

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 18:1-27

Topic

The high priest sends a large force of Temple police and Roman soldiers to arrest the Son of God

Title

"Arrested Divinity"

"That's not a knife. This is a knife."

Paul Hogan, aka Crocodile Dundee, & Linda Kozlowski were confronted by a mugger threatening them with a switchblade. She said, "Give him your wallet... He's got a knife." He chuckled, pulled out his own knife, and calmly said in his irrepressible Aussie accent, "That's not a knife. This is a knife."

The knife he brandished is 16" in overall length with an intimidating 11" blade.

There are numerous blades in the account of the arrest of Jesus.

- The Jewish Temple police, with an assist from the Roman Army, came "with lanterns, torches, and weapons" (v3).
- Peter had a blade, with which he cut off the ear of Malchus.

In the midst of all this, something incredible happened. Jesus asked the men sent to arrest Him, "Whom are you seeking?" (v4). They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." The Lord answered, "I am *He*," [and] they drew back and fell to the ground" (v6).

They were supernaturally pushed back, then fell to the ground, by the Word of God.

Jesus will display that Word-power with greater potency at His Second Coming. In the Revelation the apostle John describes Jesus, saying, "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp **sword**, that with it He should strike the nations... [they] were killed with **the sword which proceeded from the mouth** of Him who sat on the horse" (19:15 & v21).

The Word of God is our sword to wield.

The apostle Paul urged believers to put on the entire 'spiritual armor' of God, not least is "the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **Word** of God" (6:17).

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Stepped Forward To Save You**, and **#2 Jesus Steps In To Keep You**.

#1 - Jesus Stepped Forward To Save You (v1-11)

The words in this text that spoke to me the loudest are, "Whom are you seeking?"

Jesus knew that men were coming to arrest Him. He did not run, or attempt to evade. He went to a place well-known to Judas. When the authorities arrived, Jesus stepped forward.

Simultaneously, He demonstrated that He possessed supernatural power sufficient to eliminate the threat.

He established that He was in charge, not they. He commanded them to let His disciples go free, and they obliged.

The confrontation is replete with illustration and symbolism:

- Jesus stepped forward from the garden. In the Garden of Eden Jesus promised to step forward to be God in human flesh, to save us.
- Jesus stood before His enemies. Imputed & inherited sin makes us the enemies of God. You'll find the word *enmity* in Scripture, meaning *hatred* or *animosity*. Jesus died for us while we were at enmity with God.
- There were Jews and Gentiles in the posse. He was the Jewish Messiah, but Jesus came to save whosoever will believe in Him, Jews *and* Gentiles.

They came for Jesus, but it was Jesus who had come for them, from Heaven to Earth, to save whosoever will believe in Him.

J.C. Ryle wrote,

To suffer for those whom we love, and who are in some sense worthy of our affections, is suffering that we can understand. To submit to ill-treatment quietly, when we have no power to resist, is submission that is both graceful and wise. But to suffer voluntarily, when we have the power to prevent it, and to suffer for a world of unbelieving and ungodly sinners, unasked and unthanked - this is a line of conduct which passes man's understanding. Never let us forget that this is the peculiar beauty of Christ's sufferings, when we read the wondrous story of His cross and passion.

The authorities were "seeking" Jesus. Although they were seeking Him for harm, it reminds us that sinners do seek the Lord.

Don't take my word for it. The apostle Paul said, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, **so that they should seek the Lord**, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).

Joh 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.

Jesus & Co. bedded down in the garden during Passover Week. The property was probably owned by a supporter. There were other faithful followers besides the eleven and those who travelled with Jesus.

Joh 18:2 And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.

Judas had insider information on where to find the Lord. He was a paid informant. He was the mole.

Joh 18:3 Then Judas, having received a detachment of *troops*, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Each of the other Gospels calls it a "multitude." We're talking hundreds, at least.

It's like a "how many" joke. "How many armed men does it take to arrest God?" You finish it...

Joh 18:4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"

Being fully God, Jesus was omniscient. As a man, He set aside the independent exercise of His deity. Perhaps God the Holy Spirit gave Jesus a word of knowledge to know "all things that would come upon Him." It does not reduce His deity.

Robert Clark puts this in perspective, saying, "As to His deity Christ had no mother, and as to His humanity He had no father."

"Went forward" are powerful words:

- Jesus "went forward" in eternity past, volunteering for Incarnation.
- Jesus "went forward" in His baptism to embark upon His mission.
- Jesus "went forward" at His arrest, volunteering to be our Substitute.
- In the Revelation, Jesus will go forward as the only Person in Creation worthy to take the seven-sealed scroll from God the Father (5:7).

All His going forward was for you, to save you.

Joh 18:5 They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.

It speaks to us of how ordinary Jesus looked. The high priest didn't say, "He'll be the one glowing in the dark." Judas was there to make the identification.

In some Bibles, "*He*," is italicized. It indicates it was not in the original text, but added by translators to help the sentence flow in English. What He said was, "I AM," claiming equality with God.

Then this happened:

Joh 18:6 Now when He said to them, "[I AM] they drew back and fell to the ground.

- They "drew back." It was as if they had been shoved. All of them, at once.
- They "fell to the ground." All of them, at once.

Jesus didn't shout. He didn't talk at a certain frequency. The more nonchalant, the more the power is attributed to God and not gimmick.

One unarmed God-man versus hundreds of trained security and soldiers. It was no match. Jesus demonstrated He could not be taken by force. He would go with them willingly.

Joh 18:7 Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Joh 18:8 Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am *He*. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

I wonder how many of them dug-in, expecting another push. Especially the Romans, whose footwear featured short nails underneath, for traction in battle.

