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## JOHN 18:1-27

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we ask that you would continue to direct us as we go out into the marketplace and share the message of your gospel. We pray for these postcards that they would fall into the right hands of each person in each home. We pray that people would stop and look at them and save them and put them on their refrigerators or whatever they might do to remind themselves to check it out. Lord, we thank you for the many people that are involved in our church. Working on things like the website and social media, as well as greeting here on Sunday morning, and working with children, and ushering, and working with PA system, and providing refreshments. Lord, we do it all because we're servants of yours and we want to introduce people to yourself. So Lord, we're just praying that in this season as we do this promotion that you would oversee all of the work that's gone on. We continue to direct us to ideas and solutions. But most importantly, that your Holy Spirit would work in the lives of people that they would understand more about what it means to follow you, to trust you as their Lord and their Savior. In Jesus name, amen.

Today as we look at God's word, you can open your Bibles to John 18. We finished John 13-17 which is this Upper Room Discourse, one of those places like going into the Holy of Holies, as we see Jesus interacting and then praying. It's a beautiful passage of scripture. Today we're going to look at John 18, which starts these next four chapters that are going to take us through the betrayal and then the arrest of Jesus. We're going to see the crucifixion of Christ. We're going to see the resurrection of Jesus as we come to the end of the book.

So today we're in chapter 18 and one of the things we see in chapter 18 the fact that Peter denies Christ. Peter, this rock. Jesus says upon this rock I will build my church. But he lies three times. How much regret he must have felt, embarrassment he must have felt over that experience. Yet he used it in a way that just drew attention to the Lord and obviously became this great pillar of the church, someone who was just remarkable. In there lies an invitation, I think, for every one of us. That we have regrets. All of us can look in our lives and see regrets that we have. Yet God wants to turn regrets through our humility into His triumph.

So before I look at with you John 18, I want to look at Peter's writing in 1 Peter. He writes these words... In fact these are the words I'd like you to stand with me as we read these. We'll come back to chapter 18 of John in a moment. But this is Peter writing and you have to think in your mind, Peter must be thinking of the things he learned even through his denial.

He says in 1 Peter 5:6-10 – *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.* Here's a man that I'm sure knew some things about humility. *Cast all*

*your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* I think it's our anxious moments where we start taking matters into our own hands and then we end up crossing lines and doing things and saying things we regret.

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* That's this sense of surprise. This sense that you better be ready because you never know when a temptation may come your way. *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* It's when we start thinking that we're alone, that no one has experienced the pain that we're experiencing that we throw caution to the wind and often don't consider consequences and often end up doing things that are wrong. Peter is reminding us that we are not alone. Other people suffer in the same ways that we suffer.

And verse 10 is so beautiful. *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

I'm confident there's a word from the Lord in there for each one of us that God wants to restore us, to make us strong, to make us firm, and to make us steadfast.

You may be seated.

So let's go back now and look at the story that involves Peter in John 18 and I want to see the factors that led into his actual falling. Because I don't think this happened as just a one-time surprise incident. There were things that led up to this that can be warnings for every one of us that can protect us from this prowling lion, Satan, that wants to attack us with his temptations.

So we pick up chapter 18 in the story. And notice it says – *When he had finished praying* (because this was the prayer in John 17 that we spent the last few weeks on), *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.*

This is the Garden of Gethsemane. Now we aren't told the story here about the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus praying that prayer. So I'm going to kind of wed another passage of scripture, that is Matthew 26 together with John 18 so we can get the full picture here of what's happening in the story and draw from those some principles about Peter and what led up to his mistakes.

You see this first prayer that we read about in John 17 was Jesus' prayer for all of His disciples and for us. But the prayer that He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane is a prayer for Himself. And He prays in that prayer – *Lord, please take this cup from me.* In fact the Bible says He was *overwhelmed with sorrow.* I don't know if you've felt that. I'm sure many of you have. Just feeling overwhelmed with sorrow about the pressures of life. And when you feel overwhelmed with that sorrow, the solution is you have to go to God the Father to work it out with Him. And that's what Jesus did. He goes and wrestles with the Father about this and just pours out the sorrow in His heart.

