

The Final Act IV: The Trial of the Innocent
John 18
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Scott Lemmon is speaking in Scotia

Introduction

Only once was I physically attacked as a youth pastor.

I was living in Santa Barbara and we were having a youth beach party and had brought the volleyball net, we had a bonfire going, we were roasting hotdogs, playing frisbee and having a great time.

There were 40 kids there that night and we gathered them together to pray before we started eating our hotdogs, chips and Mountain Dew. I was thrilled to see so many kids who did not attend church who had come out for our event. After praying the kids gathered around the picnic table to begin fixing up their hotdogs. We had purchased large squeeze bottles of ketchup, mustard, relish and mayonaise to make this process easy.

Call me naive, but I didn't realize that in the hands of a teenager, there is little difference between a super soaker squirt gun and a plastic container of ketchup.

To my horror, our innocent dinner quickly devolved into a food fight. One of the boys began spraying me in the face with ketchup. I fled and he chased me. Like a miracle from God he suddenly tripped over his own feet, falling behind me and dropping the ketchup bottle. It landed right at my feet.

There are moments where you seize the opportunity in front of you.

That is exactly what I did. I returned fire giving him a taste of his own ketchup. What surprised me more than anything was this young man's response. Instead of laughing and running, he began loudly cussing at me and charged me, shoving me in the chest up against a fence.

Then he stormed off. I felt bad. I didn't mean any harm. I was merely defending myself in a fun way. Now I couldn't stop wondering whether or not he would ever come to youth group again. Let's just say our party wasn't quite as festive for the remains of the evening.

In this life, even the most meek and mild among us find themselves in the middle of conflicts.

Your angry boss will grill you over the failings of his business - "It's your fault!"

Your spouse will blame you for life's problems - "If you would just ____".

You become a victim of road rage...

You were born into a family...

Your religious friends will get in your face over highly debatable issues of Biblical interpretation. "So are you pre-trib, mid-trib, or post-trib?"

Your Facebook friends will bait you into an angry online political debate.

How do we respond to the countless situations of conflict that we must face? Today, we are

going to look at **how Jesus responded** when he found himself in the center of His darkest hour - when He was attacked and accused. Let's journey back to that fateful night that preceded His crucifixion.

John 18 (explain and elaborate as you read)

I. Jesus responds to attack

1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

4 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.

7 Again he asked them, **"Who is it you want?"**

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

8 Jesus answered, **"I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go."** 9 This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: **"I have not lost one of those you gave me."**

Jesus knows all of what is about to happen to himself. He is not a victim. He is in control.

After praying, this arresting party of soldiers and temple officials comes through the dark. They see a group of people and the group doesn't flee. They quickly come towards them in the dark, armed and ready to fight or to chase them down. They face off with Jesus and His disciples.

To their great surprise, the group does not flee. Out of the dark crowd, Jesus steps up - "I am the one!" Perhaps it was His boldness and authority that caught this group by surprise. For whatever the reason, they fall back, in fear when He says "I am he!" This statement floors them, literally - "I am".

Not only does Jesus courageously step up, but He also protects the other disciples from being arrested. He makes sure they go away free. He is covering for them.

Fighting a Good Fight

1. Respond with calm courage when challenged. Protect others.

Calm courage speaks of innocence. Calm courage speaks of love. Calm courage comes from confidence. Remember that you are a child of God. He lives in you. You have every reason to remain confident and at peace during conflict.

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

11 Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Jesus wasn't fleeing, so Peter starts fighting. If it's not going to be flight, it's going to be fight. After 3 ½ years Peter still doesn't understand Jesus' mission or methods. This must have been discouraging to see, but thankfully Peter only gets the man's ear.

In Luke 22:51 the One who said love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him."

2. Be a healer on the battlefield of life

We are surrounded by wounded people and we are called to bring healing to the sick and the wounded. Sadly, Christians have been accused as being the only army that shoots their wounded. We meet someone struggling with emotional issues and we write them off. We have close friends who "fail" morally and we disown them. Illustrate:

<http://www.biblehelp.org/wounded.htm>

The world's conflicts escalate because we love revenge. It is a popular human theme. We cheer for it. (The Revenant).

But forgiveness and grace is divine. We WANT revenge but God says forgive. Jesus is pursuing justice, and it will be achieved through His actions not our acts of retribution.

While others are focused on the fight, Jesus is focused on "the cup". The Father had said, this is what you are to drink. You will drink the cup of my wrath which is the just punishment for the sins of the world. You will suffer and die but it will be worth it. Jesus said Father, not my will, but yours be done.

