LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 26 (Part 4) :57-75

The Trial of Jesus

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Verse 57 is where we're picking up the story. It says, Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders had gathered. Stop there for just a moment. It is not yet sunrise. All of the things that we have been studying about in the previous weeks all took place for the most part during the nighttime.

Night has fallen and it is not yet the light of day. You have to remember, in the Jewish reckoning of time, a new day doesn't begin until the sun peaks over the horizon. It's still yesterday, which is a little bit strange for you and I because we pattern things after that midnight hour and we know that that begins a new day. So this is still the day before. By the way, that's the reason why people get so messed up in figuring out that Jesus was in the tomb for three days.

They're like, wait a minute. That doesn't compute. Well, it doesn't compute according to your reckoning of time, but the Jewish reckoning of time, which was from sunrise to sunset, was a day. That's a whole different reckoning and when you do it that way, it all works out. Anyway, so it is still dark and the reason that I'm bringing it up to you is because the Jews were forbidden from holding a trial of this kind during the nighttime hours.

This is something that should not have been happening and yet it was anyway. There were actually a lot of rules, an incredible amount of rules, were I to cite them all, that the Jews broke in bringing Jesus to trial at the time that he did and bringing it to fruition the way that they did. There was another rule that said that during a feast time, you could try a case but you could not decide the case until after the feast period was over. They tried Jesus during the nighttime. They came to a conclusion during the feast of Passover.

They just broke all kinds of rules related to things that were given in the word of God. You can tell just how concerned they were. They had all the outside appearance of being concerned about God but when it came right down to it, they broke rules right and left. And it says in verse 58, and this is an important

statement here, and Peter was following him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest and going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end. Peter wanted to see how this thing was going to turn out but so he followed at a distance and then came into the courtyard and just kind of took a seat.

There's a crowd there. He's trying to stay as much as he can unnoticed. Now, in these first two verses that you and I are looking at here today, in verse 57 and verse 58, Matthew has established for us the two characters that we're going to be looking at here in the remainder of Matthew chapter 26. We're going to be talking about Jesus and his trial and we're going to be talking about Peter and his trial but they're different trials. One is the judicial proceeding, that which Jesus is involved with.

Peter is also going to be going through a trial but it's a trial of a different sort. It has nothing to do with judicial proceedings of men. It has everything to do with a trial of character, a trial of devotion, a trial of honesty and sincerity. His faith is going to be tried. His life is going to be on trial and we're going to get into those things as we go on.

Verse 59, first we deal with the trial of Jesus. Now, the chief priests and the whole council were told we're seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death. We know what they wanted. And then this raised the bar of the testimony that they were going to be seeking. They couldn't just look for testimony of somebody saying, yeah, he said such and such.

It had to be worthy of death. That's why it goes on here to say in verse 60, but they found none though many false witnesses came forward. People came forward to falsely testify but either there were two problems, either the people didn't agree, the testimony of these individuals didn't agree. And remember, they had to have testimony that agreed from two or three witnesses or they couldn't use it. I frankly like that little tidbit of jurisprudence.

I really do. I think that that's a good thing to do. I don't like trials where it's one man's word against another man. I mean, then...and I understand that in civil trials here in the United States of America, they can decide a case based on that. And the jury is usually...if there is a jury, then they are to make a ruling based on, you know, the preponderance of evidence or who they think is just telling the truth, you know.

And it becomes a true judgment call on the case of a jury. And I don't know if you've ever sat on a civil trial and been forced to do that. I've actually been on jury duty several times, but they've always been something other than civil trials. And so, it wasn't that kind of an issue. And it's different when it's a different kind of an offense other than civil, there needs to be a greater weight of evidence that essentially leaves you without doubt.

And I really like that. But even then, this whole idea that God factored into the justice system of Israel was that, you know, listen, if one man says one thing and another man says another, that's not good enough, you know. Or if one person comes up and makes an accusation against you and tries to take that to court, that's not good enough. That's just not good enough because it's his word against yours. And who's to say that, you know, this guy hasn't decided to lie, you know?

So, when it says many false witnesses came forward, either they didn't agree with themselves or it wasn't worthy of death. And so, and it finally, it goes on to say at the very end of verse 60, at last two came forward, and then in verse 61, and said, this man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God to rebuild it in three days. Now, stop there. Again, this isn't a capital crime. Had Jesus actually said this, which, by the way, this is untrue.

This is a misinterpretation of what Jesus said. Had he actually gone around in a boastful sort of a way and said, well, I can destroy the...I'll destroy it and then raise it up again in three days. It would have been a stupid claim, but it wouldn't have been punishable by death. I mean, it's still a ridiculous sort of a notion. So, what did the people actually hear?

Well, it's actually recorded in John's gospel. Let me put this one up on the screen for you. John chapter 2. So, the Jews said to him, what sign do you show us for doing these things? And Jesus answered them, destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.

