

The Remarkable Conduct Of Jesus In Preventing The Apprehension Of Any Of His Disciples With Him.

Text: John 18:4-9
Suggested Hymns:
85, 59, 330, 51, 512

- 1) Jesus Willingly Delivers Himself To His Captors And Thereby Withdraws Their Attention From His Disciples.
- 2) By His Command The Disciples Are Left Unmolested And Thereby The Scriptures Are Fulfilled

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 18:4-9, ⁴ *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?”* ⁵ *They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.”* *Jesus said to them, “I am He.”* *And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.* ⁶ *Now when He said to them, “I am He,” they drew back and fell to the ground.* ⁷ *Then He asked them again, “Whom are you seeking?”* *And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”*

⁸ *Jesus answered, “I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,”* ⁹ *that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, “Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We just sang,¹

Jesus, I will ponder now
On Thy holy passion;
With Thy Spirit me endow
For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
May the image cherish
Of Thy suffering, pain, and death,
That I may not perish.

Our text begins, ⁴ *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward.*

These words are the key to the Passion history. Jesus knew all things that would come upon Him. He went into this holy Passion with a full knowledge of everything to be done to Him, of all the abuse to which He would be subjected, of all the pain He was to suffer, of all those dreadful things He was to endure terminating in His bitter death on the cross.

The history of Jesus' Passion will be a stumbling block to us and a sealed book which we cannot understand, if we do not apply this key, if we do not believe that Jesus is the omniscient God who perfectly knew everything beforehand, who easily could have averted everything, but willingly went into the most painful suffering and bitter death that He might redeem the sinful world.

Our text tells how the beginning was made. A band of men, armed with swords and staves, bearing torches and lanterns, and led by the traitor Judas, quietly enters the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus and His disciples were spending the night.

Most of the disciples were in the front of the garden near the entrance. Jesus was in the rear with Peter, James, and John. As the band entered, the disciples near the entrance, most likely, stood back in the shadow of the bushes and trees.

The band pushed on and they had not gone very far when Jesus stepped forward into the light of their lanterns and torches, and faced them. Jesus came forth, not from curiosity to see who these latecomers were, but, as our text says, *“knowing all things that would come upon Him.”*

Jesus could have easily made His escape in the dark, but He willingly presented Himself to those who had come to apprehend Him.

In this Lenten season we will consider the remarkable conduct of Jesus in His Passion on different occasions.

The remarkable thing in our text is the thought and care which Jesus exhibited so that the captors would apprehend Him alone and that none of His disciples would be apprehended with Him.

Our theme is *The Remarkable Conduct Of Jesus In Preventing The Apprehension Of Any Of His Disciples With Him*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Willingly Delivers Himself To His Captors And Thereby Withdraws Their Attention From His Disciples.

Our text says that, as He went forth, Jesus *said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"* ⁵ *They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.* The band of men certainly expected a fight, or they would not have armed themselves with swords and staves. Some of the disciples of Jesus were strong brawny fishermen. They knew how devoted these disciples were to their Master.

What then could they expect, but that these men would interfere and fight as soon as hands were laid on their great Teacher? What could they expect, but that these disciples would take Jesus into their midst and guard Him against an attack? How surprised must they have been, then, when a man stepped forth asking them: *"Whom are you seeking?"* They did not know who the man was. But Judas the traitor stood there with them. He knew Him.

But so dumbfounded was Judas at Jesus' sudden appearance all alone that he could not utter a word. There was the Man whom he had betrayed to the chief priests and Pharisees and scribes for thirty pieces of silver.

There was Jesus of whom he probably expected that He would triumphantly walk through their midst and disappear and vanish out of sight the moment they would lay their hands on Him, and then he would have the last laugh on the men whom he had duped, and keep the money in his pocket.

There was Jesus whom he used as a tool in his dishonest plot. But not a word could he say to let his accomplices know that this is the Man whom they must apprehend. Was his conscience beginning to waken? Did he begin to repent of what he had done? It does not seem so.

