

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Offending Christ

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-23

Code: 2320

Let's look together at the Word of God, Matthew chapter 16 for our study this morning. Fascinating, important insightful passage of the Word that we're going to be examining.

We're looking at Matthew chapter 16 verses 21 through 23, just three verses and yet they are profound and soul-searching words. Beginning in verse 21, let me read the text for you.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord. This shall not be unto Thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan, thou art an offense unto Me for thou savorest not the things that are of God but those that are of men

Now that last statement becomes for us an important spiritual principle, "Thou savorest not the things that are of God but those that are of men." And in that word our sets the things of God over against the things of men. The things of men are one thing, the things of God are another. The glorious purposes and plans and acts of God are set against the blind erring sinful purposes of men.

The Bible emphasizes this all throughout its pages, how that men see things one way and God sees things totally another way. For example, in Proverbs 14:12 it says there is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of death. Psalm 77:19 says of God, "Thy footsteps are not known." In other words, men can't see where you're going. In Psalm 92 it says, "O Lord, how great are Thy works and Thy thoughts are deep, a stupid man knoweth not."

We don't know God's thoughts. We don't know God's ways in and of ourselves and we tend therefore to miss the point of what He's doing. And we can become an offense to God today as much as Peter was an offense to Jesus that day. For Peter thought in his own human wisdom that He needed to correct Jesus Christ. And we very often go to God as if to correct Him when we see things happening that we don't think fit the way things ought to be. But that's because we don't savor the things of God but we savor the things of men.

And one thing you want to learn in the spiritual maturing process is to learn to see that God does things ways that we really can't quite understand in human wisdom. I think about David who was refused in 2 Samuel 7 the privilege of building the temple because he was a man with bloody hands.

And when God took away from him that purpose and that plan that he had in his heart and said, "That's not My plan" God gave him back something even more wonderful and said, "You'll have a son and that son will have an eternal throne," and He promised him the eternal Davidic kingdom on which Jesus Christ would sit to rule and reign forever. And David, who couldn't understand why God wouldn't do his plan finally understood how much greater God's plan was and in 2 Samuel 7, he says to God, "You don't do things the way men do, do You, God?" That's a profound lesson.

And perhaps the most powerful of all passages in regard to this comes from the lips of Isaiah as he speaks on the behalf of God and says these profound words in chapter 55 and verse 8, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." Men don't think like God. That's why when we pray, Jesus said, pray this way, "Thy will be done...Thy kingdom come..." because we don't know God's purposes in our humanness. That's why we are told that the Holy Spirit makes utterance for us because we don't know what to pray for as we ought. God's ways are not man's ways. And we see illustrated here that Peter thought to correct the Lord of glory because He wasn't working according to Peter's plans and introduces to us a profound principle of learning to live our lives according to the plan of God rather than the plans of men.

Now may I remind you that Peter here is a believer and so this is a lesson for believers? Let me give you the background. The disciples now have affirmed that Jesus is their Messiah. Back in verse 13, Jesus confronted them in the remote place called Caesarea/Philippi to ask them the ultimate question, really: who am I? And they replied through Peter their spokesman in verse 16, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." That's the affirmation that He is the Messiah. They understand that. There is no other explanation for His words. There is no other explanation for His works. There is no other explanation for the fact that He said He was the Lord of the sabbath, the fulfillment of all sabbath ceremony. There's no other answer than that He indeed is the Messiah. And so that they have affirmed.

In response to that, Jesus says this is not something you got from your own human wisdom, verse 17 says, but this was revealed to you by God the Father. And following that, He says to them, in spite of the rejection, in spite of the hostility, in spite of the misunderstanding of the multitudes of people, in spite of the fact that I am not setting up My Kingdom instantaneously and overthrowing the Romans and taking the Herodians off their petty thrones, and in spite of the fact that I am not establishing immediately a glorious majestic Kingdom, I am continuing to build My assembly of redeemed people. And it's important that He tell them that.

