

WEEK SIXTEEN

The Faultless Christ

Billy Sunday
Richmond, IN 1922

Some things must be faultless in order to be valuable. The value of a diamond, depends on its quality, not its quantity. When I was in New York I went down to Tiffany's. Picking up the famous Tiffany diamond, I asked, "How much is that worth?"

One hundred thousand dollars."

I picked up a rope of pearls. "How much is that worth?"

"Eighty-five thousand dollars."

I picked up a little two-carat pigeon-blood ruby. "How much is that worth?" Five thousand dollars."

One of the most valuable stones in the world, as well as the rarest is the pigeon-blood ruby. Only ten percent of the diamonds on

the market are what they call first class or first water. The others are either a little off in color, size, or shape, or have a flaw that reduces their value.

A man may be known by five things: First, he character - what he is. Second, his conversation - what he says. Third, his conduct - what he does. Forth, his contributions - what he gives. Fifth, his creed - what he believes.

Love is the greatest thing in the world. Character is the grandest. It will remain when all things else are taken away. You can't lose character. It will stay when money is gone, when your friends forsake you. You can burn up money, your house, your clothes; but you can't burn up your character. It

won't blow away. It can't be lost.

You can't buy character. A reputation may be lost in one act of your life which has taken a lifetime to build up.

Character needs to epitaph on its tombstone. You may bury a man, but his character will beat the hearse back from the cemetery. He will walk the streets long after his name has been obliterated by time from the tombstone. Men who lived in this city years and years ago - you have forgotten their names, but they are still living, either reproduced in a benediction or a curse.

Character has to be flawless; and I bring before you Jesus Christ.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST:
THE TRIALS OF JESUS

A MOMENT OF DECISION

The critical time has come and everyone must make a choice.

Jesus has made His choice. He will fulfill the Scriptures and the will of the Father. He will accomplish what He came to earth to do. He would not let His disciples defend Him. Though He could have called more than twelve thousand angels to His defense, He offered Himself "I am He."

Judas, I believe, was initially impressed with Jesus but only because he did not fully understand His mission. Dissatisfaction and greed twisted his reasoning. Some have suggested that his motive may have been to provoke a confrontation that would stir Jesus into action. Others reason that he was merely self-interested. In either case, he yielded himself to the control of Satan.

When crunch time came, he made a choice

that he would immediately regret that would last for eternity.

The chief priests, elders, scribes, and pharisees sent their mob with lanterns, torches, swords and clubs. They came heavily armed to take the Prince of Peace. Afraid to touch Him while He taught publicly in the streets and synagogues they sought Him by the moonlight while He knelt in prayer. They made their choice and their error would be forever recording in the annals of Scripture.

Mere moments earlier, the disciples were dozing. They were weary from a long day. Luke reports (22:45) that they were "sleeping for sorrow." They had been trying to process all that Jesus was teaching about betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection. Peter had been told that he would deny Christ three times before

morning. Stress and depression often make us weary.

Adrenaline now flowed through their veins. They were instantly awake and alert. They had been surrounded while they slept and were encompassed by a multitude. Impulsively, Peter attacks only to be rebuked yet again. The violent mob was taking Jesus into custody and He offered no resistance. In fact, He seemed almost resigned to go. It was as though it was His plan. The Shepherd was smitten and the flock forsook Him and fled.

The moment of decision had come and choices were made in a moment. The choices made in such times are always the culmination of choices we have made in the past. What do your current choices demonstrate about how you will respond when "crunch time" comes your way?

DAILY READING: Mark 14:43-52, Matthew 26:47-56, Luke 22:47-53, John 18:1-11

1. How did Judas signal who Jesus was?
2. Who cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest?
3. What was the name of the man whose ear was cut off?
4. Who forsook Jesus?
5. How many angels could Jesus have called?
6. Why didn't He?
7. Jesus said this was the hour of power of _____?
8. How did Judas know where to find Jesus?
9. Written approximately 25 years after the synoptic gospels, what information does John give concerning the officers that the others leave out?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY

1

Cities/Places

RELIGIOUS TRIALS

Annas and Caiaphas were both recognized as high priests before the birth of Christ (Luke 3:1). Annas was Father-in-law to Caiaphas. Annas was deposed in A.D. 14 by Rome. However, it seems apparent that the Jews disregarded this interference with their religion. His replacement, Ismael, was never recognized by them. Somewhere between A.D. 18 and 25, Joseph Caiaphas was officially installed into the office. Some suppose that the one was recognized by the people and the other by the empire. Between the two, it seems that they were somehow able to work things out in their own best interests.

