

March 3, 2013 by Steve Brandon



# Injustice and Unfaithfulness

## Mark 14:53-72

### 1. Injustice (verses 53-65).

### 2. Unfaithfulness (verses 66-72).

When we think about the sufferings of Jesus Christ, we often go right to His physical sufferings. We often think of the whippings that He received. We often think of the beatings that He received. We think of how He was forced to carry His cross until He was completely exhausted. We think of the nails in His hands, the nails in His feet, the pain He experienced in breathing while upon the cross. We think of the process of His dying.

But, rarely do we think of the sufferings that came before all of the physical sufferings -- the pain Jesus endured as He thought about what awaited Him; the pain of His closest disciples fleeing; the pain His people turning on Him. These are real sufferings. They are real pain.

Before Jesus was ever put to death, He was first betrayed by His people. In John 1:11 we read that Jesus "came to His own, and those who were his own did not receive Him." Instead, they rejected Him.

In our exposition of the gospel of Mark, we come today to see some of these sufferings. Particularly, I'm talking about the injustice that Jesus experienced in His trial. I'm also talking about the discouragement that He felt when Peter denied Him. Perhaps you can relate.

Perhaps you have been accused unjustly. Perhaps you said something that was taken out of context, which caused a major rift in your family. Perhaps you were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and accused of doing something you never did. Perhaps you have made a major purchase, only to realize that you have been sold a bill of goods. Perhaps you have experienced some legal dispute in which you have gone before a judge, ... only to be on the wrong end of the verdict.

Perhaps you have been slandered. Perhaps you have been greatly misunderstood. Perhaps you have experienced an unfaithful friend. You shared a confidential email with your friend, who then proceeds to send it out to a dozen (or more) people. You feel upset and angry. You feel violated. You feel that your trust has been betrayed.

Or, your friend makes a promise of some sort to you. But, when it was time to fulfill the promise, your friend was nowhere to be found. Maybe you let your friend borrow some money. But, it was never paid back.

Perhaps you have read about it. I read this week in the current issue of World Magazine of the trials facing the Romeike family from Germany, who has fled to the United States. They have sought political asylum here in the states, so that they could home school their children, which is illegal for them to do in Germany. The German government says that homeschooling creates "parallel societies" which is undesirable for the German people. The Romeikes have been in America since 2010, happily living their life. Should they return to Germany, "the parents [will] likely face huge fines and criminal penalties, and could lose custody of their five school-age children". [\[1\]](#) But, "Attorney General Eric Holder argues that Germany's ban on homeschooling fails to violate the 'fundamental rights' of ... [the Romeike family]." And I'm sure that the Romeike's are thinking now of the injustice of the world's judicial systems.

Whatever the circumstance, whether big or small, whether local or global, these things can be painful. They cause anxiety. They cause lack of sleep. Perhaps they even cause you to lose faith in people. Such were the sufferings of Christ long before He ever went to the cross to bear in His body the iniquity of us all.

Let's begin this morning where we left off last week, in verse 53, where we will read about His religious trial. Jesus actually had two trials before being condemned. The first trial was before the religious authorities. The second trial was before the Roman authorities.

Though Rome governed the area of Palestine during the days of Jesus, the Jews were given a measure of self-rule, which means that they were able to decide their disputes by themselves. However, the Jewish courts were prohibited from executing its criminals. And so, those being found worthy of death were brought before the Romans. As the Jews determined that Jesus was worthy of death, a second trial needed to take place in order for the Romans to execute the judgment.

Today, we will examine "The Religious Trial." Next week, we will examine "The Roman Trial."

### Mark 14:53-72

They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this

temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands." Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

If you have read John Bunyan's classic work, "Pilgrim's Progress," surely you remember what happened to Faithful in the city of Vanity Fair. In their journey to the Celestial City, Christian and Faithful had come upon Vanity Fair, and had to pass through. These two strange looking men were noticed instantly by those in the town. They were clothed differently, wearing only simple clothes. They spoke differently, not speaking the language of Canaan. They acted differently, turning their eyes from beholding vanity and refusing to purchase anything, but the Truth. When they refused to conform to the world, they were arrested, beaten, and brought before the court.