He had gone into the garden with His disciples and He took then Peter, James, and John a little bit further down and then He said to these three guys, “Why don’t you guys wait here and pray while I go off and pray myself.” He goes off and prays for a little while, then He comes back and they’re sleeping. So Jesus says, “Couldn’t you stay awake and pray for one hour?” We’ll come back to that because I think it’s one of those things that’s leading to Peter’s failure that he has.

Verse 2 – *Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees.* So notice the group of people. These are political officials, government officials, the Roman guard, plus religious leaders that are also present. This entourage has come into the garden and you can imagine it’s quite dark, so they come with these torches.

Notice – *They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.* A torch was a piece of wood with a cloth wrapped around it dipped in tar and then lit on fire, which would last for a little while. So they would have this lantern, so to speak, or a lamp. But you can imagine if you ever sat by a campfire that the light provided for that isn’t all that great. It’s a little bit... it allows you to know where you’re walking. But if you’re trying to see everybody, there’s shadows. There’s shadows in trees, shadows on people’s faces. There are lots of people around. That’s why they say in the next verse 4 – *Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”*

*“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.*

*“I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.* It’s because those words *I am he* had so much power within them that just saying those words caused all these people to just fall to the ground.

The words *I am (ego eimi)* used over and over in the gospel of John. *I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the bread of life. I am the resurrection and the life.* In one point He even says in John, *I am.* And that’s a direct reference to the Old Testament story about Moses who was standing before the burning bush, arguing with God about what he was going to do when he went over to talk to the Egyptian leaders. And he says, “God, if I go and I tell the Egyptian leaders that God told me something, they’re going to say we already got our gods. What’s the name of your god?” And God says, “You tell them my name is I am. Yahweh.”

So when Jesus speaks those words in the garden, it’s just such a potent glorifying moment that people can’t even stand up when He says those words. They’re in the presence of God. I don’t even know if they realize what’s going on, but they all fell backwards, fell to the ground.

*Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?”*

*“Jesus of Nazareth,” they said (probably a little more timidly this time).*

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

Now we come to Simon Peter and we're going to see right here at the end of these verses and then on the next slide we'll have more verses that Peter is going to deny Christ three times. But what led up to that? Even in this evening experience, if you think back on some things that happened in these last few hours, you can start seeing this fall of Peter start to develop way before he's tempted by the servant girl or by the other people standing around the fire. You remember that Jesus said – *One of you is going to betray me*. Peter says, “Oh it's not going to me, Lord. I'll serve you. Wherever you want to go, I'll go. I'll lay down my life for you.” He was so confident. He was so bold.

In fact let me lay out for you some of the things that I see in this whole story about the fall of Peter and the things that led up to it that created holes in his heart that temptations could sneak through and create problems for him.

I would suggest the first one is this pride and self-assurance. “Oh I will never fall,” Peter says. This pride that sometimes makes us think that we will never be tempted in that way. Or “I'm strong enough to handle this” can get us into quite a fix sometimes. Proverbs 16:18 says – *Pride goes before destructions, and a haughty spirit before a fall*. Watch out for the person who's acting proudly. Watch out for that pride that creeps into our own hearts because when it creeps on us, that's when we're so close to getting ourselves in trouble and ending up in some kind of a fall.

Another thing that I think is going on here and I suggest that he's neglecting spiritual activity based on this passage that Jesus says, “Couldn't you just pray here for one hour? You're falling asleep.” See Peter had an opportunity to pray for himself, to pray for Jesus, to be ready in prayer in his life.

I think there are times in our lives where we say, “I don't need to pray today. I don't need to read the Bible this week. I can skip church.” When we start neglecting spiritual activity, we set ourselves up for the temptations of Satan. That our heart starts developing these cracks in it that allow these temptations to sneak inside in ways we never expected because like a roaring lion who's sneaking around trying to devour us, we have no warning. So we have to be strong. We have to be working on these spiritual disciplines. We need to be praying. We need to be in God's word. We need to be fellowshiping with other brothers and sisters because it's within that that God bolsters that strength inside of us that we need in order to face the temptations that may come at any time in our lives.

In the dialogue with Peter, as Jesus is dialoguing with him even at the table just a few hours before this, He says to him – “*Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*” It's obvious Jesus knows He's going to make a mistake. And out of this mistake he turns back and strengthens his brothers. There's something about Jesus praying for Peter that is so encouraging. It's just so forgiving.