We are told, ⁶ *Now when [Jesus] said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.* No sooner had Jesus spoken the word when the whole band, Judas with them, as if they had received an electric shock, stumbled backward and fell down in a heap with their staves, and torches, and lanterns.

By this act of His divine power Jesus has shown before the eyes of the whole world that of His own free will He delivered Himself up to His captors, that they never would have been able to touch Him, had He not allowed them to do so. But it was only for one moment that the band lay on the ground in a heap.

Instantly they sprang upon their feet and again faced Jesus. ⁷ *Then He asked them again, “Whom are you seeking?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”*

Now Judas stepped forward and committed the treacherous act told by the other Evangelists. He had given them a sign and said, *“Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.”* Immediately he approached Jesus, and said, *“Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.*²

Jesus said, *“Friend, why have you come?” “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”*³ These were His last words to the traitor, who went his way and then hanged himself on the following day. Now the men came and laid hands on Jesus and bound Him.

What did Jesus accomplish by His willingness to deliver Himself to His captors and by the power which He displayed before them? He diverted their attention away from His disciples, so that their attention was riveted on Him alone and not a thought entered into their minds to apprehend the others also.

2. By His Command The Disciples Are Left Unmolested And Thereby The Scriptures Are Fulfilled.

But now something happened which could have easily led to Peter’s arrest at least, Peter, quick-tempered, hasty, and forward as he was, boldly stepped forth and several more of the disciples with him.

Peter had a sword which he pulled out of the sheath when he saw that they were binding his dear Master with ropes. He rushed forward and struck at the men who were binding Jesus, cutting off the right ear of the high priest’s servant Malchus.

And how did Jesus prevent Peter’s arrest? He not only touched Malchus’ ear and healed him, but to prevent the apprehension of Peter and of any of the rest of His disciples with Him, He commanded His captors to leave them unmolested, and such was the force of His command upon His enemies that they had to obey.

⁸ *Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way."* By these words, spoken with authority, as a command to be strictly obeyed, the Lord Jesus secured the freedom of all the disciples who were with Him.

And now that Peter had drawn the sword and Jesus' own words had disclosed to them the danger to which they exposed themselves as long as they lingered near Him, bound and secured as He was, the disciples thought of nothing, but their own safety. They all fled and kept at a safe distance.

The disciples were not to share His capture and arrest, as our text says, ⁹ *that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."* Jesus had said this in His great priestly prayer only a few hours ago. He prayed for His disciples that they might remain true to Him and not go astray.

What would have become of them, if they had been made prisoners with Jesus, if they had been subjected to only a part of what Jesus had to bear! They certainly would have been offended in Christ and would have made shipwreck concerning faith. For as yet they were too weak and not prepared for such an ordeal.

Christ our Lord does not impose on us more than we can bear, and as He prayed for Peter, so He prays for us that our faith does not fail.

But another saying has here been fulfilled, a saying of the Old Testament, which shows of what importance it was that Jesus was apprehended alone and that not a single one of His disciples suffered with Him.

In the book of Isaiah the eternal Son of God in view of His suffering and death made this remarkable prediction, as we read in Isaiah 63:3, ³ *"I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me.*

What must we think if any of His disciples had gone into suffering with Jesus and into death with Him? Could we look upon Jesus as our only Mediator and Redeemer? Could we be sure that He alone has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows?

Would we not have to think that He was not able to perform the great work of our redemption all by Himself, that He had to have assistance, and would not such assistance make His great work for us doubtful and uncertain?

But no; Jesus did tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. Not a disciple was apprehended with Him. Not one of them went with Him into suffering and death to obscure the great work which He performed for the salvation of fallen mankind; and so we can truly sing:⁴

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 59

² Matthew 26:48

³ Luke 22:48

⁴ Hymn 330