

## Control in the Midst of Chaos

Luke 22:47-53

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Even as Jesus was being betrayed by one of his closest friends, even as Jesus was facing off against the religious leaders intent on killing Him, even as Jesus knew the extent of the cup of suffering He was about to drink, Jesus was still in control. He demonstrated that in the Garden of Gethsemane, as He stood before Judas, the elders, the chief priests, and an army of soldiers. He demonstrated his control by continuing to teach His disciples, continuing to assert His divine identity, and even by miraculously healing one of His enemies.

H.G. Wells was a bestselling author in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of his works have been adapted into movies, including *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*.

By the end of his life, he was an agnostic, if not an atheist. He famously wrote that religion, or faith, collapses in the face of calamity.

He once described his view of God this way: “The world is like a great stage production, directed and managed by God. As the curtain rises, the set is perfect, a treat for every eye. The characters are resplendent. Everything goes well until the leading man steps on the hem of the leading lady’s gown, causing her to trip over a chair, which knocks over a lamp, which pushes a table into the wall, knocking over the scenery, which brings everything down on the heads of the actors. Meanwhile, God is running around, shouting orders, pulling strings, trying to restore order from chaos. But alas, poor God, he is unable to do so.”

Wells goes on to write that if God exists, He is rather small and limited in His ability to handle the chaos of the world.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke Volume 2* (Crossway, 1998), p. 334

Today, I want us to enter one of the most chaotic scenes in the New Testament, in which a prayer meeting will become total pandemonium.

We're in Luke's Gospel, chapter 22. The Lord has only moments ago surrendered to the will of His Father. He can already hear the footsteps of the mob heading up the mount of Olives toward the Garden of Gethsemane.

***Let's pick up our study in verse 47:***

*While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them.*

*Luke 22:47a*

So, the moment has arrived which Jesus had long predicted. One of the twelve will betray Him.

The Lord is about to face the most difficult moments any human being could ever experience.

He was about to drink the cup, ordained by the counsel of Almighty God before the foundations of the world were ever put in place.

But as we suggested last Lord's Day, sports teams celebrate their victories with a *cup*—the World Cup, the America's Cup, The Davis Cup, the Stanley Cup.

For you parents of young children, losing any of those cups is not nearly as devastating as losing your child's sippy cup. *That* will stop the earth from rotating!

These victory cups signify the defeat of every opponent. Likewise, Jesus is calling these events—including the chaos in the garden—part of the cup He must endure and ultimately defeat.

Now **Luke** records that a crowd arrives.

**Mark's** Gospel says this crowd **comes from the** chief priests, scribes, and elders, but Luke lets us in on the fact that this crowd **includes** them. **Look down at verse 52:**

*Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, ...*

*Luke 22:52a*

In other words, they're all in on it. They are determined to arrest the Lord around midnight and get rid of Him as quickly as they can.

**They are prepared for everything except what is about to happen.**

But here's what they evidently expected. One of two responses, if not both of them. First:

## They expected a measure of deceitfulness.

Matthew says they arrive with torches and lanterns.

- Maybe they'll run or hide.
- Maybe Jesus will refuse to step forward.
- Maybe one of the disciples would say, "Take me, I'm Jesus" in order to protect their leader.
- Or maybe His disciples will say they're just up there in the garden having an overnighter with friends.

We don't know, but they evidently had this expectation of deception, because the middle part of verse 47 says:

*... Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"*

*Luke 22:47b-48*

The plan was for Judas to undeniably identify Jesus with a kiss.

A kiss was common in this culture.

This could be a kiss on the cheek, or a kiss on both cheeks—like they do today in South America where I've traveled.

During the first century, a kiss on the hand or on both cheeks was a sign of friendship.

In fact, by the time of Christ, this had developed into the religious practice of blowing kisses toward someone's favorite temple or a statue of a favorite god or goddess.

Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume VI* (Eerdmans, 1968), p. 758

They wanted a favor from their gods, so as they walked by, they blew them a kiss.

To this day, we still use the expression of "kissing up to someone"; that describes someone who's trying to get on a person's good side.

And among believers, a kiss is still a traditional greeting in certain parts of the world.

The church in Russia takes seriously the admonition to greet one another with **a holy kiss** when the church gathers (**Romans 16:16**).