So, now they know He is the Messiah. And they know He is continuing to build that which God has sent Him to build, the great and glorious church. And He says to them at the end of verse 18, "Even the gates of Hades shall not stop this." And you'll remember last time I told you that the gates of Hades is a Jewish colloquialism for death. At least five times in the Old Testament, twice in Job,

twice in Psalms and once in Isaiah 38:10 you have the same statement, the gates of Hades, the gates of Sheol, the bars of death...and it all refers to death. And so the Lord says, "Look, I am the Messiah, I am building My Kingdom, and death will not stop it." And having said that, He then moves in verse 21 to tell them He will die. But they must know by now that His death is not permanent because He says the gates of Hades can't stop Him. And so He says in verse 21, "I will be killed and I will be raised again the third day."

So, He's moving them through the truth they need to understand. He's laying down a foundation. But now listen very carefully. They understood that He was the Messiah. They now understand that He's going to build His church. They have heard Him say the gates of death cannot stop that. But the one thing they still cannot handle is that the Messiah should suffer and die, that the Messiah, the King, the Anointed One should suffer humiliation, rejection, hostility and death is really not within the framework of their Messianic viewpoint. They're like all the rest of the Jews of whom Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that the cross is to the Jews a...what?...a stumbling block. And to the Gentiles foolishness that you should have a King and a Messiah who is murdered is not in their thoughts. And because their understanding is so incomplete, Jesus reminds them in verse 20 not to preach it until they get it straight. And that doesn't happen, to be honest with you, till after the resurrection.

So, He's moving them along with this information. Now granted, they don't understand all that He's teaching. In fact, it's kind of interesting to note that it says there that He began to show these things. And they're lesson after lesson after lesson, He's talking about it in chapter 17, He's talking about it in chapter 20, He's talking about it further on in Matthew's gospel, He talks to them about it in John 12, He talks to them about it many times and it isn't recorded. He's continuing to show these things to them about His death and resurrection which they never are able to grasp. As indicated, for example, in John 13 where when Jesus stoops to wash the dirty feet of the disciples, Peter says, "You will never wash my feet, get up." And what he is saying is, "I have no room for a humiliated Messiah, it can't be." And even when Jesus does go to the cross, they scatter. And even after the death of Christ as they walk the road to Emmaus, they are in utter confusion about what's happened. So the Lord is teaching them unfolding lessons which they never will fully understand until the Holy Spirit comes and when the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus said to them, He will bring all things to your...what?...remembrance. And all of a sudden when the Spirit of God came, the lights went on and all these lessons and all their meaning became real to them.

And so, here He begins to speak to them, to prepare them for the meaning of His death which will fully dawn under the ministry of the Spirit of God and then they'll proclaim with all their being and write it to give it as the legacy of God to the generations to follow.

Now as we look at the text, four truths unfold for us to show us how we must be careful not to substitute the things of men for the things of God. First, the plan of God. Jesus introduces the divine plan in verse 21. "From that time forth," it says and we can stop there for a moment because that's a

key phrase. It looks on the surface to be a rather inconsequential statement but it isn't. "From that time forth" is a phrase apparently used by Matthew to mark a transition. Because it appears one other time in Matthew's gospel and that's in chapter 4 verse 17. And in 4:17 it says, "From that time Jesus began..." it's the same concept again, "to preach and say repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now in 4:17, Matthew uses the phrase to mark the beginning of His public ministry to Israel. And now He uses the same phrase to mark the beginning of His private teaching to the disciples. So we have moved into a new epoch in the life of Christ, a new era, His ministry primarily now is private. The first ministry, primarily public with some private instruction. The second part of it primarily private...or rather the first was primarily public with some private instruction, the second primarily private with some public instruction. And His purpose from here on is just as it says in verse 21, to begin to show or to declare or to tell to His disciples, to get them ready for the ministry they have ahead of them. And as I said, He wants to teach them truths they won't fully grasp until after the resurrection, after the coming of the Spirit of God.

And you'll note the word "began." Now what that does to this passage is remove it from being one particular event to just make it a discussion of a series of events. In other words, Jesus began the process of showing His disciples that He must die and be raised from the dead. So we assume then that Peter's reaction in verse 22 is not necessarily a reaction to the first lesson, but more likely than that, it is a calculated reasoned thought through response to something he kept hearing and thinking about and felt he needed to respond to. So it's not a single incident in verse 21, but a flow of information to which Peter finally reacts. And we don't know how many lessons the Lord gave up to this point on the subject, but He began to teach and it's an open-ended concept and so Peter is not offering some shocked response of horror the first time he opens his mouth or else I don't think Jesus would have rebuked him quite so dramatically and severely. I think Peter's been thinking about it, he may even be offering the consensus of the disciples again so that it comes to Jesus as a calculated Satanic temptation, premeditated, at least, on the Satanic level, planned and offered to divert Him from the divine plan.

