

—Matthew 26:69-75|| Expository Thoughts on Matthew by J.C. Ryle—
Module 88 – Peter’s Denial of His Master

The Apostle Peter’s denial of Christ is instructive. If the Bible were a mere invention of man, then we would never be told that one of its principal preachers was once so weak and would deny his Master.

First, we notice the full nature of the sin of which Peter is guilty.

1. It was a great sin. Peter had followed Christ for three years. He had been outspoken in professing faith and love towards him.
2. Peter was warned plainly of his danger, had heard the warning, and had just been receiving bread and wine at Jesus’ hands, declaring loudly that he would not deny Christ, even to his own death.
3. He committed the sin under little provocation. Two women make the remark that he was with Jesus. He eventually denies Christ with an oath, cursing and swearing.

Application: This incident teaches us that the best of saints are only men, men encompassed with many infirmities. It shows us the necessity of humility. As long as we are in the body we are in danger. It also points out the duty of charity towards erring saints (*Gal. 6:1*).

Second, we notice the series of steps by which Peter was led to deny his Lord.

1. The first step to Peter’s fall was self-confidence. “*Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.*” – *Mat. 26:33*
2. The second step was indolence or laziness. Instead of watching and praying as Jesus had instructed, he slept.
3. The third step was cowardly, compromising instead of keeping close to his Master. He first forsook him, and then followed behind, “*And Peter was following Him from a distance.*” – *Mat. 26:58*
4. The next step to Peter’s fall was a needless venture into evil company. He went into the priest’s place and “*sat with the servants*”, like one of them.
5. The final step was the cursing, swearing, and three-fold denial. Startling as it appears, his heart had been preparing it.

Application: Great illnesses seldom attack the body without a previous train of premonitory symptoms. Similarly, great galls seldom happen to a saint without a previous course of secret backsliding.

Finally, we notice the sorrow which Peter’s sin brought upon him. “He went out and wept bitterly.” We should pay close attention to Peter’s tears and Peter’s repentance.

1. We see in Peter’s tears the close connection between unhappiness and departure from God. A heavy heart and an uneasy conscience will always be the consequence of backsliding and inconsistency (*Prov. 14:14*). If we love inward peace we must walk closely with God.
2. We also see the difference between the hypocrite and true believer. The hypocrite is overtaken by sin and falls to never rise again. The child of God is overtaken and rises again by repentance.
3. Let no man think that he may sin with impunity because some patriarchs of the bible have committed grievous sin. They repented greatly and mourned over their falls.

Overall Application: If we profess to have a hope in Christ then we should mark the weakness of the believer and the steps that lead to a fall. If we backslide then we must remember that Christ still lives. There is mercy for us, but we must repent and seek that mercy (*Lam. 3:22*).

—Matthew 27:1-10|| Expository Thoughts on Matthew by J.C. Ryle—
Module 89 – The End of Judas Iscariot

The opening of chapter 27 describes the delivery of Jesus into the hands of the Gentiles. He is led away to Pontius Pilate, by the chief priests and elders of the Jews. This was all ordered by God's providence, that both Jews and Gentiles would be concerned in the murder of Christ.

First, we see in the end of Judas, a plain proof of our Lord's innocence of every charge laid against him.

1. If there were any living witness who could give evidence against Jesus, Judas Iscariot was the man. He was a chosen apostle, a constant companion, a hearer of his teaching in public and private. He must have known if Jesus had done any wrong, either in word or deed.
2. Why didn't he come forward to testify against Jesus? His conscience would not let him. He knew that his Master was holy, harmless, innocent, blameless, and true. The absence of Judas Iscariot at our Lord's trial is one among many proofs that Jesus was a sinless man.

Second, we see that there is such a thing as repentance which is too late. We are told that Judas repented. He even went to the priests and said, "I have sinned", and yet it is clear that he did not repent unto salvation.

1. It is common to say, "it is never too late to repent." This is true if repentance is true. However, late repentance is often not genuine. It is possible for a man to feel his sins and be sorry for them and yet not repent with his heart. Present danger or the fear of death may account for his feelings and the holy spirit may have done no work on his soul.
2. Beware of trusting to a late repentance. One penitent thief was saved in his hour of death so that no man might despair, but only one, that no man might presume.

Third, we see how little comfort ungodliness brings a man at the last. We are told that Judas cast down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple and went away in bitterness of soul. The money brought him no pleasure (*Prov. 10:2*).

1. Sin is the hardest of all masters. Its pleasures are but for a season. Its wages are sorrow, remorse, self-accusation, and too often death.
2. Are we tempted to commit sin? "*Your sin will be found out* – Num. 32:23. Resist. Sin and the sinner will meet face to face one day and have a bitter reckoning (*Rom. 6:21*).

Finally, we see in the case of Judas, what a miserable end a man may come, if he has great privileges and does not use them rightly. We are told that this unhappy man "*..departed and went and hanged himself.*" An apostle of Christ, a former preacher of the gospel, a companion of Peter and John, commits suicide, and rushes into God's presence unprepared and unforgiven.

1. No sinners are so sinful as sinners against light and knowledge. None are so provoking to God. Remember Lot's wife, Pharaoh, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and Saul, King of Israel – they are all cases in point (*Prov. 29:1*).

Application: What is the state of our hearts? Are we tempted to rest on our knowledge and profession of religion? Let us remember Judas and beware. Are we disposed to cling to the world, and give money a prominent place in our minds? Again, let us remember Judas, and beware. Are we trifling with any one sin, and flattering ourselves we may repent eventually? Once more, let us remember Judas, and beware. He is set up before us as a beacon.