

## INTRO:

Before we stand and read, I have to tell you: I'm feeling some pressure this morning with respect to the passage we're looking at today, BECAUSE/as you know, the further we get in John and the closer we get to the Cross, the more front-loaded everything's getting. Cuz of course, when you're talking with your family/your friends, and it's your final moments, which is exactly where we're at in John/Jesus on the night before his crucifixion, you don't talk about sports and weather **right?** You talk about the most crucial things. And in our passage today, Jesus is talking to His disciples about something so crucial that, honestly, it's ALWAYS **challenged**/even offended every culture. And that's the idea of **sin and grace**. Since/you might know, non-Western/more honor-based cultures tend to find the idea of grace, forgiveness, NON-retaliation to sin, incredibly challenging. While in Western/our relativistic culture, WE find the idea of SIN/condemnation for anything, offensive. And so I'm feelin' some pressure... But the good news is: If you're willing to hold any offense loosely, then what I think you'll ALSO find here is a lot of **HOPE!** SO, if you would, let's stand now for the reading of God's Word.

## TEXT:<sup>1</sup>

So recall the scene here: Jesus/on the eve of His crucifixion, has invited His disciples into one last shared-meal. And AT that meal, both washed their feet AND reported the presence of a traitor/Judas in their midst. And though, Judas' treachery hasn't taken Jesus by surprise, cuz as we saw last week, "*He knew His hour'd come,*" you see there in **v.21**, He's nevertheless deeply "*troubled*" by it. And the verb used there is the same one used back in **ch.5** about the water in the pool of Bethesda being "*stirred up,*" you remember, before the invalid entered and was healed. So Jesus is literally "*stirred up.*" His soul agitated, which shows you that Jesus is not some passive bystander to your sin and struggle. No! BECAUSE He loves you, your hurt is His hurt! That's actually a mark OF His love for you. If He didn't care how you lived, cuz ya know He wanted to be tolerant/affirming/non-judgy, that wouldn't actually be love, that'd be apathy! And so He's "*troubled*" as He says, "*Truly, truly, one of you will betray me.*"

And you see there in **vv.22-24** that declaration STUNS the disciples into silence until/predictably, Peter breaks the silence asking John who Jesus is talking about, which you see, gets John to ask Jesus. And ya notice, John's not mentioned by name here. He's simply referred to as, "*the one whom Jesus loved.*" And people've had a hard time with that designation, cuz it seems to reflect poorly on John for apparent arrogance AND on Jesus for apparent favoritism. But what you have to know is that this isn't a designation JESUS gave to John, but a designation JOHN gave to himself out of a sense of being deeply loved BY Jesus. As I've told you before, there've been 2 men in my life/my father and a mento, who BOTH have this remarkable quality wherein almost everyone who gets around em believes they're a special friend. That was Jesus! And it's WHY John calls himself "*the beloved disciple.*" Not cuz he was literally the MOST-loved, but because when you really get to know the Jesus, you DO begin to feel particularly loved by Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted:

- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 200-206  
- "The False Disciple: John 13:21-30" // "The Future Disciple: John 13:33-38" // "The True Disciple: John 13:31-36" - *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2016).

And so John asks Jesus who He's talking about, to which Jesus, you see there in **v.26**, identifies Judas by handing him a piece of bread. And what's crazy is, not only that the other disciples don't seem to put 2-and-2 together here - which we'll talk about more in a second - BUT that Jesus even gives Judas a piece of bread in the first place. Cuz in this culture, for the host to give food/especially bread, which in Jewish culture is incredibly significant, going all the way back to the OT when God provided bread or mana for Israel in the wilderness - for a host to give bread to a guest; that was a mark of special favor! Which just shows you that EVEN AS Jesus is identifying Judas as a traitor, He's still reaching out to him with one final, astonishing, act of love. That it really is true, as John said earlier in **chapter 3**, that "*God SO loves you, me, the world/desires that NONE of us should perish, that He would give His only Son.*"

And so it says that "*Judas took the bread and went out into the night.*" Which you see there in **v.31**, prompts Jesus to begin a set of teachings that - apart from being interrupted by Peter in **vv.36-38** - will continue until the end of **chapter 16** and've historically been known as "*the farewell discourses of Jesus*" - these pre-Easter teachings Jesus gave His followers/US, ABOUT how to live in a POST-Easter age/how you're to live in light of His death and resurrection. So as Bruce Milne says, ya gotta think about these instructions LESS in terms of a kind of spiritual deathbed scene between Jesus and his friends, and MORE as the final encouragement a commanding officer might give his troops on the eve of a dangerous mission. So that's the scene!