Christian and Faithful were charged with causing "commotions and divisions in the town." They had simply refused to engage in their evil deeds. But, the city of Vanity Fair saw it as a threat. Faithful was tried first (Christian would later escape). Faithful was brought before the Judge, the Lord Hate-Good. The names of the twelve jury members were Mr. Blind-man, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Lye, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, and Mr. Implacable. From the beginning, the court was stacked against him.

And then, three witnesses came to make testimony. They were no help to Faithful's cause either. Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank were their names. Envy told the judge that Faithful had said that, "Christianity and the Customs of our town of Vanity, were diametrically opposite, and could not be reconciled. By which ... he does, at once, not only condemns all our laudable doings, but us in the doing of them."

Superstition told the judge that Faithful had said that, "our Religion was naught, and such by which a man could by no means please God. ... Your Lordship very well knows what necessarily will follow: that we still do worship in vain, are yet in our Sins, and finally shall be damned."

Pickthank told the judge that he had heard Faithful speak against, "our noble Prince Beelzebub" and other honorable friends in the down, like the Lord Old-Man, the Lord Carnal-Delight, the Lord Luxurious, the Lord Desire of Vain-Glory, the Lord Leachery, and Sir Having Greedy.

Faithful was then given an opportunity to defend himself, which he did quite well, clarifying what exactly he did say and didn't say. But the jury, with heart set against Faithful, found him guilty. The climax of the trial comes when Mr. Blindman, the foreman of the jury, summed it up well when he said, "I see clearly that this man is a Heretick." Faithful was handed over to the authorities "to be put to the most cruel Death that could be invented." He was scourged with whips. He was lanced with knives. He was stoned with stones. He was pricked with swords. He was burned to ashes at the stake. He was "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

The parallels between Faithful's trial and the trial of Jesus Christ are many. Oh, the names of the jury were different. Oh, the charges against Jesus were a bit different. Oh, the exact sentence pronounced against Jesus was a bit different. Oh, the death that Jesus died was a bit different. But, overall, the same thing took place.

Jesus Christ had entered this world and had confronted the world with its practices and lawless deeds. As a result, the authorities of His day came to hate Him. When they had finally captured Him, they gave Him an unfair trial, distorting His words, mis-representing Him, and doing all they could to find Him guilty. Like Faithful, Jesus too was "put to the most cruel Death that could be invented" -- the Roman cross.

Let's look at our first point this morning.  
1. Injustice (verses 53-65).

We will see in verses 53-65 the injustice of His trial. In verse 53, we see Jesus, bound as a prisoner (John 18:24), entering the courtroom to face His trial. As He entered, Jesus saw Caiaphas, the high priest, sitting as judge. Jesus saw the Sanhedrin sitting as jury -- all of the religious leaders.

From the gospel of John, we know that before He arrived here, Jesus was first taken to Annas, a former high priest, and father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:12-24). Annas briefly questioned Jesus and sent Him on his way for the formal trial before the entire Sanhedrin. Perhaps it was during the time that Jesus spent with Annas that the members of the Sanhedrin were quickly assembled.

We know that this was late at night, presumably somewhere past midnight. Those of the Sanhedrin may have been awakened at home and summoned for this important meeting. The entire Sanhedrin consisted of 70 religious leaders: priests, teachers, and elders. We have no way of knowing exactly how many of the men were able to come this night on such short notice. But, we do know that at least 23 of them arrived, for 23 were needed to form a quorum. My guess is that almost every leader showed up.

Earlier in the week, they had put together some plans to capture and kill Jesus (Mark 14:1-2). Jesus was on the top of the FBI most wanted list. But now, you hear, He has been captured. This trial may well be the most significant thing that takes place in your lifetime. You don't hear about these things and stay at home, asleep in bed. No, you come.

As Jesus looked around to survey the situation, He gazed into the eyes of many men that He knew. Jesus had grown up as a Jewish man, coming several times each year to Jerusalem. He spent much time in the temple as a young man, asking questions and learning from others. These men would have been prominent priests and scribes and would have been around the temple often. I'm sure that Jesus had spoken to several of these men as He taught in the synagogue.

Furthermore, Jesus was very familiar with the politics of the day. He knew who it was that was the current high priest. He knew who it was that sat on the high court. They were the highest religious court in the land. This Sanhedrin is comparable perhaps to our Senate (without the religious connotations).