Peter has yielded his thinking patterns to Satan and Satan has brought him to this place where he is offering the plan of men as a substitute for the plan of God. Which is the ultimate blasphemy.

Now would you notice the word "must" in verse 21? "From that time forth began Jesus to tell His disciples how He must..." Now that is the must of a divine imperative. That is the necessity. There is no plan B, folks. This is not whimsical. This is a...this is a must. And I would just suggest to you a thought, it is a must that is bigger than the moment in which we see it. It is a must that is older than the circumstances in which we hear it. It is a must that comes thundering out of eternity. It is not the must of human devotion to an ideal, it is the must of a divine imperative. It is an ageless must. It comes with the force of eternity. This is the plan of God set in motion before the foundation of the

world.

Four things made it necessary. First, human sin. He had to die because men are sinners and they must have their sin paid for. Secondly, because of the divine requirement, without the shedding of blood there could be no remission. And so men needed a death and God required a death. And then you can add to that the divine decree, God by His determinant council and foreknowledge brought it to pass. And then you could even add the prophetic promise, the prophets had said the Messiah would die. It's Matthew who records His death so beautifully, as the other gospel writers, but it's the Psalmist who describes centuries before. And so all these things, human sin, the demand for a sacrifice, the divine decree, and the prophetic promise all come together to say He must...there is no other alternative. This is God's plan and men don't have the option to say, "God, I'd like to let you in on my plan, I want you to know my plan so you can adjust accordingly." That sounds to us ridiculous and yet we do it all the time, when we say to God, "Say, God, I don't understand what You're doing, I've got a better plan. I don't like the suffering I'm going through, I don't like the circumstances that exist," and we begin to talk God into what we think is a better approach. That's the same thing.

Now as we look at the divine plan, it has four stages. Follow them, will you, in verse 21. First, He must go to Jerusalem, that's a must. All roads leading from Jerusalem were open to Him. All that He had to do is take any one of them and just spend the rest of His life healing people, teaching them, but He would not have fulfilled the plan of God. The one road He had to take was the road to Jerusalem, it was a must. He had to go to the city of sacrifices. He had to be the Passover lamb. He had to die the death for sin. At the moment at which He said this, He was as far from Jerusalem as you could be and still be in Palestine, He was in Caesarea/Philippi, that little town in the northeast corner of Palestine where He had gone with retreat in mind for His disciples and He'd have had some time together unmolested by the hostilities of Galilee. But now He must begin to set His face to Jerusalem and move in that direction. And going from Galilee to Judea, going from the lakeside to the city of Jerusalem was going from the proverbial frying pan to the fire, in fact, Thomas in John 11 as they approached the city of Jerusalem to assist the family of Lazarus simply said, "We will go with You and die also." In other words, they knew what awaited them there.

It was the center of hostility. In fact, in Matthew 15 verse 1 we learn that even the Jewish leaders in Galilee who gave Him the most trouble were from Jerusalem. The religion of Jerusalem couldn't stand Jesus Christ. Its hypocritical self-righteous, self-centered definitions were overthrown and inundated by His truth and they hated Him for it. But the Jews would never have to chase Him to get Him. They'd never have to hunt Him like a fugitive. He would go and offer Himself for He it was who said in John 10:18, "No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down of Myself." He it was who said to Pilate, "If it weren't for God you couldn't do one thing to Me." He it was who said, "If I wanted I could call for legions of angels." But He gave Himself. He had to go to Jerusalem.