In these closing chapters of the gospels we find seven trials in four categories. Two religious trials were held (Annas and Caiaphas). Three civil trials were

held (Pilate, Herod and Pilate again). A public trial before the people and finally a Heavenly trial where He exonerated in the resurrection.

As Annas and Caiaphas examine Jesus before the San Hedrin council we find anything but a fair trial. In fact, it was an illegal trial. A night trial concluded in less than a day for a capital offence was contrary to Jewish law.

No formal charges were presented against Jesus. This was simply a "fishing expedition" much like every other conflict they had with Jesus. However, this time it was a secluded event with no witnesses other than those who hated Him.

At last the charge of blasphemy was leveled

against Him because He claimed to be the Son of God. However, we will soon see the charges changed to treason when Jesus is presented before Pilate.

The Jews wanted Jesus dead but they did not want to be the guilty party. They wanted Rome to be responsible. Their own ignorance was complicit with the fulfillment of Scripture. Stoning was the Jewish method of execution and would not have fulfilled the Scriptures nor Jesus' own prophecies concerning His death. You can never successfully work against God.

In this Jesus accurately fulfills the type set forth by Joseph. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Genesis 50:20

DAILY READING: John 18:12-24, Mark 14:53-65, Matthew 26:57-68

1. Which two disciples followed Jesus?
2. Who struck Jesus?
3. What did the chief priests and council seek for that they were unable to find?
4. What was the problem with the false witnesses?
5. What charge was eventually leveled against Jesus and why?
6. What did Jesus hold?
7. How did Jesus say He would be seen in the future?
8. Why type of treatment did Jesus receive?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
2

Cities/Places

COVERT CHRISTIANITY

Interwoven in the religious trials of Jesus we find the account of Peter's denial. While Peter forsook Him in the garden he caught up with Him at the palace. He followed Jesus covertly. He loved Jesus but was afraid to identify himself with Him. He knew it could be costly.

Peter certainly wasn't the last covert Christian. Ashamed and intimidated by pure, Bible living Christians hide among the lost every day. Shockingly, I've heard some say boastfully, "You wouldn't even know he's a Christian." Statements like that are intended to brag on how a believer fits in with the world. They are "so cool" you would never know that they followed Jesus.

The push today is to mainstream Christianity. this 180° contrary to Paul's teaching "come out from among them, and be ye separate" in 2 Corinthians 6:17. Undercover Christians are no Christians

at all! I don't mean to say that they are unsaved but simply that following Christ (the true meaning of "Christian" has never been a secretive thing. Jesus just answered the chief priests that all of His ministry had been public and never secretive.

Jesus is quoted by Matthew as saying "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)

One lesson Jesus never taught was the art of blending in with a carnal world. He taught His followers not to hide their candle under a bushel but to be a city set upon a hill for all to see. He admonishes us to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

A true Spirit-filled Christian knows better than to blend in. That doesn't mean he's never done it. Peter was guilty. But did you notice how deeply it affected him?

Can you see Peter's face that very moment the rooster sounds the second alarm? According to Luke, Peter's eyes must have fastened upon those of Jesus. Without a word His eyes spoke volumes to Peter's heart. Can you see those eyes. They were neither mean nor cruel. They were soft and compassionate, yet knowing.

Peter knew now what Jesus had known before. The fisherman's heart was never as broken as it was at this instant. He would never deny Jesus again!

When we are found denying Jesus through worldly lifestyles and attempts to blend in we ought to be courageous enough to weep and walk away from covert Christianity.

DAILY READING: Mark 14:66-72, Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:54-71, John 18:16-18, 25-27

Note: The cock's crowing signal's that Wednesday is past and it is now Thursday morning.

1. Where was Peter?
2. Who was first to recognize Peter as a disciple of Christ?
3. Where did he go after the first denial?
4. With what did he deny Jesus the second time?
5. What evidence did they put forth at the third accusation?
6. How did Peter deny Christ this time?
7. How much time passed between the second and third accusations?
8. What did the Lord do immediately after the third denial?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
3

Cities/Places

CIVIL TRIALS

As predicted, Judas learned to regret his actions. However, regret and real, bible repentance are not the same thing. You may be saying, "But the Bible says Judas repented." It does. But to when did he repent? It was the priests who were cold, calloused and incapable of helping him.