One of our missionaries to Russia invited me to travel with him into some of the less developed areas of Russia where the church was thriving. But he told me that if I came, I needed to be prepared for this tradition where they greet one another with a kiss on the lips. “I said, “Wait, you mean the men and the women?” He said, “No, only the men.” He said, “The men greet one another with a smack on the lips.” He said, “It’s customary, it’s quick, they all have thick beards. You won’t feel a thing.” I never did go to Russia. It wasn’t because of that.

It’s interesting that Luke glosses over the kiss of Judas, but Matthew and Mark use the compound verb which can mean to shower with kisses.

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel (Augsburg Publishing House), p. 1946, p. 1079

This would have been an over-the-top despicable display of false affection.

Have you ever thought about the unseen world here in the Garden of Gethsemane. You have the serpent embracing the Son; you have the Satanically empowered deceiver kissing the Deliverer.

And Jesus knew it!

Now you might wonder why Jesus doesn’t perform a miracle and turn Judas into a little pile of sawdust.

How dare Judas kiss the Savior as if he cares about Him, when he’s already sold Jesus for the price of a disabled slave.

Betrayal is a terrible thing, but when it comes with a kiss—in other words, when it comes from someone who should love you, who is supposed to care about you, who says they’re looking out for what’s best for you—that kind of betrayal is especially crushing and discouraging.

Maybe you’re experiencing right now some form of betrayal.

- A spouse who said they loved you but lived a lie behind your back.
- An adult child who has discarded you so that they can be free to live their life without guilt.
- A coworker you thought had your back, when they actually wanted your job.

Maybe you feel entitled to a little hatred and resentment and thoughts of revenge.

Watch Jesus here. Matthew’s Gospel account says that Jesus responded by saying, ***“Friend, do what you came to do” (Matthew 26:50).***

Kent Hughes writes in his commentary on this passage:

“Even though Judas was Satan’s agent, he was still a lost soul, and Jesus always cared about lost souls. This was an appeal—one last invitation—before it was forever too late, for Judas.”

Kent Hughes

Adapted from Hughes, p. 341

Jesus didn’t just preach, “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*” He lived it! He practiced everything he ever preached!

So, get this scene here: in the midst of this mob who has suddenly appeared; in this emotionally charged chaos, the Son of God isn’t panicking, He isn’t running around the stage of history trying to pull strings and keep everything from collapsing.

Look here at God the Son, in the midst of chaos. He is perfectly composed and in total control.

Now that leads me to another observation: this mob not only came to the Garden of Gethsemane expecting a measure of deceitfulness, secondly,

**They expected a measure of defiance.**

In Matthew’s account, he writes that Judas arrived:

*... and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, ...*

*Matthew 26:47*

John’s account records:

*So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

*John 18:3*

This **band of soldiers** was a cohort or battalion of 600 armed soldiers. **Officers from the chief priests** represented the temple police force kept by the Sanhedrin to keep order as well as carry out the Supreme Court’s decisions.

And they all show up, John writes, hundreds of them, if not nearly 1,000 of them.

Why send an army to arrest a carpenter?

Because they knew He was no ordinary carpenter. He might pull something supernatural out of his hat. Or maybe now that He's cornered, He and his men might fight back.

**They were ready for anything, but they were ready for *nothing* that was about to happen.**

John's Gospel account fills in what happens immediately following Judas' identifying kiss.

Instead of cowering, out of control in this chaos, ***John records:***

*Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." ... When Jesus said to them, "I am he," ... they ... fell to the ground.*

*John 18:4-6*

Imagine, they all fell down!

In the original language, Jesus simply says, "*Ego eimi*," "I AM." This was the same expression God used as His name when telling Moses at the burning bush who He was. "Moses, go tell the people my name is I AM." "Yahweh," "Jehovah," most often translated "Lord" in the Old Testament.

Get this: Jesus is announcing to them that the one who had spoken to Moses at the burning bush is now standing before them in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I AM. And with one declaration of His divine nature, they all fell down like bowling pins.

It's as if Jesus pulled back the curtain on his deity for one brief second and they all did what everyone will do in the presence of God: fall prostrate before Him.

Make no mistake here. Jesus, the Son of God, is in command.

- They aren't arresting Him, He's arresting them.
- No one is taking His life away, He's going to give His life away.

In the Garden of Eden, the first Adam sinned against the will of God; in the Garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam surrendered to the will of God.

