and here, its physical deliverance.

But the application here is altogether appropriate. John saw the Lord's act to save them from physical harm as an *illustration* of His saving them from eternal death. The disciples went free physically and spiritually; and at His expense. He told them, (not too many days earlier), that He had "...not come to be served but to serve; and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mat 20:28).

A *ransom* is a payment made to free a person from captivity—and we were all born in captivity to justice because of sin—which is a debt to God that accumulates over the years. It is a debt too great for any one of us to pay. Only God is great enough to pay it off. And He has done that by His Son's death—which is, as you know, 'the wage', (or 'the penalty'), of sin. Romans 6, verse 23, "The wages of sin is death." He took our place in that death. He substituted His life for ours; He died in our place in order to meet the demands of the broken Law and satisfy God's justice. And having done that, He can now speak for every believer and say to the Law, and say to justice, "Let these go." (vs8b); and we're *loosed*; we're set free—forever.

His *ransom*, (or redemption), is complete. He paid the full price of our salvation. He did not leave one sin unpaid, for even one of His people. Every believer is paid up, saved, secure, and can never be lost—and that was *illustrated* when Jesus intervened for His disciples. That's how John interpreted it, a physical rescue that *illustrated* eternal deliverance and salvation.

But at this point, Peter almost lost the freedom Jesus had gained for him and His friends, (if that were possible). Drawing his sword, he made a stand and whacked at one of the men in the crowd, (at least he tried). The man's name was Malchus, a name that means '*king*', which is sort of ironic because he was the slave of the high priest. Peter's intent was to cleave him in two—but his swing was wild and all Peter was able to get was his right ear.

It was a stupid thing to do, an impulsive act—courageous to be sure, but courage without wisdom; zeal without knowledge, that does much more harm than good. And Jesus put a stop to it and repaired the damage. He told Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (vs 11).

Now that's an allusion to the agony that He had experienced in the garden when He came to terms, in His human nature, with the cross. "If it is possible", He prayed, "let this cup pass from me." (Mat 26:39).

It was not possible, not if Peter were to go free—not if he, (and we), were to be saved. The Lord was ready to drink the cup; He had come to terms with it and He was now ready to go to the cross and allow the soldiers to take Him out of the garden and off to the high priest.

So He told Peter to, 'put up the sword', (violence is not God's way). He then turned to Malchus and Luke recorded that He touched his ear and healed him. So, just before leaving the garden, He showed mercy to His enemy. Malchus came to lay violent hands on Jesus and instead Jesus laid healing hands on him. It was the last miracle He performed before His hands, those healing hands, were bound together—and then nailed to a cross.

And yet, it might seem anticlimactic. He made the lame to walk, He made the blind to see, He raised the dead; and now, His final miracle is to restore an ear. Not a grand finale—but it reveals a lot about Him. The Dutch scholar, Dr. Klaas Schilder wrote about it: "Jesus does not say, 'It is only a slave, and besides, it is only an ear.' He does not know what small wounds are. He does not know what insignificant people are. That's the kind of person He is—and the kind of Savior He is. You are not insignificant to Him, and nothing in your life is too small for Him. He is sufficient for the greatest need; He is ready to meet the smallest."

We see that in His miracle of mercy here. It reveals a great deal about the person of Christ; but it also reveals a lot about the work of Christ—which is a work of grace. This was mercy for an enemy. Malchus was the servant of Caiaphas, (the man who had

plotted the Lord's arrest and His murder), and he had come to the garden to carry out his master's plan. He was an enemy. And yet, Jesus didn't leave him in the garden, maimed, and bleeding, and in pain; He healed him. And in that, we see illustrated the work of the Savior.

Christ didn't come to save just 'good' people, but the world in all of its parts and in its corruption, (as that dark history of those two valleys in Jerusalem give witness). Romans 5, verse 8, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And Christ healed Malchus while he was an enemy—and in that He signaled to the slave to come to Him for spiritual healing and freedom.

Well, that's the age we are living in—the age of grace in which the Good News of the Gospel is going across the globe with the invitation to come to Christ and live—in spite of sin, 'Whosoever will, may come.' He doesn't expect us to 'turn over a new leaf', to begin to progress in some kind of moral rearmament and change. He saves us in our sin. He saves us where we are. But He saves us from our sin, and the power of it. He gives us freedom over that and transforms our life. And that's what we see here illustrated in the healing of this slave, Malchus.