And the Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. Maybe you remember even the event that took place when this was said. Jesus went in and cleared the temple courts of those who were buying and selling, and the religious leaders came to him and said, by what authority or what sign would you give us to show you have the authority essentially to do this?

And Jesus said, great, you want a sign? Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days. That's what he said. He didn't say, I will destroy the temple. He said, if you destroy this temple, I will raise it again in three days.

So again, hardly a charge worthy of sentencing a man to death. I mean, you're not going to go to Pilate and say, this guy said that he was going to destroy the temple and raise it in three days. I mean, Pilate would have thrown that out so fast. You know, one thing you got to appreciate about the Romans, their

system of justice was pretty good. I mean, our system of justice is largely patterned upon Roman rule and the whole kind of system that they came up with.

And so, they know that they got to find something more weighty than this. And, of course, what the Jews and the Romans consider weighty and reason for punishment by death are two different things, but you can kind of tell that the high priest is, like, tired of the whole process at this point. And so, it says in verse 62, if you look in your Bible there, it says, and the high priest stood up and said, have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent and he had every reason or right to do so.

These people, you know, first of all, the whole trial was a sham. And second of all, they're bringing up all these false witnesses that are making all these false claims, and you can tell that the high priest is just, he's had it. And in the middle of verse 63, it says, and the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God. I want you to stop there, people, just for a minute because I want you to think about that question. Are you the Christ, the son of the living God?

Now, there's a question worthy of answer. All this other stuff that has paraded in front of him up to this point has been nonsense. it has been just flat out wrong. But you know, when somebody asks this kind of a question, they're gonna get an answer. You know?

Are you who you say you are? Even though this man doesn't want the answer, he's still gonna get it. Are you the Christ, the Son of God? And by the way, this is a side point, just tuck this one away. But I want you to notice that the high priest asked him, not just, are you the Messiah?

He asked you, are you the Son of God? Today, largely Jews will claim that they as a people never ever expected the Messiah to have any role of deity or any position of deity ever. It was, Messiah was only ever considered or believed to be just an anointed man. But this question here kind of betrays that current belief. Because the high priest doesn't just say, are you the Messiah?

He says, are you the Son of God? And he lumps them together. Are you the Christ and the Son of God? And people, please understand that the Son, to say someone is the Son of God, for him to say that he is the unique Son of God, please understand the question. He's asking, are you equal with God?

I don't care who knocks at your door and tells you otherwise. To say that someone is the Son of God means that they are equal to God. We've gotten this weird intellectual shift in our brains that somehow made room for the idea that a son could be less than the father. It's ridiculous. Even our justice system here in the United States recognizes that a son has equal rights of a father.

And the punishment for taking a life between a father and a son is exactly the same. And that's what tells you, when a father has a son, that child is no less human than the father. In the same way, when God begets a son, he is God. You need to understand that. The Son of God must be equal to the father.

It can't be anything other than that. It's not possible, okay? So wherever you might have come from, or whoever might have indoctrinated you with any belief to the opposite, or to the contrary, it's just not true. And the Jews understood it. Don't think they didn't.

And you'll notice that after Jesus's next comment, what they charge him with tells you what they believed about the term Son of God, all right? So look what it goes on. The high priest says, "'I adjure you to tell me,' and verse 64, Jesus said to him, "'You have said so.'" And that's another way of saying, you know, you said it, it's true. And look what he goes on to say. "'But I tell you, from now on, "'you will see the Son of Man "'seated at the right hand of power.'" And the right hand is always a signifying element of power.

Right hand means power, okay? Sorry if you're a lefty. Right hand means power. When anybody would say, "'He's the son of my right hand,' "'it would mean he's the son of my strength.'" So to be at the right hand means to be at power. Jesus, please understand what Jesus is saying here.

"'You will see the Son of Man "'seated at the right hand of power of Almighty God.'" Okay, that's why this is such a bombshell, you know, sort of a statement. He says, "'I tell you, from now on, "'you will see the Son of Man "'seated at the right hand of power "'and coming on the clouds of heaven.'" In other words, what Jesus is saying, in essence, is I am the Christ. I am the Son of God, as you have said. My glory may, in fact, be veiled as I stand before you in this human body, but make no mistake about it, I will return, and one day the tables shall be turned and you will sit on the other end of God's justice, and I will be that judge, and I will be seated at the right hand of the glory and the power of God, and you will see me come on the clouds of heaven. Bombshell.

I mean, he's dropped a bomb. He dropped a nuclear bomb in that room, all right, from a doctrinal standpoint. He just said, I am God, okay? Make no mistake. Oh, these people, these people who, Jesus never, ever claimed to be God.

Really? Have you, do you really want to say that? Is that really the claim you want to make? Okay, let's go to Matthew chapter 26. Can you imagine any other man saying, you will see me seated at the right hand of the authority and power of God coming on the clouds of heaven, and I will be the judge.

We'd put that person in a little padded room with those coats that tie in the back. That's, you know, and that's where they would, it's insane for anyone to say such a thing, or it's blasphemy. And what did they think it was? Look at verse 65. Then the high priest tore his robes, by the way.

