

FROM RESENTMENT TO RUIN

Matthew 26:20-25

People have various titles to fame. Some are remembered with pride by their fellow countrymen for valor on the battlefield. Others are famous because of the influence they wielded, the genius they displayed, or the self-sacrifice and the beautiful spirit which characterized their lives. But there are still others who have a reputation for their evil deeds. The most famous or the most infamous of men, who have sacrificed principle for self, and honor for some proffered good of the passing hour, and who have betrayed the best that some gross desire might be satisfied, is Judas Iscariot. Mark 14:10 summarizes the tragedy of his soul in the words: "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to betray him." What privileges were his, walking with the blessed Lord in the intimacy of such discipleship! Yet in spite of what he might have been, he fell so low that to posterity he should become the synonym for basest treachery and blackest guilt.

Judas has been and still is a character of intense interest to people everywhere. The announcement of a sermon on Judas brings a quickening of interest in any audience. This interest grows out of the fact that people are fascinated with wrongdoing. Crime and evil occupy a large percentage of space in newspapers, magazines, books, movies and television programs. People avidly read the details of murders, divorces, thefts and other scandalous conduct. The more wicked a person, the more sure is the interest of the masses in his actions.

Judas Iscariot was blessed in having the parents who gave him birth. We do not know much about his parents except that they resided in the village of Kerioth, which was south of Jerusalem in Judea but has since passed out of existence, and that Simon was the name of his father. His Jewish parents were devoted to the law, honored God in their lives, worshiped Him in sincerity and looked forward with pleasant anticipation to the time when the Messiah would deliver them from the tyranny of their oppressors.

Doubtless these devout parents were happy and grateful when their baby boy was born. Naturally, they were anxious to give their son a significant and meaningful name. Judas was a natural choice. The name Judas meant "praise" and the title Iscariot simply meant "the man from Kerioth," thus distinguishing this particular Judas from all the others by linking his name with his home town.

It may shock you to learn that the name Judas did not always bear a hiss in it. It was a favorite cognomen prior to the time of Christ's earthly ministry. The national hero among the Jews during the second century before Christ was Judas Maccabaeus, who led the successful revolt against the foreign powers and won independence for his people. He epitomized all that was fine and heroic in Jewish life, and was looked upon by the Jews much as Americans have looked upon George Washington. Naturally the admirers of Judas Maccabaeus hurried to endow their sons with the honor of his name, and as they grew to manhood they were proud to wear the name of him who had flashed his deeds of heroism across the sky of Judaism. Joseph and Mary even named one of the half-brothers of the Lord Jesus Judas or Jude. Another Judas, the son of James, was one of the apostles, but he was also known by his nicknames, "Lebbaeus" and "Thaddeus." However, the evil deed of Judas Iscariot left such an indelible impression of human minds that since his day the name has disappeared from common usage and nobody would ever think of naming his son Judas. This goes to show that a man can make his name attractive or repellent.

This little boy was loved dearly by his parents and they entertained the highest hopes for him. Judas had the advantages of a good home, got off to a favorable start in life, had some excellent traits and was considered an outstanding young man. At the start of his career, he felt attracted to Christ and attached himself to Him. ~~Erigeron that nothing~~ uncomplimentary was mentioned about him. He was a young man of great promise.

Why was Judas Iscariot selected as one of the apostles? Evidently Christ saw him as a young man with excellent traits, noble qualities, considerable talent and tremendous possibilities who could render much helpful service. Doubtless Judas was a man of sagacity and sound judgment, and as such he might be of great assistance to Christ. After spending a whole night in prayer, our Lord selected Judas and the other eleven to be His closest associates. Like the others, Judas was chosen because of the gifts he possessed and the personal contribution he could make to the efficiency of the apostles. Christ saw that Judas was a man in whom the possibilities were great for evil as well as for good. Therefore, Christ chose Judas to be an apostle, and not a traitor. Eventually Judas chose to be a traitor, and not an apostle.

The story of Judas has two principal chapters, namely, what he was and what he became.