This trial actually took place at the home of Caiaphas (Luke 22:54). Apparently, he lived in a larger home with a courtyard, where people could assemble. It was large enough to hold the Sanhedrin as well as an overflow crowd that had assembled to watch the proceedings. Certainly, the council of the Sanhedrin would have been front and center and all others would be around. Among those in the crowd was Peter.

Though we are told in verse 50 that "all [of the disciples] left Him and fled," But, Peter didn't flee too far. In verse 54 we are told that "Peter ... had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire."

This was a bold move on Peter's part. This crowd that assembled in the courtyard were certainly many of the same ones who had come to arrest Jesus. There were those present who saw Peter attempt to defend Jesus when he drew the sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. To come and be identified with Jesus was a dangerous thing for him at this moment. A bit later, we will get a closer look at Peter's experience during the trial of Jesus.

This was no friendly court. When Jesus entered this courtyard, He entered a lion's den. These men had set their hearts against Jesus. Even a year or two before this scene, they were "conspiring ... against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6). They had attempted to arrest Jesus, but had failed many times in their attempts. Mark 14:1, "the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him." Finally, Jesus had been captured. Finally, He stands before them in a hasty trial at night. Now was their chance to destroy Him. And they tried to destroy Him!

Beginning in verse 55, we begin to see the witnesses who were brought forth to accuse Jesus. We read, "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death."

From the start, this trial wasn't about justice. The Sanhedrin wasn't interested in discovering the truth. They weren't interested with discerning the facts of the case. There was no due process in this whole affair. In their minds, they knew that they wanted to get rid of Jesus of Nazareth. And they would use any means possible to remove Him from their midst. In this case, they were seeking any sort of testimony that they be sufficient to condemn Him to death. They were willing to hear anybody say anything in hopes that a due reason might be found to condemn Him. Such was the hardness of their hearts.

That's why they called the witnesses. That's why they were seeking testimony "against Him." Notice that at this point, they haven't even formally charged Jesus of anything. They were looking for a charge! They simply wanted to find a fault in Him.

How typical this is to human nature. When your heart is against someone, it doesn't matter what good they do. You are interested in the bad that you see in them. In fact, you will seek to find out their faults. You will let your mind dwell on these things and continue to convince yourself of how wrong that person is. When they do anything, and you will interpret it in an unfavorable light. "Did you see what they did?" "Did you hear what they said?" "Did you see that look on their face?"

Though the good that they do is much, in your eyes, it becomes little. Though the bad that they do is little, in your eyes it becomes much. This is the exact opposite of love. Love will look at the little good, and will think much of it. Love will look at the much bad, and will think little of it. Isn't this what 1 Corinthians 13:7 says? Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

When your heart is for someone, the transgression against you matters little. When you see or hear of something bad about someone, love will work hard to justify them in your sight. "What he did against me hurt, but I will bear it gladly, because I love him." "I can't believe what she said; surely, there has to be some reason for why she said it like she did." "Perhaps he was just tired." "Perhaps she just doesn't quite understand." "I heard what so and so did. I trust that there is some sort of explanation for it." "He blew it. He blew it badly. But, I'm going to endure with him, because I love him."

The motive of love will work hard to justify another in your own mind. But exact opposite is true when it comes to hate. Your mind will work very hard to condemn another person in your own mind. This is exactly what was happening with the Sanhedrin. Their heart was set against Jesus. And they were seeking to get rid of Him. This was obvious. In Mark 15:10 we read that Pilate "was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy."

The idea we get from our text this morning is that witness after witness after witness came forward. The New American Standard has a good translation in verse 55, "the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death." They were continually hearing witness after witness, with hopes that one of them might be a key witness to put Jesus to death.

Now, we don't know how these witnesses were obtained. Perhaps the Sanhedrin announced that right there to the crowd that anyone who wanted to come forward and testify against Jesus would be welcome to come forward and say something. Perhaps they had a list of those

people living in Jerusalem who were known to say bad things about Jesus. Perhaps these people were awakened and summoned to come and say something against Him. Perhaps there were friends of the Sanhedrin who sent search parties out into the streets of Jerusalem to seek to find anyone that they could find to give a testimony against Jesus. Perhaps they were some of the wicked men from the market place who would be willing to lie about Jesus (Acts 17:5). I wouldn't be surprised at all if some were bribed.