Now, I mentioned that this passage is really about the challenging notion of sin and grace. Cuz what it specifically shows you ABOUT sin and grace are **3 Things: A Principle, A Power, and A Practice**. So **First, The Principle**. And the Principle is this: **Sin Is More Serious Than You Can Image!** It's more serious than you can imagine. And you see this in a TON of different ways throughout the passage. For example, there in **v.1** where it says that Jesus is "*troubled in spirit.*" As I mentioned, that's an incredibly strong term showing that Jesus is not speaking in a detached way about Judas here. No, He's really torn up, which just shows you that: **sin isn't JUST rule-breaking** - ya know transgressing God's Law and standards - **rather, it's relationship-severing**. Judas not just breaking a rule, but literally choosing to sever relationship with Jesus...And see, if you don't understand that you'll never understand how serious sin really is. You'll always just be like, for example, "*Oops. I know the Bible says, 'thou shalt not lie,' and 'I lied.' So I broke the rule, but then nobody's perfect right?*" In other words, you'll minimize sin, failing to realize that something like lying isn't just breaking one of God's 10 Commandments, it's bringing things like falsehood and deception into the relationship with the one to whom you lied...This is WHY, by the way, the 10 Commandments START with: "*you shall have no other Gods before me.*"/literally, you should never put anything in your life before God...You understand, that's a relational command...to the point that Martin Luther actually said that if we could ever bring ourselves to keep THAT command, we'd naturally keep the other 9. Cuz of course if you never put anything before God, you'll naturally never worship other things, take His name in vain, lie, covet, steal, commit adultery, and so forth...So see, sin is not just trampling on a rule, it's trampling on relationship with God, from which all brokenness then comes! If you don't see that, you'll EITHER minimize sin, thinking that because you're just breaking a rule that's ok cuz

nobody's perfect OR you'll be outraged over it, cuz how could people be so AWFUL as to break that rule you never would. ***Ya gotta see the seriousness of sin in the sense of it being relational.***

But you also gotta see it in the sense of it being **Hidden**. ***What do I mean?*** I mean, notice the different ways that Judas, despite being singled out by Jesus, is nevertheless essentially able to hide in plain sight. Cuz you see it says in **v.21** Jesus straight-up tells the disciples, "*one of you is gonna betray me.*" But in **v.22** the disciples look at each other confused. So Jesus says in **vv.26-27**, "*(the traitor) is he to whom I'll give this morsel of bread,*" and He gives it to Judas and tells him, "*go do what you're gonna do, quickly.*" But STILL the disciples don't see it. They think that Jesus is telling Judas to go out and do ministry with some of the funds they have. And you say, "*how could they miss this?*" Well, what this shows you is how our sin hides in plain sight/how it can "look normal." Because think about it: Judas looked just like everyone else. He'd been in ministry with em, doing miracles alongside em, was basically the church treasurer/ even appeared to enjoy life with Jesus. In other words, he looked JUST LIKE everyone else. Which is exactly the way sin is! It masks itself as normal. Like when we say, for example, "*I'm not a workaholic/I'm not neglecting my family; I'm just a hard worker who wants to be productive.*" "*I'm not uncommitted or flaky; I just know you have to keep your options open.*" "*I'm not gossiping; I'm just trying to keep people informed.*" "*I'm not addicted/being controlled by some substance or desire; I'm just trying to have a little fun.*" "*I'm not greedy; I just know we need to be good stewards of our resources.*" "*I'm not racist or bigoted; I just know you gotta be careful with who ya let in.*" ***Ya see?*** Our sin hides. And if ya don't understand that, then you open yourself up to being devoured BY sin. That's why the Apostle Peter, who knew a little something about sin, said in **1 Peter 5:8**, "*Be sober-minded; watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" ***Ya know how lions prowl?*** In waiting! Beneath tall grass!...In hiding! ***Ya gotta understand the serious, hidden nature of sin!***

