

Matthew 26:47-56 "The Agony of Betrayal"*

Main Idea: Jesus felt four types of pain in Matthew 26:47-56.

I. Jesus felt the pain of being betrayed (47-50).

A. Judas's crime was unthinkable (47-49).

1. He conspired with the enemy.

2. He used deception.

B. Jesus's response was unparalleled (50).

1. He exhibited grace.

2. He exhibited sovereign control.

3. He exhibited submission.

II. Jesus felt the pain of being misunderstood (51-54).

A. Peter tried to do God's work his own way (51).

B. Jesus did God's work the Father's way (52-54).

1. There's something more important than defending ourselves.

2. What matters most is seeing God's will accomplished.

III. Jesus felt the pain of being misrepresented (55-56a).

A. The crowd treated Jesus like a terrorist.

B. Jesus kept focusing on the Scriptures.

1. He lived His life in light of God's Word.

2. We must do the same.

IV. Jesus felt the pain of being deserted (56b).

A. The disciples didn't do what they needed to do.

1. They failed to pray.

2. They failed to think biblically.

B. The disciples did what they said they'd never do.

Response: Because of what Jesus did at Gethsemane...

1. We have a Savior to trust.

2. We have an example to follow.

Perhaps no treachery is worse than betrayal by a trusted family member or friend. Julius Caesar knew such treachery. Among the conspirators who assassinated the Roman leader on March 15, 44 B.C. was Marcus Junius Brutus. Caesar not only trusted Brutus, he had favored him as a son. According to Roman historians, Caesar first resisted the onslaught of the assassins. But when he saw Brutus among them with his dagger drawn, Caesar ceased to struggle and, pulling the top part of his robe over his face, asked the famous question, "You too, Brutus?"

It's one thing to be hurt by an enemy. It's quite another to have someone close to you turn on you, to *betray* you.

Which is what happened one dark night in a garden nearly 2,000 years ago. A betrayal occurred. But there was something quite unique about this betrayal. The person betrayed knew it was coming—He wasn't caught off guard. In fact, though He could have avoided the agony, He didn't. He allowed it to happen. Why? We'll find out this morning.

To see this most tragic betrayal, we must travel to Gethsemane. *Gethsemane*. The word itself means an "olive vat" or "olive press." It was a garden of sorts on the slopes of the Mount of Olives just outside of

Jerusalem. Gethsemane was a quiet place, a perfect spot for reflection and prayer.

That is what the Betrayed was doing that night. He was praying. He had talked fervently with His heavenly Father. And then suddenly His solitude was shattered by the noise of the Betrayer and a hostile mob that accompanied him.

We're talking, of course, about Jesus and Judas, and the events that took place in Gethsemane. We would not be here today were it not for Gethsemane.

I mentioned last time in introducing our two part study on Gethsemane that this is *holy ground*. Of all biblical studies, we must not approach this subject merely for intellectual purposes. When we come to Gethsemane, we must do so with hearts that are ready to worship.

The fact is, Jesus endured great agony in Gethsemane. He felt four types of pain as described in Matthew 26:47-56. Let's come alongside the Savior, to see Him, to worship Him.

I. Jesus felt the pain of being betrayed (47-50).

Here's how it happened. Verse 47 begins, "While he was still speaking." Stop there. Jesus had been in Gethsemane for some time by now, perhaps hours. He took His disciples there after they finished eating the Passover meal earlier in the evening. He wanted to spend time in prayer with His Father. He knew what was coming tomorrow.

There in Gethsemane Jesus looked into the cup of God's wrath. It was a dreadful sight, so much so that He prayed (39), "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me." As He gazed into that symbolic cup, the Lord saw the indescribable agony He would face in the next eighteen hours. There would be physical torment for His body would be literally ripped by the scourging and the splintery cross.

But other men had faced inhumane physical treatment. What Jesus dreaded when He looked into the cup was more than physical suffering. What He saw was and what produced deep agony of soul was the coming *spiritual torment*. He was about to experience the wrath and judgment of God for sin—not for His own sin since He had none. He was about to take the place of sinners. He was about to experience the horrid consequences sinners deserve for living their own way in God's world. He would take what sinners have coming to them. He would literally take the sinner's sin upon Himself and take the sinner's place in hell. He would be cut off from His Father, the One with whom He had known eternal fellowship. That was the cup He was about to drink.