But, none of the testimony stuck. At the end of verse 55, we read, "they were not finding any." They were not finding any [incriminating evidence against Jesus]. Verse 56 explains, "For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent."

I can just imagine the long line of witnesses that came forward. One witness would come and say one thing. Another witness would come along and try to say the same thing, but some of their testimony was contradictory. And so, the testimony would be thrown out. The contradictions must have been huge discrepancies. As the judge and jury were willing to find out anything that they had against Jesus, it must have been very obvious that things didn't quite line up. After a bit, a few more witnesses would come forth. But again, their testimony was found to be greatly inconsistent. Nobody could agree on what Jesus did, when He did it and where He did it.

The closest thing that they got came in verse 57 and 58, ...

Mark 14:57-58

Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"

Yet, this was just the sort of accusation that was needed against Jesus. Anything!

Had there been an American lawyer in their midst, surely he would have said, "Objection, your honor. This testimony is entirely irrelevant. It is unrelated to the issue at hand." But, in the trial of Jesus, it didn't much matter. They were attempting to use any testimony that they possibly could use. When there was an opportunity to turn it against Jesus, they tried to do so, and thus, they clearly revealed their heart in this entire trial.

So think with me about this accusation against Jesus. Is this really such a crime? To say that "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days?" Today in this age of terrorism, you might be arrested and thrown in prison for making such a statement, as it might reveal a plot of terror similar to what took place on 9/11. But it has only been in recent years that we have become especially aware of these types of things. But, in the days of Jesus, nobody was even capable of destroying the most magnificent building in Jerusalem by Himself! And the words about rebuilding it again was certain insanity.

In fact, this is what the people thought when Jesus initially said these words. Jesus said in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews had responded to Him by saying, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" (John 2:20). When they heard this initially, their response was that Jesus was crazy. In the book of John, we get the clarification that Jesus "was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:21), referring to His resurrection. "Destroy this temple [of my body] and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

Maybe these witnesses were referring to Jesus' testimony in Mark 13:2 of the buildings on the temple mount. Jesus had said, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down" (Mark 13:2). But, in that context, Jesus spoke nothing of Him destroying the temple. Nor does Jesus speak anything about rebuilding them.

It's no wonder that we read in verse 59, ...

Mark 14:59

Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

From John's account, we see that Jesus said nothing about Himself destroying the temple (verse 58). Nor do we hear anything about Him building another temple without hands (verse 58). Perhaps these are some of the sort of facts that were being disputed.

At any rate, we find the high priest standing up, coming forward and questioning Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" (verse 60). In other words, the high priest was saying, "We have you now! What will you say about Yourself?"

At this moment in the trial, all was silent. The focus of everyone's attention in the courtyard was upon Jesus. "But He kept silent and did not answer" (verse 61). At this point Jesus could have easily explained His words. He could have said, "First of all, your words aren't exactly true. I never claimed that I would destroy the temple, much less with my own hands. I simply said 'Destroy this temple,' implying that someone else might destroy it. Second, and more importantly, I wasn't talking about the temple upon the mount. I was talking in symbol about my body."

With such an explanation, the Sanhedrin would probably have gone back to seek other testimony that might have a better chance at sticking. Or, perhaps they may have chosen to convict Him anyway (as they did with Faithful). Whatever His reasons, His silence was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." Jesus remained perfectly silent.

Step back a moment and think about this. Of all the things that Jesus did, nobody could accuse Him of anything that He had done wrong. They had to resort to something that Jesus said. They had to resort to some, obscure statement about the temple. This observation is a subtle hint as to the innocence of Jesus Christ. The requirement of the law for sacrifices was an unblemished animal. There could be no

defect in the animal. It couldn't be lame or blind or have any type of physical blemish.

And the same is true of Jesus Christ. For Him to be our sacrifice, it was necessary for Him to be blameless and innocent. We will see this to be a big issue in the Roman trial. Pilate will ask the Jews, "What evil has He done?"

Though not the main point, here in the religious trial, the innocence of Jesus is clearly seen in their lack of ability to find any wrong in Him.