Judas was a man of unusual ability and was well versed in business affairs. He must have stood out as a leader among the apostles, because he was their choice for the difficult task of managing their financial affairs or being treasurer of their funds. It does not appear that any of the others envied him his position. It seems that all of them assumed that he was the best man in their group for this position of responsibility. Their action in this regard indicates that they looked upon him as a capable, honest and trustworthy man. That he did well is evidenced by the fact that neither of the writers of the gospels recorded any misunderstandings or disputes about the way in which he administered their funds. Their thorough belief in his honesty remained unshaken until the night of the betrayal.

After Christ had chosen the twelve apostles, He offered to them His friendship, admitted them into the most intimate fellowship with Him and lavished upon them the wealth of His tender and gracious love. For three years Judas lived and walked and talked with the Son of God. No man ever had a better opportunity than Judas. Today we are told by some that what a man becomes depends largely on his environment and associations. But that is not true. If that were true, then Judas, who lived those years in closest intimacy with the only perfect Person Who ever walked upon this earth, would have grown better, nobler and holier, but we know that such was not the case. While living with Christ, witnessing His beautiful life, sharing His consistent friendship, observing His marvelous deeds and listening to His matchless messages, Judas failed to become a better man. This goes to show that religious privileges are powerless to save. Judas' glorious privileges of walking with Christ from dawn to darkness, sitting at the table with Him, eating with Him, observing His miracles and hearing His teachings -- including His immortal Sermon on the Mount -- were invaluable opportunities, but they only served to harden him in his sin.

After the feeding of the five thousand there was a strong movement to make the Lord Jesus king by force (John 6:15). When it became clear that His aims were quite different, many of His supporters turned their backs on the Lord Jesus. Then He affectionately and solicitously asked the twelve the personal and pointed question, "Will ye also go away?" Peter strenuously protested his loyalty indicating that there was no other to whom they could go to find the words of life. Then Christ said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:7). John then explained that Christ was referring to Judas Iscariot who was one day to betray him.

One evening a feast was given in honor of Christ in the house of Simon at Bethany, whom Christ had previously cleansed of his leprosy. In addition to the apostles, Mary, Martha and Lazarus were present. While the meal progressed, Mary, not caring what anybody would think or say, broke the seal of the alabaster box of precious ointment and poured its contents on Christ's head and feet. As the fragrant odor of the perfume filled the dining room there was astonishment and indignation on the part of the apostles who did not think that what she did was in good taste. Judas regarded her deed as an act of senseless extravagance. To him it was so much money thrown away. Upon hearing their harsh and unkind criticism of Mary, our Lord quickly

praised her noble deed and commanded her critics to let her alone. In the gospel which bears his name, John has informed us that the remark of Judas, to the effect that this expensive ointment should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor, was not made because of his love for the poor, but because of his covetous and sinful desire to pilfer a portion of the receipts from the treasury after they had been placed therein. If the receipts had been placed in the care of Judas, he, rather than the poor, would have profited by their use.

At the Passover Judas was occupying the place of honor at the left of the host. With anguish in His voice our Lord said, "One of you shall betray me." Smitten with fear, they looked at the Master and said, "Lord, is it I?"

Instead of pointing out Judas publicly as the traitor who would betray Him, Christ carefully concealed that fact from the others. To the very last He sought to win Judas by love. Instead of holding Judas up to scorn before the other apostles, Christ actually did the opposite -- He gave the sop to him, which was the highest honor at the feast. Judas was torn between love for Christ and love of money. With the passing of time he had permitted the greed for money and the lust of gain to master him. Judas always had been mercenary; the kind of man of whom people say, "he's keen," meaning thereby keen on making money. He was money-wise and soul-foolish. He let money exercise its fatal charm upon him, until he would do anything and anybody for it, without it ever dawning upon him that he was vainly trying to do what Christ said was impossible -- to serve God and mammon. Judas only wanted to be partly religious.