Three times He prayed, "If there's any other way, Father..." each time concluding, "Yet not as I will, but as You will." *Your will be done.*

Yet Jesus went to Gethsemane for another reason. In addition to preparing Himself for the coming agony, He sought to prepare His disciples. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation," He told them (41). They'd made big promises to Him earlier in the evening: "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you," Peter had said—as had the others (35). But Jesus knew it takes more than promises to stand in times of adversity. "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak (41)," He told them. They needed to watch and pray, He told them.

But they slept. Three times they dozed off. After the third time a familiar voice jolted them out of their slumber (45), "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

It was at that very moment that it—the betrayal—happened right on schedule. "While he was still speaking," Matthew says, "Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs,

sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people."

Matthew enables us to look at the betrayal from two perspectives. First, he puts the spotlight on Judas.

A. Judas's crime was unthinkable (47-49). Matthew, an apostle himself, refers to Judas as "one of the Twelve." Here was a man who had, by personal invitation, spent three years with Jesus. He was privileged to observe firsthand the life of the Son of God. He saw His miracles (for that matter he was enabled by the Master to *do* miracles himself; Matt 10:1). Judas heard the best teaching one could ever hear. He experienced the power of unconditional love. He was one of the Twelve. He was given the honor to be close to Jesus. He ate with Him, took trips with Him, and heard Him explain mysteries veiled to the public.

And though Jesus knew from the beginning what this close friend would do to Him, He didn't hold Judas at arm's length. Indeed, He gave him the trusted position of being the treasurer for the group (John 13:29). That makes the crime all the more unthinkable.

Judas's crime involved a couple of wicked elements, as mentioned here.

1. *He conspired with the enemy.* Matthew says, "With him [Judas] was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people." A *crowd* came with Judas ("great multitude" in the KJV). Crowds are fickle. Just a few days earlier a crowd cheered Jesus' entrance into the city. Now a crowd gathers to eliminate Him.

A quick sidelight. It's a sad reality that many churches today are opting to adjust their ministries to attract crowds rather than make disciples. The fact is, it's not all that difficult to get a crowd. Nor to lose a crowd. Our assignment is disciple-making, not crowd-gathering.

This particular crowd was under marching orders from the chief priests and elders. That's tragic when you ponder the implications. The chief priests and elders were supposed to be the spiritual leaders in Israel. They were supposed to have the glory of God and the good of His people in mind. But they didn't. What motivated them here was jealousy and personal greed.

That's why they worked with Judas. They could care less about Judas—as is evidenced by their treatment of Judas later during his time of remorse (Matt 27:3-5). But what united the Jewish leaders with Judas was their mutual disdain for Jesus.

Judas certainly underestimated Jesus. He thought Jesus would try to hide. Or that He'd put up a fight. Or at least that the disciples would. So he brought a mob with weapons.

And so they conspired together. Verse 48 explains the intended plot, "Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

How could Judas do such a thing? It's impossible to explain fully the irrational ways of a depraved heart, but I see a couple of possible motivations for Judas. Perhaps it was greed. Though unknown until after the fact, Judas did love money. He was a thief and used to help himself from the disciples' money bag (John 12:6). Here own words in the deadly bargain reveal his greed, "What are you willing to *give me* if I hand him over to you?" And so He betrayed Jesus for the sum of thirty silver coins (Matt 26:15).

Maybe it was greed that motivated Judas, cold-hearted greed. There's another possible explanation for his motivation, however. It's possible Judas never intended for Jesus to die. It's possible what motivated Judas was his disillusionment. Jesus was moving too slowly for his taste. He kept expecting Jesus to take action and get rid of the Romans by force. After all, wasn't that what the Messiah was supposed to do, get rid of rival kings and rule the world? But Jesus kept talking about meekness and forgiveness, and Judas was tired of it. So he tried to force Jesus' hand. By getting the Jewish authorities involved, he would coerce Jesus to

take action.

Whether this was his motivation or not, of this we can be sure. Judas refused to accept Jesus as He was. He tried to use Jesus to get what he wanted. My friend, if that's what you are doing with Jesus, you are no different than Judas.

Whatever his motivation, Judas conspired with the enemy. He used a second, wicked element in his crime.

2. *He used deception.* Verse 49 states, "Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him."

Judas used deceptive words. "Greetings," he said. But this was no greeting. This was a trap. The Greek term *chaire* literally means "rejoice" and is still the major street greeting to a friend. Ironically, this was Jesus' first recorded word after the resurrection ("Greetings," He said to the women; 28:9).