In the Garden of Eden, the first Adam ran and hid his sinful humanity; in the Garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam steps forward and announces His deity.

What's happening is not the decision of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders, the nation Israel, or the Emperor of Rome; this is the decision of Jehovah—the I AM.

Jesus is not a victim; He is a willing sacrifice.

**Now Peter evidently didn't get the memo.**

Jesus is stepping forward to surrender, Peter is declaring war.

***Luke writes what happens next in verse 49:***

*And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.*

*Luke 22:49-50*

John is the only Gospel writer to give us the details that the servant's name was Malchus. John knew him personally, because **John 18:15** informs us that John knew the high priest and his household, probably because John was a relative of Zechariah the priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who bore John the Baptist.

Lenski, p. 1082

John mentions that it was Malchus who had his right ear completely cut off, and John mentions that Peter was the guy swinging the sword.

Peter probably told John later, "Thanks a lot for adding those details."

But you must admit: Peter has decided to take on 800 armed men. He should get a medal for bravery, he just won't live long enough to pin it on his shirt.

Now fortunately Peter's aim wasn't that good. Malchus should be grateful that Peter was a fisherman.

But still, imagine this scene now: You've got this young man no doubt screaming in pain, his severed ear lying on the ground, blood gushing from the side of his head, and the soldiers no doubt have their swords out and ready.

Now you've got pandemonium. Total chaos. And it all happened so quickly!

God the Father must be running around the stage trying to get the scenery back into place after it all got knocked over.

Now what?!

Matthew's Gospel account records Jesus saying:

*"Put your sword back into its place. ... Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"*

*Matthew 26:52-53*

One legion was 6,000 soldiers. Jesus effectively says that all He had to do was ask and each of the eleven disciples would be protected by 6,000 angels each, and then 6,000 for Himself.

Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Courageous (Victor Books, 1989), p. 122

Just one request, and 72,000 angels will mop this thing up!

***Luke records Jesus simply saying, here in verse 51:***

*“No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.*

*Luke 22:51*

This is the last recorded miracle before Jesus dies on the cross. Don’t miss the fact that this miracle was performed on one of His enemies.

And don’t miss the miracle either.

All four Gospels record that Peter’s sword literally cut off the servant’s ear; but only Luke records that Jesus healed him. Only Dr. Luke seems to care about the patient.

But follow this: Jesus touched his ear—you could render it, ***“the place of his ear”***—and healed him.

In other words, Jesus doesn’t stoop down and pick up the severed ear and reattach it; He touches the side of Malchus’ head, and a new ear appears in its place, perfectly whole.

His other ear is still on the ground. But a new ear is where that one used to be. And the pain is gone, and the bleeding is stopped.

Listen, Jesus didn’t perform a medical reattachment, He performed a miraculous re-creation.

This wasn’t a random event. It was woven into the Lord’s plans from eternity past. You see, Jesus has just announced to them that He is the great I AM—Yahweh, Yehovah, Jehovah in the flesh, the Lord God.

And they would have agreed that only God has the power to create out of nothing, so Jesus effectively says, “Let me show you that I have the power to create something out of nothing. Malchus, here’s you a brand newly created ear.”

Many believe that John specifically mentioned the name of Malchus because, we learn from early church history, Malchus became a follower of Christ.

I can understand why.

Again, let's model the heart of Jesus. He had a way of seeing an enemy as a potential disciple.

**Now with that**, He has a serious warning for the religious leaders; He's giving them one last chance at sanity, and humility in **verse 52**:

*Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."*

*Luke 22:52-53*

You might notice the Lord's use of this word "hour."

He says to them, "This is your hour; this is the hour that demonstrates the power of darkness." In other words, this is the hour when hell will do its worst, when the power of darkness will seem to win the day.

But just like the cup related to difficulty, but also victory, so this hour of hell's dark power will become the hour of heaven's bright promise.

Let me offer one observation from this scene, as it comes to a close:

**Global darkness and personal difficulties that surround you are on a divine timer.**

In the light of eternity, it's barely an hour. It might be dark, but it's not forever. Satan seems to win, but it's only a matter of time.

And Satan cannot have one second more than God allows him. He must hear the ticking of God's divine timer. Compared to eternity, he's just got an hour.

Time changes, suffering changes, difficulty changes when we have the perspective of heaven.

