

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'

And Other Radio Addresses

by
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CHAPTER SEVEN

AROUND THE COMMUNION TABLE

THIRTEEN young men - none perhaps over thirty-three years of age, are sitting at the Passover feast in an upstairs room.

For three years now, twelve of these men had followed the One in His out-of-doors, itinerant school.

Many things they had learned, among them the fact that:

- He, their leader, their teacher, was the very Son of GOD, who, sent into the world from Heaven itself, had become the Son of man, that they, the sons of men, might become the sons of GOD.
- He had come to seek and to save that which was lost;
- He had claimed and had exercised the power to forgive sins, a task committed only to the GOD of heaven Himself.
- Nature had bowed to His will when, on a wild and tossing sea on a night with the fury of storm, He had spoken one word and that sea had become like the surface of a mirror.
- He, the leader of these twelve men, now seated about the table, with all eyes focused upon Him, had one day demonstrated His power over demons - again and again delivering frenzied, tormented sufferers from the power of Satan;
- He, the God-man, had spoken a word, and the dying servant of a centurion of the despised Roman army had instantly begun to amend.

Gentle, loving, patient, also fiery in His denunciation of the sins of the religious leaders of the day, dynamic in the display of His holy wrath, when He had, with a scourge made with His own hands, cleansed the temple of rubbish - both of things and of people, He had lived among men a life of absolute perfection.

Not one sin could be laid to His charge - not one accusation which could be established.

And now, for a moment, he looks sadly about the table at His little school of men - men who, in only a few weeks will begin their work of turning the world upside down.

Men - who, soon, will suffer stripes and imprisonment, and who as the years have rolled by, tradition claims, will lay down their lives because of Him:

- Matthew to die as a martyr in Ethiopia,
- John to be tossed into a cauldron of boiling oil at Rome, and then, escaping death, shall later die a natural death at Ephesus in Asia;
- James the Great to lay his head upon the executioner's block in Jerusalem;
- James the Less to be thrown from the pinnacle or a wing of the temple and, later, be beset with a fuller's club and be beaten to death;
- Philip to be hanged up against a pillar at Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia;
- Bartholomew to be flayed alive by the command of a barbarous king - his skin torn inch by inch from his body by cruel hands;
- Andrew there, silent, soul winning Andrew, to be bound to an X-shaped cross and to hang for days, preaching to everyone who witnesses his sufferings, until at last he, too, moves on into the presence of GOD;
- Thomas to be run through with a lance, near Malipar, in the East Indies;
- Jude (not Judas Iscariot) to be shot to death with arrows;
- Simon (Zelotes), crucified in Persia;
- Peter, to be crucified head-down, disclaiming the right to be crucified upright, as would be his Lord.

Eleven men . . . to some day die as martyrs, their blood to be the seed from which ten thousand times ten thousand Christians shall spring up in every nation of the world these eleven.

Ah, but there is another, sitting there, who will also die - a strange and shameful death, who, even at that moment held in his hand under the table the general purse containing the money of the little school.

For a moment, a sad expression is etched upon the face of the "**Son of God - Son of Man**," mirroring the troubled waters of His inner spirit. All eyes are fixed upon Him. Only a few moments before, He had risen from the table, and had taught them by object-lesson - in an acted-out parable, the secret of cleansing from sin.

Girded with a towel, a basin of water carried from man to man, he had washed each of their feet. If He did not wash them, He said, they could have no part with him. There was no forgiveness of sin except through Him - no salvation, no heaven . . .

Listen. Listen. Do you hear Him speaking? "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, One of you**" - one of the twelve, "**shall betray Me.**"

A tense hush sweeps over the room, dishes and eating utensils are silent, faces are blanched, nerves are taut with emotion, eyes move furtively from one to another - Peter to James, John to Matthew, Andrew to Simon Peter, to Philip, each searching perhaps to read the black truth in the guilty man's eyes, each to disclaim to his friends that he shall be guilty.

For a moment, the atmosphere in the upstairs room must have been electric with amazement and fear - **Is it I? . . . Is it I? . . . Is it I? . . .** Will I betray my Lord? . . .

It was then that Simon Peter, spokesman for the bewildered disciples of the Lord, looked across the table to where nineteen-year-old John was resting in a semi-reclining position, his head- pillowed on the Master's breast. But now, even loquacious Peter is silent, his lips sealed by the awful prophecy. Tragedy hangs like an avalanche over them all.

Quickly, then, this rugged converted fisherman motions to his former companion in the fishing business - John, and in the gesture, indicates, "You ask him, John. Ask him "Who is it?"

And he then, lying on JESUS' breast, saith unto Him, "**Who is it?**"

And the Lord answered, "**He it is to whom I give the sop, when I have dipped.**"

And then, a hand reaches out toward the common dish, in that hand a bit of broken bread - symbol of the bread that was himself, soon to be broken upon the cross. The bread quickly absorbs like a sponge the tasty liquid of which they have all eaten earlier, and then, that hand, soon to be pierced by nails, extends the sop toward the lips of Judas Iscariot - Judas the financier, Judas the treasurer, Judas the lover of money, more than of GOD - it is a last offer of friendship, a parting gesture of friendship . . . saying in the act, "I - I'm sorry, Judas -."

Suddenly, then, the face of Judas turns to stone, blackness enters his spirit. There is a rustle of garments, as he swings back from the table, stands, looks for a moment round the little circle of disciples -

The Lord speaks: "**That thou doest, Judas, do quickly . . .**"

And now, this wretched, money-worshipping creature, moves hurriedly across the room to the door, and out onto the stairs. The sound of his retreating footsteps is heard going down going down . . . DOWN . . . Out into the night Carrying the blackest of night within himself . . .

And in the room now are only the eleven, who someday will die at the hands of others -all but John to be martyrs - and yonder, slinking out across the lawn, under the golden stars, the glitter of other gold blinding him, the betrayer hurries . . .

Gone, - alone now with His eleven pupils the Master sees before Him soon the cross, seeing the glory on the other side of the cross - seeing it through the wounds of Calvary, announces,

"NOW IS THE SON OF MAN GLORIFIED, NOW GOD IS GLORIFIED IN HIM . . ."

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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