But keep going, cuz ya also gotta understand that sin is serious, because it **Grows**. I think a lot of times we think of sin as just something we shouldn't do. And in thinking that, we just won't do it next time. But see, that's not how sin works. Every time you sin/every time you choose to live for yourself rather than God in some way/sever that relationship, what it's doing is getting you to do that again, until eventually, that's all you EVER do! It's like the auto-correct feature on your phone: Ya ever noticed when you get a new phone and ya go to send a text, it takes like an hour, because the phone hasn't "learned" your shortcuts. So you're trying to type "BRB"/be right back, and it auto-corrects to like, "*bring the ribs Billy.*" And you have to go in click back and choose "BRB."...until EVENTUALLY, after a few times OF choosing that, every time after you just type the letter "B" it's ready to throw in B.R.B. That's because it's learned/it's grown. Every time you do it, it's getting you to do it again! That's just like sin. It grows! And you see that with Judas there in **v.27**. Cuz when it says that, "*Satan entered him,*" what that's telling you is not so much the mechanics of like demon-possession or something, but rather that sin has this ability to kinda start on the outside, but eventually work its way inside your life, UNTIL it masters you. There's a kind of progression to it. You see this in the book of **Job**, where Satan ramps up his attacks on Job. And we've all seen this too **right?** People who ya know, you're around em and ya kinda think to themselves, "*man, they complain a lot.*" But eventually, they aren't just

grumbling, they THEMSELVES have BECOME a grumble... So things like discouragement grows into depression. Worry grows into you becoming a “worry-wart.” A taste/drink/proclivity grows into an addiction. Because sin grows. Such that every time you indulge that wrong thought, behavior, attitude, it gets easier to do the next time... Maybe the most famous version of this was Ted Bundy, who you might know was a really educated man, raised in a loving Christian home, didn’t experience any abuse growing up, BUT who became one of our nation’s most notorious serial killers in the 1970’s; beating, raping, and murdering at least 30 women between the ages of 12 and 26. And shortly before Bundy was executed, he was interviewed. And in the interview/you can read the transcripts online, he admitted that he didn’t possess ANY of the normal triggers for his behavior. But what he did say was how as a young boy he started looking at pornography. And the more-and-more he did, the more deviant his desires became UNTIL he began acting out those desires.<sup>2</sup> That’s because sin grows! Which is why you can’t say, “*Oh I’ll take care of that later/I’ll repent later.*” That’s like letting a baby poisonous snake slither around your house and saying, “*It’s just a baby.*” How arrogant to think it won’t GROW. **Sin grows!** And then finally with respect to the seriousness of sin, ya gotta see how often it’s **Celebrated**. That we don’t take it seriously, cuz we actually think it’s good. And you see this in Peter there in **vv.36-38**, where he OVERconfidently asserts his allegiance to Jesus. Basically says, “*Jesus, even if it’s dangerous, I’m brave. I’ll go with you to the end.*” Obvious overconfidence ESPECIALLY if you know the next big event in Peter’s life...in which He denies Christ 3x. He’s overconfident/arrogant, which SADLY is something we celebrate. Cuz we call people with Peter’s kind of confidence here: gritty, bold, determined **right?** But that’s because we don’t see how dangerous pride and arrogance actually is. How, not only is it the original sin, and from which all other sins have come, but how it leads you to live as somebody you’re NOT, to the detriment of who you actually are... This is why/those of you familiar with 12-step programs know/**what’s the first step?** Admitting you’re powerless over your problems right? **Why?** Because the reason anyone ever falls into addiction/the reason any of us EVER sin is cuz we don’t think it’s a problem. And if it is/we can manage it **right?** In other words, we live as somebody we’re NOT, which is all-powerful, to the determinant of who we actually are - limited and blessed to be dependent upon God. That was Peter’s sin here. And it’s representative of the fact that, if we’re not careful, we’ll fail to see the seriousness OF sin, because we’re **celebrating** sin. Like/and I don’t mean to be inflammatory here, but like when we say, for example, “*abortion isn’t the murder of an image-bearer of God; it’s freedom of choice.*” ...Or “*Pre-marital sex isn’t violating the covenant union God intends for healthy marriages; it’s checking if we’re compatible.*” “*Gender fluidity and transitions aren’t overwriting the creative and complementary work of God; it’s freedom of self-expression.*” ...Celebrating these things God has clearly called sin.