The third thing I think we're going to see right now in this passage as we read it is that he's relying on his own strength instead of the strength of Christ. So Christ knows he's in the garden.

The scriptures already told us he knows everything that's going to happen. That's why He introduces Himself to the guards.

Peter decides to take matters into his own hands. Notice what he does. Verse 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.) Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"*

I'm reading this and the first question I have is where did he get the sword? What's he doing with a sword anyway? There's a little passage tucked away in Luke 22, a dialogue that Jesus had just a few hours earlier with His disciples. He's reminding them about the time when He said, "Do you guys remember when I sent you away I said don't take your suitcase, don't take your wallet, don't take your suitcase, and don't even take your sandals. Go out there and minister for me and if someone invites you to the house, go there. Let people care for you and watch what happens when you do ministry. God's going to care for you in the midst of that. Remember that story?" He says to them. They go, "Yes, we remember!" Because Jesus used experience to teach them this valuable lesson about His provision and His protection.

But now He says, "Now a time is coming where you're going to need your wallet and your suitcase and you're going to sell your coat and buy a sword." And the disciples look around and say, "We have two swords here." And Jesus says, "*That's enough!*" Now I don't fully understand what's going on in the passage, whether Jesus says "that's enough, we're not talking about this anymore," or He's saying "that's enough swords." I'm not exactly sure what He's saying, but that kind of ends and it goes on in the passage. But that's where the swords come from.

Peter knew where the sword was. He knew which one of these guys had a sword. And so he went over there and grabs the sword and cuts this guy's ear off. He's so impulsive. I'm sure he wasn't intending to cut the ear off. He was probably aiming for the head. He was determined. If that would have happened, it would have been so amazing to pick up the head and put it back on this guy and heal him. It would have been stunning.

The guy's name is mentioned. His name was Malchus. I think it's mentioned (this is just my idea) because the Bible tells us a number of people became Christians and started becoming Christ-followers. There was Cornelius, who was the centurion. There was Nicodemus who was a Pharisee. I wonder if Malchus somewhere down the road here says, "You know what? That guy put my ear back on. He had more power than those guys all around us. I'm trusting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." That's how maybe we know his name was Malchus and he gets put in the Bible the way he is.

But Peter was taking matters into his own hands and when we start to do that, we're setting ourselves up for danger. "I'm going to control this. I can handle this. I don't need to pray about this. I got this one covered." When we start taking matters into our own hands, it creates cracks in our hearts, temptations can sneak through.

Verse 12 – *Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.*

*Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus.* Now in here we're going to see another reference to Peter following and in Matthew 26 it says he was following at a distance. There are some times where we're tempted to follow Christ at a distance. Peter's doing that. I think it's going to contribute to his problem. Let me read on here. *Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple (this disciple was John) was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple (that is John), who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.*

So I'm going to suggest that another thing that added to this fall of Peter was that he was following Jesus at a distance. I think that happens in our lives sometimes when we're too busy. We've got all kinds of things going on, so we start pulling back a little bit from our quiet time. Or we've got some other issue going on that's competing with our relationship with Christ. So somehow we start pulling back. It's dangerous to follow Christ at a distance. We want to be right there with Him. We want to be so close to what He's doing in our world.

So now we come verse 17 at the bottom of this slide to the first time Peter denied Christ.

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

*He replied, "I am not."*

*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.* He was getting really comfortable there. I just want to suggest sometimes when we get comfortable with the world we open ourselves up to danger. You never know when temptations are going to come. He's warming himself by the enemy camp. You know what happens. You hang out with people with foul mouths and those words start to slip out of your own mouth. That you become kind of comfortable watching raunchy movies. That there's some comfort level with the world that's dangerous because it opens up these cracks in our heart that allows temptations to enter and we never know when those temptations might come.

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

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

One of the beautiful things about Christianity is it's all out in the open. There's no secret handshakes, as there are in some religions. Special underwear that you wear as leaders of the church. We're all just normal people growing in Christ. It's all out there. Anybody can go and examine the faith. They can check it out and they can see the truth that is there. Jesus is saying hey, it's all out there.