One benefit of the silence of Jesus was that it forced the high priest to get down to the main issue. He had seen the accusations come which were trivial. He now brought it down to what they all wanted to know. Look at the middle of verse 61, ...

Mark 14:61

... Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

At this point, the high priest asked Jesus the most straightforward question of them all. "Are you the Messiah!" Note, they are still looking for some crime to charge Jesus with committing. Now, on several other occasions, Jesus had already revealed Himself to various people that this was indeed the case.

The first time that He did so was early on in His ministry. In Luke, chapter 4, the story is told of how Jesus returned to His home town of Nazareth and was given an opportunity to preach to the synagogue in which He grew up. He asked for the scroll of Isaiah to be given to Him. He opened it to the very end (what we know of as Isaiah 61:1-2). He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

He rolled the scroll back up, gave it to the attendant, sat down, and said, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Everyone knew that this was a Messianic prophecy! Everyone knew that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. For after He spoke, "all in the synagogue were filled with rage" (Luke 4:28) and they tried to kill Him, just like what took place in His trial.

As much as the Jews claimed they were looking for the Messiah, such attitudes toward Jesus demonstrate that they never would have accepted anybody to be their Messiah.

I can think of another occasion during which Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. The story is told in John 4 of a sinful Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well. As she came to draw some water, Jesus struck up a conversation that addressed many different topics. At one point, this woman said, "I know that Messiah is coming; when that One comes, He will declare all things to us" (John 4:25). At that point, Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26).

On another occasion, Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi with His disciples. He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt. 16:13). When they gave various responses, He said, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). It was Peter who said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Jesus then told Peter and the other disciples "that they should tell no one that He was the Christ" (Matt. 16:20).

As Jesus continued on in His ministry, it was more and more obvious that He was the Messiah. And yet, it was still a bit veiled from the people. At one point, the Jews said to Jesus, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). Jesus told them, "I told you, and you do not believe" (John 10:25).

But now, Jesus stands before the high priest who demands that Jesus give him an answer: "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" Here's where the rubber meets the road. Here's where it all comes down. And Jesus answered in the affirmative. He said (in verse 62), "I am."

This is as straightforward an answer as you can give. With unmistakable clarity, Jesus confessed to who He was. The Jewish people can never claim that their Messiah didn't make it plain to their forefathers who He was!

The issue with the Jews of Jesus' day is not that they didn't know who the Messiah was. The issue was that they refused to believe. Jesus said, "I told you, and you do not believe" (John 10:25). The issue for many today is that they don't believe. Though we may be living in a post-Christian America, there are still many people who know who Jesus is; they simply refuse to believe in Him. They simply refuse to place their trust in Him!

May this not be true of us at Rock Valley Bible Church. May we place all of our trust in Him!

Well, with His confession, Jesus knew that His fate would be sealed. And so, He gives one last statement that will come back to haunt these Jewish leaders someday. He adds, "and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (verse 62). In other words, it may look like you all are in control of things today. "You have bound me and I stand here helpless before you. You have gathered a hostile crowd surrounding me. You are sitting as judge over me. But there will be a day in which the tables are turned. There will be a day when you are bound and I stand in judgment of you."

Jesus mixes together two Old Testament allusions to the Messiah. Psalm 110 pictures the Messiah seated at the right hand of God, a place of power and authority. Daniel 7 pictures the Messiah returning to claim His everlasting, all-powerful kingdom. They were famous verses in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah. Upon hearing this, there was no doubt as to what Jesus was saying. It was clear that He was claiming to be the Messiah. But, He wanted to make sure that it was clear!

It was clear to the high priest. For verse 63 tells us that the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"

You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" (verses 63-64).

In Biblical times, people would often tear their clothes in a demonstration of their great sorrow or exasperation. For instance, Jacob tore his clothes when he heard of Joseph's supposed death (Gen. 37:34). Also, Joshua tore his clothes when he heard that the Israelite army was defeated (Josh. 7:6). Here, the high priest tore his clothes to show his exasperation at the "blasphemy" of Jesus. They had finally found a charge that would stick. Verse 64 says, "... and they all condemned Him to be deserving of death."

It's at this point that the great irony of the text comes. The religious leaders had discerned that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. In fact, it is this very fact that will cause them to send Jesus to the Roman authorities to be killed (which we will look at next week).