By the way, Jerusalem means "foundation of peace." And there's no city in the world that's known less than that city. But someday it will know it when the Prince of Peace reigns. Thirty-three miles east of the Mediterranean, 14 miles west of the sea known as the Dead Sea, elevated on a plateau 2500 feet above sea level with its highest point being the Mount of Olives, 2650 feet looking at it from the east, sparkling like a jewel in the sun, it became known as the "Golden City." First mentioned in Genesis 14:19 as the dwelling place of a priest of el elyon, the God most high, a servant of yahweh by the name of Melchizedek, a picture of Christ, and as Melchizedek was associated with that city, so would be his anti-type Jesus Christ. Appearing again in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, that very location becomes the place where Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac and finds a sacrificial animal who also is a picture of Jesus Christ who would be a sacrifice in that same vicinity of Mount Moriah. In 1003 B.C. it was in the hands of the Jebusites and David came and took that city and made it the capital of Israel. And it was the city of David in 2 Samuel 5:9. Three months later he brought the Ark of the Covenant there and it became the city of God for God dwelt in the Ark...symbolically. Solomon called it the standard of perfection in Song of Solomon 6:4 and he built the temple to the Most High God in that city. It is become the sacred center of worship for the Jews, alternately flourishing and being devastated but never losing its definition in their hearts and minds as the city of God. In fact, when they were taken into captivity, they cried out in Psalm 137:5, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning." They loved the city, they do yet.

But the city of Jerusalem by the time Jesus got there was hostile to God. It wasn't the city of God. We can't even call it the city of God. We can't even call it Jerusalem, foundation of peace because when Jesus was born it tried to kill Him as an infant. And when He began His ministry, the first Passover He went to the city, He took a whip in John 2 it says, and He had to clean out the defilement in the temple there. And hatred of Him was born at that moment. The second Passover of His life, He went there violated their sabbath tradition and they tried to kill Him, says John 5. The third Passover of His ministry, He deliberately stayed away because of their hatred. Later in the year, He went to attend the Feast of Tabernacles and the leaders in John 7 tried to arrest Him to execute Him. In John 8 He went to the temple to teach and they tried to stone Him to death. He taught on the porch of Solomon and had to escape for His life. And when He returns for that last Passover and raises Lazarus from the dead, it is at the expense of His own life and they kill Him.

Jerusalem was not the city of David. It was not the city of God. It was not the foundation of peace. Jerusalem has a new name today, it got that name in the time of Christ and that name is given for us in Revelation 11:8. Listen to what it says, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt where also our Lord was crucified." Jerusalem has a new name, folks, Sodom...a new name, Egypt, cursed, not the people of God, outside the covenant. That's its name. And in 70 A.D. God used the Romans to wipe it out. It will get its rightful name back, Zechariah 14 says, when it flourishes again when Jesus returns to set Him His glorious Kingdom and then again it will be Jerusalem the golden city of David, city of God, foundation of everlasting peace. Jesus said He must go to Jerusalem.

In Luke 13 and verse 33, He tells us this, "Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following, I have to keep moving to Jerusalem for it cannot be that a prophet perishes out of Jerusalem...O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee." He went there to die because that was the divine plan.

Second phase of God's plan was to suffer many things from the elders, chief priests and scribes. Now those three groups of people constituted the Sanhedrin which was the ruling tribunal in Israel. It was made up of the elders and they are the basically respected tribal heads that became leaders and judges all around the land. Then you have the chief priests who were primarily Sadducees and the scribes who were primarily Pharisees. And together they constituted the legal court, the tribunal of that land. And Jesus is saying I'm going there and I'm going to be tried there by the orthodox religious leaders of Israel, even though the trial is a mockery, from their viewpoint it is a formal trial and condemnation.

Ironic, isn't it? The holy city is not holy. And the leaders of it are not holy either.

There's another must in verse 21. He says He must be killed. The word here used is not a word of judicial execution. It's a word that means to be murdered. It means to be robbed of life, to be put away. We would say "to be snuffed." There's nothing of the executioner's thought here, nothing of a just punishment for crime. And Jesus says I'm going to be killed. And He breaks terrible news. It isn't as if He hasn't told them before, but never in such clear terms. Oh, He did say the first time He went there and cleansed the temple, He did say He'd destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. He did say that. I mean, He had in a veiled way articulated the fact that He would die and rise. They should have known about it. They should have understood the words of John the Baptist who said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and draw on a conclusion there that lambs had to die to atone for sin. In guarded ways He had spoken of His death but they just couldn't see it. It just didn't compute according to their Messianic mission viewpoint.