"These aren't the disciples you are looking for." No, it wasn't a Jedi mind trick. The Lord's words, "Let these go their way," were a command, not a negotiation or a request.

Joh 18:9 that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

Jesus' concern was more about the eleven than Himself. He must suffer at the hands of persecutors, but they need not - at least, not on that night.

Joh 18:10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Malchus was there to represent the high priest. Before I forget, John doesn't tell us, but Jesus healed the ear of Malchus.

Commentators describe Peter being groggy from sleeping through prayer, suddenly awakening, and swinging his sword wildly.

Cutting-off an ear, cleanly, would be a one in a million hack for a sleepwalker. I suggest Peter was skilled with a blade.

This wasn't Excalibur or Narsil. It wasn't a Roman broadsword. Peter didn't walk around strapped, sword at the ready. It was illegal for a Jew to be armed. This must have been a much smaller blade.

A chef is skilled with his blades. A surgeon is skilled with his scalpel. A fisherman by trade, Peter was skilled with knives to flay fish.

The disciples were always expecting Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God, probably by force. Peter may have thought this was the kerfuffle that would begin the downfall of Rome.

Joh 18:11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

The "cup" is His suffering and death on our behalf. Jesus drained it.

In the past, or maybe right now, has God "given" you a "cup" of suffering? If so, how would you describe your drinking it? Are you trying to sip it?

Is it a cup half full? Have you tried spilling it? Or maybe you've put additives from the world, seeking to sweeten it, or to dull its effect.

Drain it.

Peter fought the world using a weapon of the world. He struck a blow, sure; but in the long run he would have been undone by the swords of hundreds. You can't fight the world with its weapons.

When you unsheathe manipulation, or guilting, or pressuring, or intimidation, or anger, or abuse, or craftiness, or lying, or fear, etc., etc., you are wielding the swords of the world, while all the while ignoring and thereby dulling the Sword of the Spirit.

Humble yourself and let God show His resurrection life through you.

#2 - Jesus Steps In To Keep You (v12-26)

A 'perp walk' is the American tradition of parading a suspect before the media. It serves as a form of public shaming.

The Jewish leadership wanted Jesus shamed as much as possible. It started with His arrest and subsequent 'perp walk.'

Joh 18:12 Then the detachment of *troops* and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.

There was no need to bind him, except to cause Him shame.

Joh 18:13 And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.

Joh 18:14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

A high priest was supposed to serve for life. The occupying Romans did not like the concentration of power in one person so they frequently pressured the Jews to change high priests. Annas was succeeded by five of his sons, and at that time, by his son-in-law, Caiaphas. Despite Rome's efforts, Annas remained the real power.

Caiaphas seemed bent on killing Jesus, thinking it would benefit the nation. It would - just not in the way he thought.

Joh 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

Joh 18:16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.

Nine of His disciples skedaddled. Two followed Jesus - Peter and "the other disciple," probably John being humble. John had some pull and was able to get Peter in to the courtyard where they had taken Jesus.

Peter will fail momentarily, but kudos for following when nine colleagues fled. You've heard of "fight or flight?" For a disciple the choice can be "follow or flee."

The rich young ruler wanted to follow Jesus.

He was living a life of piety and discipline. Jesus told him to divest himself of his wealth, then follow. He fled.

Joh 18:17 Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also *one* of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

Bold-to-cold in record time. J.C. Ryle wrote, *"If Peter's fall has made Christians see more clearly their own great weakness and Christ's great compassion, then Peter's fall has not been recorded in vain."*

Joh 18:18 Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

Undoubtedly some of those around the fire had been part of the posse. Why did Peter chance being recognized?

I speculate that, even though he had already denied the Lord once, he figured no way would he do it again.

Maybe you have some kind of life-dominating sin. You fall into it, repent, thinking that's the end of it. If you keep falling, *find a new strategy*.

Joh 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

Joh 18:20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.

Joh 18:21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

The authorities were required to produce witnesses to substantiate any accusations against Him. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy. There were no witnesses

Joh 18:22 And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?"

Joh 18:23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?"

No matter the reaction of this Temple officer, Jesus could not disrespect the office of the high priest. Even after being struck, He kept His composure, and asked a penetrating but appropriate question.

Joh 18:24 Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Taking Jesus first to Annas was a nod towards the real power in the priesthood. Jesus is our great high priest. Note the contrast between He and Annas, then Caiaphas. They were men who were not even saved, let alone qualified to serve as high priest.

Joh 18:25 Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also *one* of His disciples, are you?" He denied *it* and said, "I am not!"

Joh 18:26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative *of him* whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

Joh 18:27 Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

Peter insisted he would be cock-a-doodle-**don't**, but cock-a-doodle-**do** he was. He fell hard.

Jesus kept all of the disciples. Not Judas; we saw in a previous study he was an unbeliever from the start, and was never saved.

Jesus keeps you, Christian.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you *is* faithful, **who also will do it**" (First Thessalonians 5:23-24).

Something Thanos said to Dr. Strange got me thinking. He said, "You never once used your greatest weapon."

The Word of God, wielded by those yielded to the Lord, is our greatest weapon. I can't tell you precisely what that means in your circumstances. But if you believe it is true - and you should, having all the examples in the Bible - the indwelling Holy Spirit will counsel and guide you.

An anonymous quote reads, "It is by prayer that the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is effectively unsheathed." While that refers to prayer generally, I think we ought to specifically ask and keep asking, to believe our weapon is superior. We too easily default to the things we learned in the world, pulling out our fish-flayer, while the world is ready to launch its nukes upon us.

It sounds campy, but if it helps to remind us to use our greatest weapon:

Yield, then wield.