So, why did Jesus die? He died for being the Messiah! These Jews got it all right! They properly identified Jesus as being the Messiah! Their problem was that they refused to believe it! They had their own idea of what the Messiah ought to be like. When Jesus came upon the scene, they knew that He certainly couldn't be the Messiah. They didn't see the power. They didn't see the glory! Rather than being willing to evaluate the words of Jesus, they refused. And so, they missed God's man and destroyed Him instead. I just can't help at this point to stress to you that they got it all right, but in the end, they got it all wrong.

The Jews at this point remind me of Amelia Bedelia. Perhaps some of you children know who I am talking about. She is the maid, who simply can't follow instructions. She takes everything literally. One day, she arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers to do her work. Mrs. Rogers gave her a long list of things to do. One of the things on the list was "dust the furniture." Amelia said to herself, "Did you ever hear tell of such a silly thing. At my house we "undust" the furniture. But to each his own way." She went to the bathroom and found some dusting powder and began to shower the dust all over the furniture.

Another thing on the list read, "draw the drapes when the sun comes in." Amelia Bedelia said to herself, "Draw the drapes? That's what is says. I'm not much of a hand at drawing, but I'll try." So, she pulled out a sketch pad and proceeded to draw a picture of the drapes.

Also on the list was the following: "Put the lights out when you finish the living room." So, Amelia went through the whole house and unscrewed all of the lightbulbs and hung them up on the clothesline. She said to herself, "So those things need to be aired out, too. Just like pillows and babies. Oh, I do have a lot to learn."

Amelia Bedelia was one who got things exactly right. But, Amelia Bedelia got it exactly wrong. This was the Jews! They understood quite clearly that Jesus was the Messiah. And yet, they didn't understand it at all!

We ought not to be surprised. This was all prophesied of the Messiah. Isaiah said, "we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Jesus, Himself, had told the Jews that He spoke in parables, "because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:13). The same was true of them regarding the Messiah at this moment. Though they rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah, they didn't understand Jesus as the Messiah. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:8, "none of the rulers of this age has understood [God's wisdom]; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

With the official charge against Jesus now established, His guilty verdict was assured. In verse 65 we see Jesus beginning to bear His physical punishment, right in front of the entire gathered assembly. We read that ...

Mark 14:65

Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

This was all done to insult the Lord of Glory. Since Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, they were attempting to demonstrate to all how He was lying. Yet, through all of it, what did Jesus do? He did nothing. He took the punishment upon His body. Why? For our sins.

Though Jesus could have changed the entire course of actions, with 12 legions of angels at His disposal, He wasn't willing to do so. Though He could have set matters straight, He was unwilling. Instead, He gladly faced this great injustice. He gladly faced this great evil.

In fact, I would argue that this was the greatest evil ever committed. Here was the only innocent man ever to walk upon the planet receiving an unjust and illegal trial, and being condemned to death! But, praise be to God, for His sacrifice means that we go free!

Let's look at our second point.

2. Unfaithfulness (verses 66-72).

Not only did Jesus have to suffer at the hands of the wicked religious leaders, but He also suffered at the hands of His closest friend and most faithful disciple -- Peter. Peter's denials meant that Jesus was forsaken by all in the world.

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

At the time of greatest need, Jesus was all alone. When Jesus endured the cross, it was in His own power. He didn't have anybody else supporting Him. None of His disciples were of any help at all. If anything, they were a distraction to Him. The story of Peter's denials helps to

illustrate that Jesus endured the cross all alone.

In the athletic world, there is much discussion about "home field advantage." It is believed by many that the home team generally plays better at home than on the road. The reason is quite simple. Though your lungs are crying for more air, though your legs are sore from cramps, though your throat is parched with thirst, the roar of the crowd will help you play on, ignoring the screams of your body. Some would even argue that playing at home is worth another player on the field; the twelfth man.

But when Jesus died upon the cross, He had no "home field advantage." Though Jerusalem was rightly His own city, He faced a hostile crowd. When Pilate offered to set Jesus free, the crowd shouted, "Crucify Him!" (Mark 15:13). When Pilate responded, "Why, what evil has He done?", they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" (Mark 15:14).