But here He breaks the word very specifically. And for the first time, beyond all the other times when He sort of hinted at it, they really understood it. And you know something? They turned off their minds after the third element and they never heard the fourth one, verse 21, "And be raised again the third day." Oh, if they'd just listen to that one, there would be glory and there would be triumph. In that one Greek word, "shall be raised up," no details are given, no explanation of how. He had said to them earlier in 12:40 of Matthew as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the earth...He hinted at the things that might be a part of that but now He just says He will be raised again the third day. And He adds that lest they think like the sister of Lazarus, "Oh yes, we know he'll be raised at the last day." This was unique. He would be raised in three days.

He was not giving them some indefinite word, but they just couldn't handle it. As soon as they heard He was going to be killed, they just bailed out mentally. And they didn't understand the plan. I mean, they had seen Him raise the daughter of Jairus and they had seen Him raise the son of the widow of Nain, but if He was dead who would raise Him? And so they just cancelled that out and they were left with a dead Messiah.

And he couldn't, Peter couldn't, reason it, couldn't fathom it. And I guess it didn't mean much to him that he had just heard Jesus say the gates of Hades couldn't prevent the extension of the Kingdom, the building of the church. He doesn't seem to have fit that into the computing process. All he can think about, and apparently he is again speaking somewhat collectively or for the consensus of them, is that Jesus can't die, that can't happen.

So then we see the things of God, don't we, in verse 21. But let's look at verse 22 and see the things of men. Now when men come to the plan and they don't like the plan, they offer their plan instead. And here we see the presumption of Peter. We saw the plan of God, here's the presumption of Peter, and this is very presumptuous. "Then Peter took Him," and may I remind you that the Greek word here means to catch hold of. And it literally means that he put his arm around Him and forcefully dragged Him off. Now, you know, that's...two things hit me when I began to think about that. The first one is the brashness of Peter and the second one was the humanity of Jesus Christ. There must have been something so really totally consummately human about Jesus that Peter actually thought he could talk to Him as a man talks to his friend. And that's marvelous, isn't it? For those who would want to deny the utter humanness of Jesus, He must have been utterly human. Peter would never have thought to do so to God if God were being revealed in some supernatural inhuman way. And so they're walking along, he just puts his arm around the Lord, caught hold of Him, the Greek says, and hauled Him off to straighten Him out.

Now before you jump on Peter's neck with both feet, you've probably done the same thing and so have I when you've said, "Lord, I just want to tell You that the way things are going aren't according to my plan and I'd sure wish You'd change it. I don't understand, God, why I have to go through these trials and this suffering and this problem and that problem and why did so-and-so die and why did I lose my job and, Lord, I don't know what plan You're operating on but it isn't mine and it doesn't seem to square with what I perceive to be the best way to do things." And we want to offer to God the plan as we perceive it, "Lord, now this is the way the plan should work. Ahem, point one, no pain, Lord. Two, no suffering, Lord. No trials, no difficulty, just unmitigated joy and glory." That's our plan, always our plan because as soon as the pain comes, that's what gets us to pray. When we're in the times of joy, we don't pray because that's the way we think it ought to be anyway and there's nothing to ask for.

Well, Peter hauls Him off and he began to rebuke Him. By the way, the word for rebuke is full of vehemence...I mean, he really spoke very strongly. He came on strong, to put it in vernacular. Now how did he get to the point to...? Well, I think it's the officiousness that comes with age. You know, he's older. It's the brashness that comes with personal confidence, and he had a lot of that in his personality. It's the strength of pride. It's the sense of privilege that he had because he had spent a long time with Jesus. And then to add to all of that, the Lord had just told him, "O blessed art thou, Peter, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you but My Father was in heaven..." and he was beginning to feel like a spokesman for God. And all that stuff came together and he just presumed on all of that and he said, "Lord, I just want to get You in the right track and sort of...I just want to straighten out Your wrong Messianic mission view."