What a wonderful and dramatic twist to the story could have been recorded on the pages of Scripture if Judas had properly repented! Would not the Lord have forgiven him? If his repentance had been directed toward God rather than the helpless priests, Judas could have been saved. Imagine how the book of Acts might have been different if Judas had been restored. What books of the bible might he have written. Imagine how powerful his testimony would have been and how different his eternity would be. But his confession was incomplete and unsatisfactory because it was offered to those with no authority.

Unfortunately, many today are going the way of Judas and getting the same results. The priests are powerless. Their

confessions do not lead to conversions. The end result is still unsatisfactory and their eternity is still Christless. As close as Judas came, he still died with religion rather than a relationship.

Now the Jewish council has brought Jesus to Pilate to do their dirty work. They have changed the charges from blasphemy to treason. How convenient. They know that Pilate would be uninterested in judging their religious laws.

Pilate saw through their charade. He had no interest in executing Jesus. In fact, he appears to even sympathize with Him slightly. There are no signs that he wished to receive Christ as he should. But he seems to have fond Him intriguing. He certainly did not feel threatened and Jesus gave him no reason to. Repeatedly, Pilate declares Jesus innocent but the chief priests will not accept his verdict.

Pilate is fearful for his own political position. He has been charged to keep the peace. However, he has caused more than

one riot and is essentially on probation. One more tumult and he could loose his position if not more.

At last, he thinks he finds a way out. Jesus is from Herod's territory. Let Herod deal with Him. Herod is delighted to have Jesus before him. He wants to be entertained by a miracle. He's looking for a show. Jesus will not perform. Recall that it was Herod who silenced the voice of God in John the Baptist! Once he said "no" to God, he would never hear His voice again.

Back to Pilate Jesus must go. Herod will do nothing but mock Him. He will not accept responsibility for Him. Pilate's plans of avoiding Jesus have failed. He must decide what he will do with the one called Christ.

Everyone of us must decide what we will do with Jesus. There is no neutral position. This is no avoidance. We can try but eventually our time will run out and we must give an account. What will you do with Jesus?

DAILY READING: Mark 15:1-5, Matthew 27:1-14, Luke 23:1-12, John 18:28-37

1. How many times does Pilate pronounce Jesus not guilty or without fault?
2. Which three gospels confirm that it is a new day (Thursday)?
3. Why did Pilate marvel?
4. What caused Judas to repent?
5. What was wrong with Judas' repentance?
6. Whose prophecy was fulfilled by Judas and the priests?
7. What two new accusations did the present to Pilate?
8. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
4

Cities/Places

A PUBLIC TRIAL

Jesus had appeared to be a popular among the people. Stories were told of miracles and healings. Thousands had followed Him. Rumors had circulated that He fed them all on meager portions of fish and bread. He had entered into Jerusalem just a week before to the cheers and adoration of the people. Pilate knew that it was the envy of the religious leaders that was behind their accusations.

Rather than stand against Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate thought he could put Jesus on public trial and the people would set Him free. He had not counted on the influence the chief priests had over this multitude. He did not realize how finicky the people could be.

The crowd had been primed by the religious leaders. In fact, they had most likely gathered the crowd. This multitude was comprised of those intimidated by the leaders. They feared being thrust out of the synagogues. They were willing to yield to the pressures of the priests.

I wonder how many of this congregation had eaten of the fish or witnessed the miracles. Is it possible that they could have turned so quickly?

Pilate was startled to hear the crowd call for the release of Barabass rather than Jesus. He was a wicked and vile man. He was a true blasphemer. His name literally means "Son of the Father." What did he

mean to imply with that?

Frustrated, Pilate consented to their will. He yeilded to thier pressures. However, he called for a basin of water and figuratively washed his hands of the whole affair. He declared that he would not be held responsible. However, saying it does not make it so.

Pilate was guilty because he would not take a stand. You cannot wash your hands of Jesus. Every one of us must give an account of what we do with Jesus. We cannot blame the religious crowd, the civil government or even the general public. You alone must decide what you will do with Jesus. Choose wisely.

DAILY READING:

Mark 15:6-15, Matthew 27:15-26,
Luke 23:13-25, John 18:38-19:16

DAY
5

Cities/Places

1. What was Pilate's custom at the feast?
2. What was Barabbas guilty of?
3. What did Pilate know about the chief priests motives?
4. What did the chief priests urge the people to do?
5. What was Pilate willing to do?
6. What role did Pilate's wife play?
7. How did Pilate disassociate himself with the people's choice?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

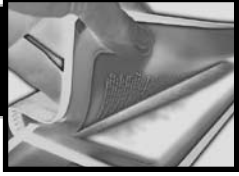


TABLE TALK



PASTOR'S MESSAGE