If ever a team is going to win on the road, they need the support of every teammate on the team. I've seen basketball games where the entire stadium is rooting for the home team. The only people in the entire place going for the visitors are the teammates on the bench of the opposing team. And when the away team makes a crucial basket, it's as if all the air was taken out of the building, ... except for 10 guys on the opposing bench, who are up, jumping for joy and cheering their team on. I have seen such teams pull through, despite the difficulty of being on the road.

When Jesus was standing firm in His trial, He had no disciples cheering Him on, encouraging Him to be "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). No. Jesus died alone. Deserted and abandoned by all. And in His hour of need, even His most faithful supporter, Peter, was unfaithful to Him. Remember, Peter was the one who said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Mark 14:31).

We can't look to a courageous disciple, who helped Jesus endure. It wasn't the encouraging word that helped Him to continue on in His obedience to the Father. It was Jesus Christ who accomplished our redemption all by Himself. Nobody else can take any credit for any of our redemption, except for Jesus Christ.

The great works of the world have always been done by many people. Consider the pyramids. They were built by thousands of slaves over many, many years. Consider our sky-scrapers. They weren't built by a single person. It took teams of people and massive machinery over many years.

But, Jesus did His work all alone. Nobody was supporting Him. Nobody was helping Him. The unfaithfulness of Peter shows how abandoned Jesus was in this world.

The background to our text comes in verses 27-31, ...

Mark 14:27-31

And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away [literally, "stumble"], because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.

So here in verse 66 we see how well Peter does in His great promise.

Mark 14:66

As Peter was below in the courtyard, ...

As I mentioned earlier, Peter was in the courtyard of the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the religious trial of Jesus was taking place. Caiaphas was the highest Jewish political figure in the land. You might think about his house like the White House. It was also quite appropriate for a trial to be held here, for the house of the high priest was a common public gathering place.

In the days of Jesus, large houses would often be arranged in a circle, surrounding a courtyard. Their yard would be in the middle of their house, rather than in front or in back. The house of Caiaphas was large enough for the Sanhedrin, and quite a few other observers, to assemble in it.

Apparently, Jesus was up on some steps, on a higher level for all to see, as Peter "was below in the courtyard." At this point, we need to commend Peter. Yes, he had fled when they came to arrest Jesus. But, he followed the crowd from a distance and into the courtyard to see what would take place with Jesus.

And yet, we see His unfaithfulness in verse 66.

Mark 14:66-67

As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene."

Remember, it was late at night. In the arid climate of Jerusalem, it's warm during the day and cold at night. So, Peter was warming himself by a fire. And a servant-girl came and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." It's sort of a question. It's sort of a statement. We don't know the reason why she thought this. Perhaps it was because of the way that Peter was intent upon listening to the trial. Perhaps it was

because she sort of recognized Peter as having been with Jesus in the temple the previous week. Perhaps it was feminine intuition. Perhaps it was divine revelation. We simply don't know.

But, there was something about Peter that gave reason for her to think this. This was the last thing that Peter wanted to hear. He wanted to remain incognito. He wanted to blend into the background. He wanted to be a wall flower.

But now, Peter had to deal with his relationship with Jesus. Remember that, at this very moment, the Sanhedrin was attempting to find guilt with Jesus. They were looking for all types of witnesses, in hopes of finding a false witness. If Peter would come out and say that he was one of Jesus' disciples, he would be dragged into the middle of the court and asked to give testimony about Jesus. Would it come out that Peter was actually one of the disciples of Jesus, Peter may well have been crucified along with him. So Peter knows what is at stake: His very life! To say that He was one of Jesus' disciples was to put his own life at stake. And so Peter responded in a way that saved his life, responding in the negative and leaving the scene.

Mark 14:68

But [Peter] denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch.