You see, Peter had the power, glory, pomp majesty Messianic view. Jesus had the suffering, pain, be killed and rise from the dead view. And that was God's view, by the way. But Peter hauls Him off. And look what he says to Him. "Be it far from Thee, Lord," that's idiomatic, that's a colloquialism, that's an idiomatic expression. It's kind of interesting, it means "pity thyself...have a little pity on Yourself, Lord....I mean, don't do that to Yourself...don't go die...I mean, it's obvious You don't need to go to Jerusalem, right?...You're here, everything's fine, there are roads leading every other place in the world, don't go there...pity Yourself, Lord." Or to put it in its real colloquialism, "God, be gracious to You, Lord...or heaven grant You something better than that...or heaven forbid." And notice in the middle he calls Him Lord but doesn't mean...doesn't mind commanding Him in the process, you see. He's Lord in name but not Lord in terms of His right to overrule Peter, at this point, at least in Peter's mind. So he says, "Heaven forbid, heaven grant You something better than that...don't do that...pity Yourself, Lord...give Yourself a break...take it easy on Yourself...don't do that."

And then he adds, "This shall not be unto Thee." We're just not going to have it...that's it. That's pretty bold stuff. That's a flat out rebuke. You see, he could not see a suffering Messiah. He couldn't see a humiliated Messiah. He couldn't see a crucified Messiah. It just didn't fit the plan and he would make a great modern-day liberal who wants a kingdom without a cross, you see.

So, the things of men are set against the things of God. The plan of God, the presumption of Peter leads, thirdly, to the protest of Christ, verse 23. I...I couldn't imagine anything more shocking to Peter than this response because Peter's intentions seem honorable on the surface...he's saying this out of love, he's saying it out of ignorance, he...he doesn't want the Lord to die...he doesn't want the Lord to have the pain...he doesn't want personally to have the pain that comes in the loss of the Lord, after all, the Lord had provided everything they had, everything...food, tax money, you name it, everything. And they didn't want to lose Him and they didn't want Him to suffer and all of that and it was sort of a...sort of loving and ignorant and the Lord hit him with this response in verse 23, "He turned and said to Peter," the idea of being that Peter had pulled Him off and apparently was talking to Him, you know, maybe with his arm around Him and the Lord just turned around and looked him in the eyeball and said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan, you are an offense to Me."

Now that's a fairly strong rebuke. Two of the terms in that phrase "Get thee behind Me, Satan," hupage, Satana, get, Satan, be gone, leave. Why does He say that? That's a stinging crushing devastating response? I mean...and it says that Peter began to rebuke Him but he didn't get finished, he got shot down in mid-flight and he landed with a devastating crash. And you ask yourself, "Does such a small sin deserve such a destructive blast of fury from the Lord?" Well, as soon as Peter said this to Him, the Lord immediately knew the source and He said hupage, Satana, get away, Satan. He had said that once before, you know. Basically the same terms. In chapter 4 verse 10 when Satan took Him up and tempted Him and all of that, and after the temptation was over, you remember what He said? "Be gone, Satan." And Luke tells us that Satan just waited for a more opportune time. And I believe that all the way through the life of Jesus Christ, Satan kept coming back trying to divert Him from the cross. You see, Satan in that Matthew 4 passage and Luke 4 passage, parallels, took Him in a mountain, he said, "Look, there it is, all You want, just go down and take it, it's Yours...feed Yourself, take care of Yourself, don't suffer, don't be the humiliated Messiah, don't be the suffering Messiah, turn the stones into bread and eat, take care of Yourself. And You want to be a hero to everybody, dive off the promontory of the temple and land safely and they'll all go...Oh, He must be the Messiah of God...and then I'll give You all the kingdoms of the world and You won't have to die and You won't have to suffer, You could be a hero, You can eat what You want and when You want, You don't have to depend on God...no humiliation, I'll give You the whole deal."

You say, "Was that a temptation?" The Bible says it was a temptation. Why was it a temptation? Because the Lord knew He was going to have to bear all the sins of all the people that ever lived on the face of the earth in His own body on the cross and that He would be separated from God the Father and the horror of that to one who knew no mark of sin in His life was to cause this to be a temptation. Don't you think for a minute that the Lord wasn't tempted, He was. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet...what?...without sin. And as soon as that temptation came to Him, just that fast did He say, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." He knew who it was coming back. And would you mark somewhere in your mind that the same believer who can be used to speak the Word of God in one verse can be used in the next one to speak the word of Satan? The same believer who on the one hand extols the plan of God can on the other hand extol the plan of Satan. The same one who takes a side with God can turn around and take a side against God.