**So put all this together. Do you see the Principle here? How Serious Sin is?** Because only when you see that, will you THEN see the necessity for the **Second** thing we’re shown here. Which is **The POWER For Overcoming Sin**. And the Power is this: **Beholding the Glory and Grace of God**. Beholding the glory and grace of God. And you see both throughout this passage. For example, you see the glory of God in Jesus at the very outset when He’s not just identifying

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Porn-Again Christian (Manuscript) by Mark Driscoll, p.35.pdf

Judas as the betrayer, but in that, predicting the future. That even, as Bruce Milne says, *“amid the trauma of unmasking the traitor’s scheming and the handiwork of Satan, (Jesus still) remains in control.”*...And then you see it too, in **vv.31-32** when Jesus ATTESTS to His glory saying, *“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him...”* That Jesus and what He’s about to do in His crucifixion and resurrection is the glory of God epitomized!...And then you see it again, when He says to Peter there in **v.38**, *“WILL you, REALLY, lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you’ve denied me three times.”* Again, not only foretelling the future, but telling Peter, *“You’re confidence is a problem, cuz you think you could lay down your life and that would save the day. When in-fact, I’M the one who’s gonna lay down His life and ACTUALLY save the day!”* The amazing glory of God in Christ here!

But notice His grace too. Cuz on the one hand, ya got Jesus offering Judas bread, which as I said is Him seeing Judas/seeing YOU - full of nasty sin and all - and STILL loving you!... You got Him telling Judas, in **v.27**, *“what you’re gonna do, do it quickly.”* Which by the way, CAN’T mean, *“alright, get on with it. I know you’re resolved to betray me, so let’s get this going.”* It can’t mean that, cuz that would go against the turmoil He feels for Judas. No! What Jesus is saying is, *“go do what you’re gonna do, because THIS is why I’ve come. So do it quickly, because when you do, I’ll be graciously reconciling even enemies like you, to myself!”* And we know that’s what He means since in **vv.31-32** He talks about the glory that’s gonna be displayed through the GRACE of His death and resurrection. Cuz of course, there’s nothing more glorious than someone strong enough to be weak! And there’s nothing more gracious than someone powerful enough to lose all power! Just unbelievable glory AND grace! Ya have to behold both if you wanna find the Power to overcome sin. Because WITH both, what happens is/**listen**: You’re simultaneously humbled AND encouraged! Humbled by the glory of God - like when standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon and realizing how small and not in-control you are - humbled, which causes you to acknowledge and even despair over your sin...But THEN encouraged because even though you’re on your face having to despair of your sin, you’re not despondent BECAUSE you realize that the grace of Christ is: No matter how DEEP your sin, His love for you is deeper still...Rebecca McLaughlin has a great image for this. She says, *“Coming to Jesus” - overcoming sin THROUGH Jesus - “is like entering the most beautiful underground cave. To get in, you gotta first get down on your hands and knees” - be humbled. “But THEN once you’re in, God’s grace lifts you up to show you all the wonders that are found in Him.”*<sup>3</sup> For example, how He forgives you OF sin; loves you IN your sin; and is even working THROUGH your sin!...Ya gotta see both! Cuz if you only see the glory of God, you’ll be humbled...but into fear and worry. Afraid of God/not willing to turn TO Him, cuz ya think, *“what’s He gonna do?”*...BUT if you only see the grace of God and think, *“well Jesus loves me as I am,”* which is the so-called “grace” of more mainline/progressive religions, then you’ll never be truly encouraged unto change. Because yes! Jesus loves you as you are, but He doesn’t want to leave you as you are. Ya gotta behold BOTH God’s glory AND His grace!