Here was strike one. After this encounter, Peter was on the move. He knew that those around the fire were on to suspecting him. Perhaps they would have questioned him about these things. It would have been difficult for Peter to make up an entire story about what he had been doing the last three years. I can imagine the conversation going like this:

*"So, if you aren't one of His disciples, what do you do for a living?"*

*"I'm a fisherman!"*

*"Here? In Jerusalem?"*

*"No, I fish in Galilee."*

*"I thought that you said that you weren't from Galilee."*

*"No, I didn't say that. I said that I didn't know Jesus."*

*"Galilee is a small place. How is it that you don't know Jesus?"*

*"I don't know."*

*"I've heard that some of His disciples were simple fishermen. Do you know some of His followers?"*

*"I think so. But I'm not sure."*

It would have been very difficult for Peter to cover up His knowledge of Jesus if he continued in conversation around the fire. So, he chose to split instead. So, in verse 68 we find out that Peter moves from inside the courtyard "out onto the porch."

This was the entrance into the home of the high priest. As such, it was further away from the trial. I believe that Peter was seeking to remove himself a bit and hopefully come to a place where there wouldn't be any more confrontations. But we see the same thing happen again.

Mark 14:69

The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!"

Mark seems to indicate that it was this same servant-girl, who saw Peter again and pressed him again regarding his relationship with Jesus. Again, Peter did the same thing.

Mark 14:70

But again he denied it.

Strike two. Shortly afterwards, we see the same scenario.

Mark 14:70

... And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too."

Mark said that this happened, "after a little while." Luke is a bit more specific. He said that it was an hour later. So, don't think of these denials as happening one after another without giving Peter much time to think about it. An hour is a long time for Peter to think about what he had just said, how he lied, and how he had been unfaithful to his previous promises. But, I suspect that he didn't much think about his previous denials. He was busy talking to those who were around him. He was busy looking to see what was happening inside the courtyard.

Matthew's account tells us how they thought that Peter was from Galilee. They said, "The way you talk gives you away" (Matthew 26:73). Across our country, we have various different accents. They speak differently in New York than they do in Chicago. They speak differently in Alabama than they do in California. It is easy to recognize a foreigner to our parts of the country.

If someone comes up to you and begins to speak with you in a southern drawl, you know that they are from Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Texas, or some other southern state. They don't talk like we do. It's easy to see. So also was it easy for these people in Jerusalem to recognize a Galilean accent. They said, "Your talk gives you away."

Again, Peter denies having any relationship with Jesus. And yet, what comes out of Peter's mouth is as strong a denial as he can make.



Mark 14:71

But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"

I'm sure that Peter was trying to make himself as believable as possible. Cursing and swearing in efforts to persuade those who were around him. I expect at this point that he raised his voice. Perhaps he was red in the face with intensity. He didn't want any to keep suspecting that he was with Jesus. "I swear to God. I am telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! May curses be upon my house if I'm not telling you the truth. I do not know the man!"

Strike three! There was no joy in Jerusalem. The mighty Peter had struck out. We read in verse 72, ...

Mark 14:72

Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

It all came to pass just like Jesus had predicted (verse 30). In fact, it was probably the very crowing of the cock that brought into Peter's mind the words of Jesus, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times" (verse 30). Luke tells us that Jesus "turned and looked at Peter" (Luke 22:61). Their eyes met. Their hearts broke. Here was the man who professed to be able to stand with Jesus even unto death, wilting at the questioning of a servant girl. It was too much for him to take.

In verse 72 we read that Peter "began to weep." Matthew tells us that he "went out and wept bitterly." He went out of the courtyard. He went out the home of Caiaphas. He went away from the crowds. I suspect that he found a place all alone and balled his eyes out at the evil of his deeds. He had abandoned Jesus. He had been unfaithful to His promises. He left Jesus all alone. And now, Peter was all alone.

Now, this would be a mighty sad story if we didn't know how things turned out. At the end of the gospel of Matthew, we see Jesus gathering His disciples (including Jesus) together and instructing them to "go ... and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Though they all fell away from Jesus, they were all later restored unto the work of spreading the gospel throughout the world! Peter became the first great Christian evangelist. He became the rock of the church that Christ said that he would (Matt. 16:18).

The Holy Heart was broken, sent from the Father's side.

The Son of God forsaken. The holy sacrifice.

Chorus:

For me He was forsaken, afflicted and alone.

My sin forever taken that I might live for Him.

The Holy Lamb was stricken, abandoned and alone.

He bore my sin upon Him, He bore it as His own.

And when my heart is broken, torn by my sin and pride;

The Son of God now risen will draw me to His side.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 3, 2013 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] World Magazine, March 9, 2013, p. 12.