After Christ rebuked Judas for interfering with Mary's gift of precious ointment, Judas became the victim of a smoldering resentment which literally consumed him. It is well that we remember, too, that Judas was the only apostle who was not a Galilean. This might have given cause for his feeling that Christ, as well as the other apostles, had discriminated against him. Remember that there was an inner circle, composed of Peter, James and John. Don't you imagine that Judas wondered why he, the treasurer of the group, was not on the executive committee with them? When Mary anointed Christ with costly ointment, Judas strenuously objected, saying the cost of the ointment should have been distributed to the poor. Christ sternly rebuked Judas for that remark, and Judas never recovered from the sting of it.

The betrayal itself showed that resentment was at the bottom of it. Judas could have told the enemies of our Lord where He was. Instead, he went personally to the garden with them. He did more. He pointed Him out by a kiss of betrayal. Was not this the evidence of rash hate and revenge, the desire to get even? And what of the thirty pieces of silver? A mere pittance. Judas was greedy, to be sure, but greed had little to do with the betrayal. Thirty pieces of silver was not much for such a hazardous act. And when Judas found out what his betrayal had done to Christ, he threw the money away. The money was a pretext; resentment was the cause of the crime. Resentment meant the ruin of Judas.

When Judas had received the sop two things happened. Christ said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly," and Satan entered into him. These things marked the crisis in the soul of Judas. The hour had come when he had to choose between good and evil, between the light and darkness. Judas chose the dark and immediately Satan took possession of him. So Judas went out, and it was night (John 13:30). The others did not know where he was going. If they had known, he would not have been permitted to leave that room. Perhaps they thought that, because he was treasurer, he had gone to make arrangements for the offering for the poor which was part of the Passover observance.

Judas knew where Christ Jesus would be. He knew that an unknown friend had courteously given Christ the privilege of using his garden at the Passover time, and he knew that

the Saviour would go there. Judas went to the Jewish authorities and agreed for the price of thirty pieces of silver to lead them to the place where they could arrest Jesus without the crowd being present. So Judas led the Jewish authorities to this place. He had arranged a signal whereby he might identify the Lord Jesus for the benefit of the soldiers and the temple police. When a disciple met a rabbi, it was the custom for him to place his hands on his master's shoulders and to kiss him. That was to be the sign and Judas betrayed Him according to the agreement which he made with the enemies of the Lord Jesus.

Christ knew what was in the heart of Judas. He knew that Judas resented Him. And Judas knew that Christ knew from the beginning that he was a traitor, or had treasonable propensities. This knowledge bred deeper resentment and alienation. When you know that others know your faults, you hate them the more for their knowledge. So Judas, who once admired Christ, began to be critical of Him, resented Him, learned to hate him and finally betrayed Him.

After Judas had betrayed Christ, he returned and hurled the bribe before the smiling priests, bathed his cheeks with the tears of heart-broken disappointment and went and hanged himself from the limb of a tree near the scene of his terrible crime. "He went to his own place." That place was the one which he had fashioned in spite of the influence, the warnings and the appeals of Christ. Of Him our Lord said, "It had been better for that man if he had not been born." For more than nineteen centuries men have been repeating and assenting to these words. The treachery of Judas has always been regarded as the most foul deed that was ever committed. The place Judas might have won was exchanged for a suicide's grave and universal condemnation.

Resentment, smoldering hate, envy and jealousy mean the ruin of any man. This fact cannot be overemphasized: Love is the dynamic of redemption; hate is the dynamic of destruction. Contrast the lives of Simon Peter and Judas. Both were impetuous; both were severely rebuked for their impetuous and foolish acts. Peter repented when he was reprimanded; Judas resented his reprimand. Peter became a great power in the first church at Jerusalem, but Judas went out to destroy himself. Peter arrived at his position and influence through repentance. After nearly two thousand years, the road signs are the same for all pilgrims along the way. Repentance means life; resentment means death. Judas refused to let the Lord transform him, stumbled into outer darkness. He went from resentment to ruin. Profit by his example and avoid his mistakes. Receive Christ as your Saviour and live for Him.