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CrdI90oO4BG/>

And so if I could begin to close here with a best **Practice** for doing that; it's what you see there in **vv.34-35**, which is: **To be REALLY committed to a Gospel-Focused Community!** Cuz of course, it's in the Gospel - the Cross and Resurrection of Christ for your freedom and mine - that we most see both the glory and grace of God **right?** BUT it's in a Gospel-Focused community that you EXPERIENCE that glory and grace!...Cuz see when Jesus says there, *"A new commandment I give to you - to love one another: just as I've loved you, cuz that's the way people'll know you're my disciples..."* He's not giving a "new commandment" in the sense of one that'd never been uttered before, since of course, "loving people" is command in a number of religions/Israel was commanded to love God and love others in the OT. No! What's "new" about it is the motivation and medium through which we're to practice it; namely you see, MOTIVATED by Jesus' love for us - *"love one another: just as I've loved you."* And then through a MEDIUM, you might say, of family - a people committed to loving one another amidst crowds so those crowds can see what that love is like...a family!...So here's what this means: YOU, not just occasionally being around, but committing to live like a family with others in Hub, which is to say loving each another as Christ has loved you/in view of His glory and grace, is what ALLOWS people to see Christ now that He's ascended! Which is why Francis Schaffer famously said that, *"the church is the final apologetic for the Gospel."* **You know what an apologetic is?** It's a defense or a case for something. When you really commit to a Gospel-Focused church like this/commit to live as family with others IN this church, THAT makes an incredible case for the love of Christ. Cuz of course, a person can argue against theology, liturgy, and all the other "gy's," but it's very hard to argue against a people! Especially when that people, BECAUSE of how Christ has loved them, willingly chooses to love each other, irrespective of differences like race, politics, wealth, education, gender, townie or yuppie, you name it. That makes an incredible case for people. And not just people out there, but you too in here! Cuz I'll tell ya: I wish I had time to say something about each one of you and how BECAUSE of you, I'VE come to, not just understand, but EXPERIENCE the Gospel in ways I never thought I would. Like when I hear of some of you, who've literally turned down job offers and promotions because if you took em, you'd have to move. And you're committed to this church family more than you're committed to comfort or your wallet. **You know how much that teaches me about the commitment of Christ, and makes me wanna commit more TO Christ?** Or how in a neighborhood FULL of people who are doing everything they can to look pretty, be desirable, make a name for themselves, get ahead; how so many of you have decided that it's not just ok, it's GOOD...to be profoundly...unimpressive! **You know how much that teaches me about the steadfast love of Christ/encourages me to keep following Christ when it's NOT impressive/feels mundane?**...Or those of you who have so many responsibilities, between marriage, and family, and work, and YET, you SACRIFICIALLY give of your BEST time and money to serve here. Cuz you don't see church as some consumable religious good, here for your entertainment or inspiration. You see it as a family in which you participate and in which EVERYBODY gets to play. **You know how much that teaches me about the sacrificial generosity of Christ, and makes me wanna serve Christ and His family more than myself?**...And I could go on-and-on. Cuz that's how it works! If you grasp the glory and grace of Christ/the love of Christ in the Gospel; you WILL love one another. But ONLY as you love one another, will you truly EXPERIENCE the glory, grace, and love of Christ! That's the **Practice** we're given here for

laying ahold of the **Power** to overcome something as serious as sin. AND it's the practice that therefore makes church/including THIS expression of God's family we call Hub, God's plan A **hope** for our neighborhood, city, and world. And Friend, there is no plan B. Because "*By THIS - your love for one another/living in view of the Gospel together - will all people will know that you're Jesus' disciples.*" ...**Let's Pray!**