Judas continued, "Greetings, *Rabbi!*" (KJV, "Hail, Master!") But this was no act of a devoted disciple. This was treason.

In addition to his deceptive words, Judas also exhibited deceptive action. He "kissed" Jesus. The Greek text is more specific than the English. Matthew actually uses two different words for "kiss" here. When Judas gave the armed mob a signal he said, "The one I *kiss* is the man (48)." The Greek word is *philein*. It's the normal word for kiss. But when Matthew records what Judas actually did, he says he "kissed" him (49). The Greek term is *kataphilein*, which the Greek scholar Barclay says is the word for a lover's kiss, and means to kiss repeatedly.

The *kata* prefix indicates that Judas didn't just kiss Jesus. As commentator Frederick Bruner observes, "He kissed him warmly, as if he meant it." And Bruner concludes, "Human nature is sick; but the sickest of all human natures is take discipleship. Judas twists a greeting of friendship into a death sign."

He could have pointed, but that wasn't good enough for Judas. He chose to make a big show of affection out of the most deadly act ever committed.

Lest all we do is point fingers at Judas, I urge you to think about one key implication for us. *We don't change by osmosis.* Judas didn't, nor do we. It's not enough merely to grow up in a Christian home or have Christian friends. We don't change simply because we "go to church." For that matter, we can even do God's work and teach God's Word to others, yet miss the boat completely.

Judas had the best exposure to Christianity available. He was exposed to Christ Himself! But it did him no good. He merely went through the motions. He knew a lot about Jesus, but he never placed his faith in Jesus. He convinced everybody, including himself, that he was okay—everybody, that is, except the only One that matters. He knew. Jesus knew all along that for Judas it was a sham.

In fact, Jesus had warned Judas ahead of time (Matt 26:20-21, 25). But Judas refused to take it to heart. In cold-blooded, self-focused, premeditated fashion, he betrayed the Lord. Judas's crime was unthinkable.

Next Matthew helps us see the betrayal from another perspective. He puts the second spotlight on Jesus Himself.

B. Jesus's response was unparalleled (50). "Jesus replied, 'Friend, do what you came for.' Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him." In His response to Judas's unthinkable crime, Jesus exhibited three qualities.

1. *He exhibited grace.* "Friend," He said to Judas. Judas had treated Jesus as his enemy—indeed, *worse*

than an enemy—but Jesus refused to reciprocate. He spoke to Judas the same way He had always spoken to him, as a *friend*. You can treat a person as a friend regardless of how they treat you.

That's grace. Grace is treating people in ways they don't deserve to be treated. That's what God did with us, didn't He? When we were running from Him as fast as we could go, He tapped us on the shoulder and said, "Come home. I love you."

2. *He exhibited sovereign control.* "Why art thou come?" is how the KJV renders Jesus' words to Judas. The NIV reads, "Do what you came for." The Greek is hard to translate. The three words (*eph ho parei*) literally read, "For what you're here." The verb and the punctuation must be supplied.

Some take it as a *question*—"For what are you here?" Others see it as a *statement*—"I know what you are here for." Still other translators view Jesus' words as a *command*—"Do what you are here for." Bruner prefers the final option (which the NIV follows) because of, as he says, "Matthew's emphasis on Jesus' commands, and because I do not believe Jesus is unaware of why Judas is here."

Jesus knew. He is not a helpless victim. Betrayed, yes. But tricked, absolutely not.

In John's gospel we learn something that Matthew doesn't record. Here's what happened when the mob arrived (John 18:4-6): "Jesus, *knowing all that was going to happen to him*, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground."

Such was Jesus' power had He desired to use it. In response to betrayal, Jesus exhibited sovereign control.

3. *He exhibited submission.* The action picks up now. Jesus let the mob get back on its feet, and as Matthew says, "Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him." He allowed Judas to succeed. He allowed spiteful men to "seize" Him.

Talk about injustice. His only crime was His love and commitment to truth. He ruffled the feathers of the religious establishment because He chose to do what was truly best for the people. Yet they *seized* Him. And the brutality would only get worse.

Yes, in Gethsemane Jesus felt the pain of being betrayed. There's more.