Jesus recognized the approach, He knew who it was. And Satan was using Peter. Now you can discuss and debate whether Peter was demon possessed, demon obsessed, devil oppressed, or whatever, but whatever it was, somehow Satan had allowed or prompted Peter to think his thoughts so that Peter was reasoning along Satan's lines. Whether Satan was actually in his mind, in his body dwelling or whether Satan had actually infiltrated his thinking is not the issue and the text doesn't tell us. But what we do know is that he was articulating the thing that Satan was continually articulating and it was a heavy weight, a heavy temptation, so much so that it came to Him in the garden He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood in the agony over that same thing. Satan knows the cross is

the place that crushes his head. Satan knows the cross is the place that destroys the power of death which he held. Satan knows the cross is the place where men's sins are paid for and they are liberated from his dominion into the kingdom of light to dwell with God forever. Satan despised and hated the cross. But when Jesus was crucified, he tried to keep Him dead and he couldn't do that either because the gates of Hades can't hold Him. Satan always came to Jesus to get Him to avoid the cross, avoid the cross, avoid the cross, take the glory, take the power, take the earth without the cross. And here was the same old stuff again. And so He says, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

Then He turns and says, "You're an offense to Me." And I think that's directed to Peter. Peter had become a trap. Peter had become a stumbling block. The word skandalon means to entice somebody to destroy them. Peter was baiting a trap. Peter, you're setting a trap for Me...a Satanic trap. He recognized it. It's an old story. Again and again the tempter launched this attack. And people still look at the cross and say, "Foolishness, stumbling block."

Well, you can imagine Peter's shock. He could hardly have understood that by his attempt to dissuade Jesus from the cross he was putting arrows in Satan's bow to shoot at the Savior. But he was. How profound an insight...oh, to think that in our times of desiring, desiring to honor the Lord, or desiring to express our love or whatever, we can actually be loading Satan's bow, taking Satan's side. How subtle.

So, we see the plan of God, presumption of Peter, protest of Christ, lastly, the principle for us. What does this say to us? Now listen very carefully. This is the point of all of this. The end of verse 23, here's the principle and He generalizes now out of the specific incident and He puts Peter's action in a category that all of us are in from time to time. "For you savor..." that means to think, the French word is savour which means to think or to reason, "For you are thinking along not the lines of God but the lines of men." You are reasoning from the standpoint of humanness, not deity. You're thinking the things of men, you're not thinking the things of God.

You see, from God's viewpoint Jesus had to die. From God's viewpoint Jesus had to suffer. From God's viewpoint Jesus had to go to Jerusalem to be that lamb. From God's viewpoint that had to happen, that was a divine must. But from man's viewpoint it was incomprehensible with their Messianic view. They just couldn't see that. And men still see the cross as folly...stumbling block because our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways. Peter was acting like a fleshly man, like Romans 8 where it says that the flesh is enmity against God, it's pitted against God. Peter was reasoning from the selfish look. He was self-centered and he was self-circumferenced. And all he could see was the process not the end. All he could want to do was eliminate the present pain, he couldn't give any thought to the ultimate value of that pain. You see, he didn't hear the echoes of the prophets and he didn't understand the product of the future so he muffed the present.

And we're like that. We forget that the Bible says that through trial you're perfected. And we forget that God is moving us to the image of Jesus Christ and all we can see is the present pain and we cry to God to get us out of it when it is that which perfects us. We don't think like God thinks. All we can see is present darkness, present pain, present suffering. God sees future glory. They wanted God to do things their way. They wanted the pomp and the majesty and the kingdom and the whole shot...right now.

What is the lesson for us? Two lessons, just two and I want you to remember...lesson number one, the Savior, the Messiah, the Son of God may not fit men's definitions but He is no less the fulfillment of God's plan. If you're looking for a Savior, if you're looking for a Jesus, a Christ, a religious leader, if you're looking for a deliverer, if you're looking for a Messiah other than Jesus Christ, one that better fits what you think He ought to be like, you've set yourself against the true Messiah. Peter was saying, no, that's not our kind of Messiah. And men are still saying that today. We can't be interested in Jesus, Jesus talked about judgment and Jesus talked about sin, and Jesus was rejected and Jesus was murdered and so forth and so on, that's not our kind of deliverer, that's not our kind of monarch, that's not our kind of king. But God's ways are not our ways. And God made His King the way He had to be. And because we don't see it doesn't change it.