In following Jesus, we also have to make difficult decisions. We have to drink the cup of His will for our lives. the middle of your battles, keep the cup. Choose obedience always. When your spouse hands you papers, drink the cup. When laid off, drink the cup. When we screw up, drink the cup. When tempted by "success" keep drinking the cup. For us, this cup isn't a cup of wrath. It may include suffering but it also includes blessing, and healing.

Some people flee suffering. Some people ignore conflict. Most people live in denial. But if the Lord says, go through it, than do it.

When we do this, even our "enemies" will be healed. Jesus loved Malchus. We do not know what happened to him after this, but in that moment he experienced a powerful healing.

II. Jesus responds to interrogation

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him 13 and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. 14 Caiaphas was the one who had

advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, 16 but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17 "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

When questioned, Peter denied.

19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. 21 Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

23 "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" 24 Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

It surprises me how calm Jesus is in this situation. He faces the anger of these officials and He turns the other cheek. I do not enjoy being around angry people. Yet it seems as though the population of angry people is increasing.

There has been a lot of talk about how angry people are in America. Just last night a political rally was cancelled due to fighting.

<http://time.com/4166326/why-americans-are-so-angry-about-everything/> (Reference the article)

We cannot escape the anger of our world. We value fairness and justice. This has been instilled in us from the time we were very young. If you do ____, you can expect _____. If you don't do ____, you can expect _____. When justice is violated, people get angry. On occasion you may end up being the victim of that anger that people are carrying. It may even be completely misplaced. Like never before, the world needs people who are capable of staying calm. Jesus offers us an escape valve for the anger that we carry.

3. When turning the other cheek, speak the truth

Consistently speak the truth in love.

A. Peter responds to interrogation

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" 27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

3. When tempted to deny, rely.

When caught, we have a tendency to deny. "I didn't do it." "That wasn't me." "You're wrong." That is what Peter is doing here. It is out of fear that we deny. We are capable of blocking out the truth and pathologically creating a false reality. Some will do this for so long that they will begin believing their own lies. I recently was counseling someone who was being haunted by their past failures and they had fallen into the denial trap. My advice was to stop minimizing and denying. Honesty is always the best answer to accusation. I encouraged them that the next time they were accused, to fully disclose what had happened. Own it. Forgiveness doesn't come through denial. It only comes through confession. Peter was caught but instead of telling the truth, he lies.

You may notice in this story there is another disciple present who is not denying. He is there and is known to be a disciple of Jesus. Most think that it was John, and he is the only disciple who stays with Jesus to the end.

This concludes the illegal trial of Jesus from the Jewish authorities.

III. Jesus' defense

28 Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

30 "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. 32 This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. 39 But it is your custom for me

to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

40 They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

In John 19 things quickly get more violent. Jesus is flogged, mocked, and crucified. During the entire experience it is clear that His focus is completely on the Father's mission - the salvation of the world. When pressured, Jesus never compromises His mission or His values. He is the way the truth and the life.

6. When under pressure, maintain your mission and values.

There are times in life when the pressure is on.

There are weeks where everything that can go wrong seems to go wrong.

In one week you're going on vacation. But this week your roof starts leaking. Your mother's health is failing. The school calls because of behavioral issues with one of your children. A close friend tells you they are divorcing their spouse. A needy person demands your energy and attention and when you don't give it to them, they become angry. You find out you owe money on your taxes. You and your spouse are fighting, and you are seriously considering cancelling your vacation.

Stress. Pressure. We work under it. We are driven by it. We suppress it. We deny it and try to escape it. We take vitamins for it. We feel it in our chest. Our stomach churns. Our palms get sweaty. And all of us are squeezed by it.

The questions for all of us are: *How do we live with it?* and *Is pressure always bad?*

Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary to China, has some great advice, "It matters not *how great* the pressure is, only *where* the pressure lies. If we make sure it never comes between us and our Lord, then the greater the pressure, *the more it presses us to Him.*"

But sometimes I want out. Don't you? We often think less stress would be better (and sometimes that's true). However, many of us want less pressure from the things that are good for us to bear. There *can* be positive effects from pressure. It is not pressure, but our response to pressure, that determines pressure's effect on us

Let the pressure press you into the Lord. Keep the cup. While others are fleeing and others are fighting, persevere.

I know what you're thinking, "Matt I have done that for too long. I'm tired and beat down." We all get to our breaking point at times.

7. Look to the Lord to heal your own wounds.

Jesus goes to the cross to bring you healing. He does this to help carry and remove those burdens.

Ask for healing in the areas of your life that are causing the greatest amount of stress.

Testimony: Just yesterday at Teen Challenge...angry...closed off...once open to the love of God...

Hurt people hurt people but loved people love people.

Let His love fill you today so that you can fight the good fight with love, not anger. With joy, not bitterness. With healing, not harm.

Lord help us respond to the trials and attacks of life with your grace, strength and love.