II. Jesus felt the pain of being misunderstood (51-54).

A few years ago, a man told the following story in *Readers Digest*. "A friend of mine awoke one morning to find a puddle of water in the middle of his king-size water bed. In order to fix the puncture, he rolled the heavy mattress outdoors and filled it with more water so he could locate the leak more easily. The enormous bag of water was impossible to control and began rolling on the hilly terrain. He tried to hold it back, but it headed downhill and landed in a clump of bushes which poked it full of holes.

Disgusted, my friend threw out the water-bed frame and moved a standard bed into his room. The next morning, he awoke to find a puddle of water in the middle of the new bed. The upstairs bathroom had a leaky drain."

We're in trouble when we misinterpret the data—when we see things, come to wrong conclusions, and take action based on those conclusions. That's what happened next in Gethsemane to one of Jesus' disciples. Notice verse 51, "With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear."

Matthew doesn't name this disciple. John does, however (John 18:10). It was Peter. When Peter saw his

Master being manhandled, he took action. What was he thinking? He wasn't. He was reacting. Maybe he was trying to prove Jesus wrong. Remember, Jesus predicted that Peter would disown Him, to which Peter responded, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."

And so he reached for his sword. The act was irrational—how could twelve men take on a mob of armed soldiers? Peter's intent was good, but his actions weren't. Jesus rebuked him (52), "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."

What was Peter's problem? This...

A. Peter tried to do God's work his own way (51). Some people use this verse to justify pacifism, but that misses the point. Jesus told Peter to put the sword back *in its place*, not to *throw it away*. There is a proper use for the sword. God has given the sword to the institution of government (Rom 13:4). But God didn't give the sword to the *church*.

Church history is filled with sad examples of Christians who did what Peter did. In their zeal they tried to use force to accomplish the Church's mission. Case in point—the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Again, Peter's zeal is commendable, but his actions were off target. Apparently, so was his aim. Instead of taking off a neck, he removed an ear. According to John's account, the man's name was Malchus (18:10). Luke specifies that Peter whacked off his *right* ear (22:51). Luke also informs us that Jesus touched and healed the severed ear. Warren Wiersbe suggests, "Had Jesus not healed the ear of Malchus, there probably would have been *four* crosses on Calvary!"

Peter misunderstood the Savior's submission. He couldn't understand why the One who could calm the storm by speaking a word would allow these thugs to arrest Him. So he took it upon himself to do God's work his own way. In contrast, notice Jesus.

B. Jesus did God's work the Father's way (52-54). Verse 53, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

A legion represented the number of about 6,000. Jesus mentions "twelve" legions of angels. Is the number significant? I think so. How many disciples were there? Take away Judas, the betrayer, and that leaves eleven. Add Jesus and that makes twelve. Twelve legions would be enough for Jesus and each of the remaining disciples to have their own personal body guard, should the Lord so desire.

The point is clear. He is being arrested because He chooses to be arrested. Not because Judas fooled Him. Not because the mob caught Him off guard. It happened because He allowed it to happen. And why did He allow it to happen?

Verse 54, "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" We learn two key lessons from these words of Jesus.

1. *There's something more important than defending ourselves.* If you try to do God's work the world's way, you'll fail. If you live by the sword, you'll die by it. What brought about the fall of the iron curtain of communism in Europe? Was it the sword? No. Perhaps the greatest influence was the prayers of God's people. For decades the underground church preached Christ, went to prison and death for Christ, and *prayed*. And God changed hearts. And God changed governments.

As the song well says, "He could have called 10,000 angels." But Jesus didn't. He didn't get arrested and eventually killed because His plan went haywire. It wasn't because He lacked the means to prevent it. No way. Jesus knew what we tend to forget. There's something more important than defending ourselves...

2. *What matters most is seeing God's will accomplished.* "How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

There is something more important than standing up for our rights. It's seeing God's will fulfilled in our lives. That's true for you if you're not happy with your spouse and are thinking about divorce. It also applies if you've got a spiteful neighbor who's causing you grief, and you're considering responding in like manner.

Look at Jesus. What was important to Him? Not His rights, but God's will. In fact, He settled that issue in His prayer time in Gethsemane.

III. Jesus felt the pain of being misrepresented (55-56a).

By the crowd, that is. Peter misunderstood the Lord, but the crowd misrepresented Him. Here's how...

A. The crowd treated Jesus like a terrorist. "At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me." The KJV renders verse 55, "Are ye come out against a thief?" The Greek word, *lestes*, is used by Josephus in describing first century terrorists that committed brutal murders during Jewish festivals. Is that what you think I am, Jesus said, a terrorist?

