

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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Program Number 145
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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

The Sermon: ONE OF YOU SHALL BETRAY ME

Scripture: Matthew 26:20-25.

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, Is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, Is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

A besieged city or fortress can be captured by its enemies from without by superior force, or by cunning and artifice; but it can be betrayed only by its friends from within. Betrayal must come from inside. Betrayal is the act of a traitor; in fact the two words have a common origin. A traitor is one who betrays things which can be known only to one who is on the inside, and who deliberately gives to an enemy on the outside that which will help him to accomplish his purposes of destruction.

Judas was such a traitor. However misguided they may have been, or however wrong, the priests who crucified Jesus, thought they were defending their nation and their religion from destruction. We have forgotten most of the names of the Sadducees and chief priests who were Jesus' enemies, but the name of Judas and the ignominy attached to it will never be forgotten, for Judas was one of the inner circle. He knew better. He knew that Jesus had come to save his people Israel. From inside he betrayed his Lord to those who would destroy him. To make the evil still worse, he betrayed him with a kiss, which is a sign of love and friendship.

What's done is done, however, and it is useless to waste any time in despising or villifying Judas nearly two thousand years after his treachery, except to draw such a lesson of warning from his downfall that we do not commit his sin today. For it is possible for us to betray our Lord today. Today, it may still be that "One

of you shall betray me." Today, even as we come to the table of the Lord from time to time to partake of the communion that is in remembrance of his broken body and spilled blood, it may be that "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." In the light of the many warnings which have been given, it is still possible today for a Christian to fall from grace, and to betray his Lord. Paul, even after his miraculous conversion experience and his years as an apostle and missionary, kept a close watch on himself "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (I Cor. 9:27) He wrote to the Hebrews "For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:14) In the 6th chapter of Hebrews he warns that when those who have tasted of the heavenly gift, partaken of the Holy Ghost, known the word of God, and felt the stirrings of eternal life reject all these witnesses and return again to their sins, there can be no repentance and no forgiveness for such. It is they who betray and crucify their Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame, by rejecting the sacrifice he has made, and counting it as a thing of naught.

The idea that once a man is born again, he cannot sin, originated in the heresy of Gnosticism, which taught that the body is unreal and does not exist; that when a man is spiritually reborn, he no longer has to be concerned about the

deeds of the body, which after all exists only in the imagination. Therefore, said the Gnostics, the body may sin as much as it likes, but that sin cannot affect the pure spirit which remains aloof from all the body's immorality and remains pure and innocent because it has been born again. This is not the teaching of Jesus, or of Paul, or of any of the other apostles. Over and over again the Bible asserts that men shall be judged for the deeds done in the flesh -- that is, for the deeds willed and chosen by the spirit, and carried out by the physical implementation of the physical body. Body and spirit live this earth life together. We know the nature of the spirit only as we see the things it does by means of the body. Body and spirit reunited by the resurrection shall receive judgment, and eventually reward or punishment, for the deeds done together in the flesh.

It is a principle of life often repeated in scripture that he who has received the greater light receives the greater condemnation if he fails or refuses to walk in that light. Jesus said: "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." When we have light and knowledge and reject it, we are more culpable than if we had never had light and knowledge at all. When we know Jesus as Lord, taste of his power, receive his pardoning grace, and felt the joy of life and fellowship in his kingdom -- and then betray him by turning away from all these things to our former darkness and sin, we are more to be blamed than if we had never heard of Jesus at all. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great shall that darkness be!"

To illustrate this principle Jesus told a parable of an unclean spirit which had been cast out of a man. Finding no peace, that spirit returned, to find that the man in whom it had formerly dwelt had left its place empty. Though it was cleaned and swept and garnished, he had not filled the empty place with the Good Spirit, or with the fruits of the Good Spirit's works. The evil spirit therefore went and found seven other spirits

more wicked than himself, and all moved in, so that "The last end of that man is worse than the first." Similarly, Jesus said to the impotent man who at Jesus' command had taken up his bed and walked: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

Jesus' statement that "One of you shall betray me" is therefore just as pertinent today as it was when he made it. We are all mortal; we are all subject to temptation; all of us at some time or other weakly give in to those temptations and fall into sin. If we continue to strive, to struggle, to resist temptation, to heed the upward pull of the Holy Spirit, we will repent of each mistake, and by the power of the abiding Comforter overcome and find forgiveness for each sin, and renewed fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. If, however, we altogether turn from Christ, from his light, from his gospel, from the power of his Spirit, and if we defy his power and deny his truth in rebellion and willful, deliberate stubbornness, than there can be no forgiveness for that sin, because we have betrayed our Lord as Judas did.

When you betray your friends, you deliver yourself into the power of the enemy. You place yourself on the enemy's side, and under his control. But you don't belong there either. You don't belong any place. Your one-time friends who have been betrayed can no longer receive or respect you. Your one-time enemies who should not be your friends cannot respect you either, for there is no assurance that you will not turn against them too. You are an outcast from both sides. It would have been better if you had never been born.

"One of you shall betray me." "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." Have you betrayed him by turning from his light, his truth, his power? Have you denied him by serving his enemies? Have you betrayed him by being careless in keeping his word? One thing may be said for the disciples at that table in the upper room. When Jesus said that one should betray him they did not look around and wonder which of the others it would be. Each was humble enough at that moment to feel his own weakness, his own susceptibility to temptation; and they all asked, "Lord, Is it I?" May none of us ever be ashamed to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, or to follow wherever he may lead.