The apostle Paul was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, abandoned, imprisoned and destined to be beheaded and yet he would write:

*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ...*

*2 Corinthians 4:17*

Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 8:

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

*Romans 8:18*

Just wait until that hour dawns.

***The apostle Peter had this view of the divine timer as well; he writes:***

*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ...*

*1 Peter 1:6*

***“For a little while.”*** We know that Peter suffered for decades until he was executed by crucifixion.

Peter had learned to compare what was happening *today* with what *will* happen on that day.

Jesus is not overwhelmed here in the Garden; He’s in total control of:

- the actors.
- the set.
- the stage.
- the drama.
- and, most importantly, the outcome.

So, you can trust Him today—one hour at a time.

Let’s act and live in a way that proves H.G. Well, and all the other agnostics wrong: your faith does not need to collapse in the face of calamity.

And that’s because you *know*—as we’ve seen here in the Garden—that in the midst of calamity, Jesus Christ, the Great I AM, is in complete control.

Access the complete archive of Stephen Davey's teaching ministry at **wisdomonline.org** or on the **Wisdom for the Heart app**.

# Study Guide

## Summary

In this sermon, we explored the chaotic scene in the Garden of Gethsemane as described in Luke 22:47-53. We began by discussing H.G. Wells' skeptical view of God, who he believed was powerless in the face of chaos. Contrasting this, we examined how Jesus, in the midst of betrayal and impending arrest, remained composed and in control. Despite the pandemonium, Jesus demonstrated His divine authority and compassion, even healing the ear of Malchus, one of His enemies. The sermon emphasized that global darkness and personal difficulties are on a divine timer, and that Jesus is in complete control, even in the most chaotic circumstances.

## Key Takeaways

- Jesus' composure in the Garden of Gethsemane shows that He is in control even when everything seems to be falling apart. No matter how chaotic our lives may become, we can trust that Jesus is sovereign and has a plan. Our faith should not waver in the face of calamity because we know that Jesus is orchestrating everything for a greater purpose.
- The betrayal of Jesus by Judas with a kiss is a powerful reminder of the pain caused by those closest to us. Yet, Jesus' response to Judas as "Friend" and His healing of Malchus' ear demonstrate His boundless compassion and forgiveness. This challenges us to respond to betrayal and hurt with grace and love, reflecting Jesus' heart even towards those who wrong us.
- When Jesus declared "I AM" and the soldiers fell to the ground, it was a profound revelation of His divine nature. Jesus is not just a historical figure but the living God who holds all power and authority. Recognizing His divinity should deepen our reverence and trust in Him, knowing that He is capable of handling any situation we face.
- Our sufferings are temporary and are preparing us for an eternal glory that far outweighs them. This perspective, shared by apostles like Paul and Peter, encourages us to endure hardships with hope and patience. Understanding that our trials are momentary in light of eternity helps us to remain steadfast and faithful.
- The ultimate message is that our faith does not need to collapse in the face of calamity because Jesus is in complete control. By trusting in His sovereignty and timing, we can navigate life's challenges with confidence and peace. This trust transforms our response to difficulties, allowing us to live out our faith boldly and resiliently.

## Discussion Guide

### Bible Reading

- Luke 22:47-53
- John 18:4-6
- 2 Corinthians 4:17

### Observation Questions

1. How did Jesus demonstrate His divine authority when the soldiers came to arrest Him, as described in John 18:4-6?
2. What was Peter's reaction to the arrest of Jesus, and what did Jesus do in response according to Luke 22:49-51?
3. How does 2 Corinthians 4:17 describe the nature of our sufferings in comparison to eternal glory?

### Interpretation Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to heal Malchus' ear, even though Malchus was part of the group arresting Him?
2. What does Jesus' declaration of "I AM" and the soldiers falling to the ground reveal about His identity and power?
3. How does the concept of "divine control in chaos" challenge or support your understanding of God's sovereignty in difficult times?
4. In what ways does the perspective of temporary suffering preparing us for eternal glory, as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:17, influence our approach to current hardships?

### Application Questions

1. Jesus demonstrated His divine nature by declaring "I AM." How does recognizing Jesus as the living God impact your daily faith and trust in Him?
2. Think about a current difficulty you are facing. How can the perspective that our sufferings are temporary and preparing us for eternal glory help you endure with hope and patience?
3. How can you actively remind yourself of Jesus' sovereignty and control when you encounter unexpected challenges or calamities in your life?