*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.*

*“If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?” We have to realize that even when you speak the truth you’ll get slapped in the face.*

Jesus is going to go through a lot of persecution, drama, trial, all kinds of bad things are going to happen here. The reality is even if you do everything right in your life, you can still get crucified. We don’t measure the success of our lives based on public opinion. We measure the success of our lives based on our ability to follow the truth.

*Verse 24 – Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. 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.”*

*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?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow. And at that moment I’m sure Peter remembered the words of Jesus – Before the rooster crows, you are going to deny me three times.*

It’s been said that years afterwards Peter would be teased by other people. People would come up behind him and say, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” to tease him because of his mistake. I’m sure there’s that kind of cock-a-doodle-doo in the hearts of many of us as we think of the regrets that we have, mistakes that we’ve made. Sometimes those regrets and mistakes plague us in our own hearts and they prompt us to put ourselves on the shelf spiritually. They prompt us to limit our own opportunities for service. Oh because we’re not worthy. Because we’ve failed, we’ve made mistakes. It’s in those moments that we must understand the forgiveness of God. And it’s a lesson that struck so deeply in Peter’s heart. He wanted everybody to know. Everybody wanted to know this is so important that God wants to restore you, to make you strong and steadfast. That God is the one who wants to forgive us for all the wrongs that we have committed in our lives.

If you’ve never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior, this is the essence of salvation. That we have sin in our lives and we need forgiveness. The beautiful thing is when you get saved, you feel like this weight has been lifted off your shoulders because it’s not your job to save yourself. That Jesus Christ saves us and forgives us from all of the sin that we have committed in the past, in the present, and in the future. There’s this depth of love and forgiveness that God has that is so powerful. We need it. It is what restores us. It is what restored Peter in his own life and gave him such a passion to serve that came through humility.

So failures and regrets are valuable because they move us through humility into the power of God to trust in His mighty hand. That’s why Peter says – *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* He’s strong with His mighty hand and He also loves and cares for us so deeply. He

doesn't want us wallowing in self-pity. He doesn't want us living with regrets that cause us to not experience the full life He wants for us. But He wants us to be on guard.

That's why He says *be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* On the one hand he's prowling around to surprise us in ways that we never knew. On the other hand he's roaring because often there are indications that the enemy is nearby and we need to have in our mind this understanding that sometimes we get ourselves into a place because of our activity or our inactivity that opens our heart with these cracks to temptation.

You never know when the temptations might come. We must be ready for them. That's why he says be alert and then verse 9 – *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* You are not alone.

How many times have people felt so distant and alone. The consequences mean nothing. They don't care about consequences at all and they just engage in whatever they're going to do, whether it be a violent episode of anger or some sexual promiscuity or going into huge amount of debt. Consequences don't mean anything because they think they're all alone. There's something very big going on here that we need to know that we live in a world where there are a lot of other Christians that are around us and supporting us and encouraging us because of their own lives.

*And the God of all grace.* God is the one who give us that grace to overcome the challenges that we face, *who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* And that is God's desire for every one of us. He wants us to be firm and steadfast. He wants us to be able to hold our heads up high in the midst of failures and mistakes. Not because we're relying on our own strength, but we're relying on the mighty hand of God. As we rely on that mighty hand and we understand what God is doing, then we have this confidence inside, this greater confidence we could ever have than the confidence we could have of relying on our own selves.

Would you stand with me?

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I want to ask your forgiveness now for all of us as we sometimes in our mistakes start depreciating ourselves with negative comments, saying that we're stupid or an idiot or we're never going to get this right. Lord, we know that you create us and you don't make junk. You not only created us in the image of yourself, but you also when we fell, when we sinned offer us forgiveness and you restore us and you redeem us and you give us a spiritual gift and you give us this longing, this love that we need in our own hearts and lives and you give us such a confidence. So Lord, forgive us for our self-condemning thoughts and actions. We thank you for your forgiveness that you provide for us for all of our sins. And Lord, I pray that you would give us such a great confidence that we would live the steadfast and firm love and life that you've called us to live. Lord, bless each one here. I ask for your blessing on my brothers and sisters here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. Give us such a confidence in you that we can live this week in your strength. In Jesus' name, amen.