Talk about a misrepresentation! Jesus came to save, not kill; to give life, not take it. How did Jesus respond to this attack? Not surprisingly...

B. Jesus kept focusing on the Scriptures. Verse 56, "But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."

I'm challenged by how Jesus responded to this crisis by the use of prayer and Scripture. In Gethsemane He prayed and focused on Scripture. To correct Peter's use of the sword He said, "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled?" And to address the crowd's misrepresentation, He again turned to Scripture. Know this about Jesus...

1. *He lived His life in light of God's Word.* He used Scripture to overcome Satan's temptation (Matt 4:4). In the Sermon on the Mount, He clarified some common misunderstandings about Scripture (Matt 5:17, 21, etc.). He quoted Scripture often (as in responding to a question about marriage and divorce in Matt 19:4; and even on the Cross when He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" taken from Ps 22).

In Gethsemane He responded to Judas' betrayal, Peter's brash action, and the crowd's hostility by reviewing Scripture. "This has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled (56)."

Perhaps He had in mind the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12, or this one in Zechariah 13:7, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones."

Jesus knew the Scriptures. He knew that the Messiah would be rejected at His first coming. The Scriptures said so. He knew a close friend would betray Him (Ps 41:9). And that He would be crucified (Ps 22:16), buried and then resurrected (Ps 16:10). But Jesus didn't just *know* God's Word. He *lived* in light of it. And like Him...

2. *We must do the same.* We must make it our aim to learn God's Word, obey it, share it with others, and submit our lives to it. We need to make sense out of life by looking to the Scriptures. Jesus made decisions based on what the Scriptures said. He wanted to see the Scriptures fulfilled in His life. So must we.

Did you realize that God tells us in His Word what's supposed to happen in this age and in the one to come?

He does. Acts 1:8 says we must tell the whole world about Jesus before He returns. Matthew 28:19 says it's our mission to make disciples of all people groups. Matthew 6:33 says we must use our time, resources, and abilities for kingdom business—nothing is more important. Matthew 25:14-30 indicates we are going to give an account to the Lord of whether we did put His kingdom first in our lives.

Colossians 3:8 says we're supposed to get rid of anything that isn't Christlike. Acts 1:11 says that Christ will return to earth, and Matthew 25:1-13 says we must be ready.

My friends, the Scriptures are clear. The question is, are we living in light of them?

There's one final pain that Jesus experienced in Gethsemane. He felt the pain of being betrayed by Judas, misunderstood by Peter, and misrepresented by the crowd. Finally...

IV. Jesus felt the pain of being deserted (56b).

"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." What happened to the disciples? Why did they flee? I think we can summarize their problem with two statements (keep in mind that *their* problem is often *our* problem).

A. The disciples didn't do what they needed to do. What was that? Two things...

1. *They failed to pray.* "Watch and pray," Jesus told them over and over in the garden. But they slept. They failed to pray. Furthermore...

2. *They failed to think biblically.* When the soldiers came, when the crisis hit, the disciples fled because they were confused. They weren't thinking Scripturally. In fact, the disciples failed to do the very same things Jesus did in Gethsemane. He prayed. He kept thinking biblically. But they did neither. They didn't do what they needed to do. And because they didn't...

B. The disciples did what they said they'd never do. "We will never disown you," they all said. But they did.

What strikes fear into my heart is this. I'm no different, nor are you. If we are not in prayer and if we're not in the Word, we're in trouble. We, too, are weak and confused, just like the disciples were in Gethsemane. We are one crisis away from crashing, cashing in, and fleeing into the darkness. If we fail to do what we need to do, we too might end up doing what we said we'd never do. Thankfully, there's hope for us.

Response: Because of what Jesus did at Gethsemane...

1. *We have a Savior to trust.* Yes, the disciples deserted Jesus, but He never deserted them. He went to the Cross, then He conquered the grave, and afterwards He went to them. He didn't give up on them. Rather, He restored them. And He sent them into action with this message. "There is a Savior. You can trust Him."

Yes, beloved, we have a Savior to trust. Trust Him. Entrust your life to Him. Because of Gethsemane, we have something else...

2. *We have an example to follow.* We need to follow in our Savior's steps. Like Him we need to become a people who pray, a people who are searching the Scriptures to discover the Father's will, and then be a people who submit our lives to our Father's will, as did our Savior, no matter what the cost.