His birth was common. Men wouldn't have had a common birth for such a King. But it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the heavens above. His lodging was poor and men wouldn't have put Him in a stable but it was attended to by celestial visitants. It was marked by a conflux of stellar bodies. He had not the magnificent equipage of other kings but He was attended by multitudes of patients seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body. He made the dumb that attended Him sing His praises and the lame leap for joy and the deaf to hear His wonders and the blind to see His glory. He had no guard of soldiers, no magnificent retinue of military men, but centurions took orders from Him...and so have millions across the earth. He didn't control a vast empire of those who did all of His bidding, but the waves and the winds and the storms which no early power can control obeyed Him. And death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when He demanded it. He didn't walk on velvet tapestry but when He walked on the sea the water held Him up. All parts of the creation except sinful men honored Him as their creator. He had no vast incomprehensible treasure of wealth but when He needed His money to pay His taxes, a fish yielded it up out of its mouth. He had no barns and He had no corn fields, but when He wanted to fill the hearts and the stomachs of a multitude, He created the food right out of His own hands. And no monarch in history ever entertained that way.

He didn't have the fantastic group of people sorrowing like other people have on occasions that demanded sorrow on His behalf, but the frame of nature itself solemnized the death of its author, heaven and earth were mourners, the sun was clad in black and if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth itself trembled under the awful load. And there were few to pay the Jewish custom of rending their garments at His death, so the rocks took their place and rent their own

bowels. He didn't have a grave of His own, but other men's graves open to Him. He came not as the subject of death, but as the conqueror and invader of its territory and He rose victorious.

No, He doesn't necessarily fit the human definition, but God's ways are not man's ways. And He was all that the world needed as a Savior. Peter needed to see that. And he did. For he preached how that Christ had to suffer. He preached that message again and again. Hear it in the book of Acts. Hear it in 1 Peter. Hear it in 2 Peter. It's there outwardly and behind the scenes.

There's a second lesson. And that considers itself with not Christ but us. And it is that we must learn that for us there is pain in the refining process. And He goes on to talk about that in verse 24, if you're going to follow Him you're going to take up a cross. If you're going to follow Him, you're going to lose your life in the process. And that's the road to glory, that there's no glory to be had without pain...there's no crown to be won without a thorn in the process. And God is refining us to make us gold and He's burning off the dross. And every time a trial comes, or a painful thing comes, we don't scream to God and say, "Hey, God, get Your plans in line with mine..." we say to God, "Help me to get mine in line with Yours." Our way is the glory way. Our way is the joy way. Our way is the blessing way. Our way is the painless way. His way is suffering...then glory, then joy, then blessing. Peter learned that, too. First Peter 5, he says, "After you've suffered a while, the Lord make you perfect." He learned it.

I close with this. Someone has written these provocative words. "Man judgeth man in ignorance. He seeth but in part. Our trust is in our maker, God who searcheth every heart. And every wrong and every woe when put beneath our feet, as stepping stones may help us on to His high mercy seat. Then teach us still to smile, O Lord, though sharp those stones may be, remembering that they bring us near to Thee, dear Lord, to Thee. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not as ours. He wounds us sore with cruel thorns where we have stooped for flowers. But, O, tis from the oft pierced heart those precious drops distill, that many a life else all unblest with healing balm shall fill. Then give, o give the flower to those who pray it so may be, but I would choose to have the thorns with Thee, dear Lord, with Thee."

Father, again we come we this morning thankful that You've taught us from Your Word and we would choose the thorns, dear Lord, that draw us close to Thee. We thank You for the trials, thank You for the struggles, thank You that we are poured from vessel to vessel till all the dregs be drained away and we are as sweet taste in Thy mouth. May we not think men's thoughts but God's thoughts about the Messiah and about our own life and its struggles...even as Jesus was not what men expected, may we know that to be like Him is not necessarily to be what we expect either. Make us to the image of Christ, whatever that takes. We pray for His glory...amen.

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