So, having read all of this we might have expected the soldiers, who had just experienced Christ's majesty and power, and witnessed His mercy to Malchus, we might have expected them to drop their swords, fall to their knees, and confess "Jesus is Lord".

But the heart of man is darker than night. And like so many who learn of God's grace, they were unaffected by that, unaffected by all that they'd witnessed. And instead we read, in verse 12, that they "arrested Jesus and bound Him", and led Him off.

And not like some *Prometheus*, unwillingly, unexpectedly. No, Jesus was bound by His own consent—He knew what was coming. It was all in the plan—and He went as a willing captive. This was the hour for which He came into the world.

But at the sight of Christ in bonds, all of Peter's courage evaporated. And he, along with the other disciples, fled into the darkness, leaving Jesus alone in the hands of His enemies—which only reveals more about the Lord and magnifies His love for these men. Faithless to Him, He remained faithful to them—and continued on the path to the cross until He had finished the work of salvation.

He went willingly. No power on earth could have kept Him in those bonds if it had not been His will. He could have snapped them as easily as Samson snapped the ropes of the Philistines. He went onward willingly, gladly, (as the author of Hebrews puts it in Hebrews 12:2), "For the joy set before Him." The joy of the cross? Where's the joy in that? Well, it's not the cross that's joyful, it's the result of it—what it would produce, what He would do through the cross, which was to save His people from their sins and save them for all eternity. "For the joy set before Him"... saving His people, He went forward.

And the effect that that should have on us is the effect that it would have on the disciples, who, by God's grace, recovered from their failure of faith to reenter His service willingly and gladly. And we should respond in the same way. We should do nothing for Him grudgingly, but always gladly, in view of all He was willingly and joyfully doing, and has done, for us.

Now we know that happened to the eleven disciples and how they responded; but we can't help but wonder, what happened to Malchus? What effect did all of this have on him? Later, did he reflect on the events of that night? He must have. And did he say to himself, 'He was kind to me. He made me whole—and me, just a slave to Caiaphas, but significant to Him!'

Well, you can't help but wonder if that happened, and if the healing of his ear occasioned a change of his heart that led to faith and to him becoming a new creature, a new creation, and in that newness of life, a strong witness for Christ and His grace.

Well, we'll never know this side of heaven. And as for us, the question really is not important; the question that has relevance for us is: 'Have I been changed?'

We're not different from Malchus. We're not different from those soldiers who came to seize Christ. —We're all as guilty as they are. Isn't that signified in the combination of Romans and Jews who arrested Him—Jews and Gentiles? It represents the world and reminds us that we are guilty—and our guilt brought Christ to the cross. And it is only by believing in Him as the One who died in our place that our guilt and sin are removed.

But there is no *atonement*, justice is not *satisfied*, and there is no *forgiveness* for those who reject Him. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 26, "If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin." The one who rejects that is without hope—in this life and for all eternity.

So turn from unbelief if you're here with an unbelieving heart. Turn to Christ in faith. Believe in Him who died for our sins, who was raised from the dead as proof of His Father's acceptance of His sacrifice: The proof that He is alive and today we have a living Savior and proof that He is coming again.

And when He comes again, He will come in justice and power. And then, Paul says, 'Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' (Phl 2:10-11). Even unbelievers will be compelled to bow just as those soldiers fell down in the garden.

Well, how much better to bow in faith now, and escape that judgment that will come? How much better to willingly confess Him as Lord and Savior? May God help you to do that with faith and joy if you've not put your trust in Him.—And to give all of you, all of us who have, the courage to serve Him, to serve Him faithfully and joyfully, as He served us.

*(Closing Prayer)* Father, we give You praise and thanks for sending Your Son and hiding us in Him, as Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock and saw Your glory pass by. And we were hidden, as it were, in that glory because there Your glory was demonstrated at the cross when love and justice kissed; and we were saved—saved from a just penalty of eternal death and damnation. But You gave us a place in Your Son who took our punishment as our representative—and we go free with new life.

LORD, may we not take that for granted, for we do take so much for granted; Your blessings to us every day because every day is a gift, and every moment of every of every day is a gift from You. And what a rich blessing we have in the new life we have in Christ. May we understand the greatness of it and may it influence our behavior, our conduct—may we live for You and live in great gratitude for all You've done. So LORD, produce that in our hearts. Increase our love for You and our love for one another.

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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