That was forbidden. The high priest, according to Leviticus, I believe it's chapter 22, was not to rend his garment ever, ever for grief. Yet he did. He tore his robes. It was a sign of grief.

And look what he said. He has uttered blasphemy. What further witness do we need? You have now heard him, or heard his blasphemy. Why did they charge him with blasphemy?

Because Jesus is saying what no human being could say, right? That's why. That's what's blasphemous about it. He is making a statement that no human being could possibly say unless they were insane. It can't be true.

It's blasphemy because he's claiming to be God. He's claiming to be equal with God. Don't you remember, he would call himself the Son of God, and in other places in the Gospels, you can read where, you know, they picked up stones to stone him, and Jesus said, for which works that I do do you now stone me? And he said, we don't stone you because of those. We stone you because you claim to be God.

You say you are the Son of God, thus making yourself equal to God. That's, see, the Jews understood completely what Son of God meant. We've reinterpreted it in our own weird American strangeness, but they understood exactly what Jesus was saying when he referred to himself as the unique Son of God. It was, if it's not true, it's blasphemy. And you know what?

They're right. It is blasphemy if it isn't true. But in this case, it's true. So then he goes on in verse 66 to say, to ask the other men in the room, so what is your judgment? And they answered, well, he deserves death.

Now, keep in mind, that's only according to the Jews. They're going to have a hard time selling this to Pilate, who the only reason somebody would really deserve death in his mind is for treason, you know, or, you know, something worse, maybe some kind of heinous murder sort of a situation. But anyway, they think he deserves death. And then I want you to notice in verse 67 and 68, it says, then they spit in his face and struck him, and some slapped him. And we're told that they even put a cloak over his head, and they took turns hitting him and saying to him, prophesy to us, you Christ, who is it that struck you?

It's hard to believe as we read this, that these are the men who are responsible for Israel's spiritual life. You know what I mean? It's hard to actually wrap our minds around the kind of cruelty that this requires. I

mean, if you believe the guy is lying, then the only really other option is that he's deranged, I suppose. And if he's deranged, he deserves our pity, you know.

But a slap or a strike with a fist when he's blindfolded so that he can't see where it's coming, and then to mock him. I mean, who would do that? It's just, it blows me away. So there's what we get of this initial trial. And then we move on to Peter.

And we're told in verse 69, now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up to him and said, you also were with Jesus, the Galilean, but he denied it before them all saying, I don't even know what you mean. Denial number one. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again, he denied it with an oath. I do not know the man.

Denial number two. After a little while, the bystanders, came up and said to Peter, certainly you too are one of them for your accent betrays you. Peter spoke with a Galilean accent. And then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man. Denial number three.

And immediately the rooster crowed. We're just at that time where the sun is probably beginning to peak up over the horizon. And we're told that Peter remembered the saying of Jesus before the rooster crows. You will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.

And there's Peter. In all his glory. In all his. Oh, I don't know all his mistake or prone ridden. Ability.

Peter was quite a man. But it's not hard actually to trace in Peter's life. Some of the mistakes that led up to this failure and make no mistake about it. This was a failure in his life. But in fact, we can see most of them right here from this very chapter.

I'll put them up on the screen anyway. But one of Peter's first mistakes was the mistake of self-confidence. Do you remember when Jesus told the disciples that they would all fall away? At the last supper he said, you're all going to fall away. You're all going to desert me.

You remember what Peter said? What he said was, Peter answered him and he said, no, no, no, no. Though they all fall away. If everybody falls away, it's not going to affect me. They might.

I won't. And now, remember, this is, guys, this is Jesus talking and saying, you will all fall away. Can you imagine? This is the same, Peter is the same man who confessed to Jesus and said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. And yet, when Jesus speaks something, Peter says, no, that's not right.

Do you understand the disconnect between those two things? It reveals something about Peter and it reveals something. Well, it obviously reveals the kind of haughty self-confidence that he possessed, but it also reveals something else that is important for you and I to see, which I think we exercise in our own lives all the time. And that is this kind of this willingness to hear the Word of God and then disbelieve it. We hear it, but we don't believe it.

Jesus says, this very night, you will all fall away. And Peter goes, no, that's wrong, right? And we think, oh, Peter, Peter, you dopehead, what is your problem? And we do it every day. God says, I love you with an everlasting love, and we go, no.

And God says, I will work all things together for good to those who love me and are called according to my purpose, and we go, no. God says, trust in me with all of your heart, leaning not upon your own understanding, and I will direct your paths, and we go, no, you won't. And it is God who said it. And we look him in the eye, and we say, that's wrong. And it is the same pig-headed human arrogance that causes us to do what Peter did, to look God in the eye and say, that's wrong.

Where in the world does that come from? It comes from this perverted sense of our own personal knowledge and self-confidence that says, I know better. Experience tells me differently, and I know better. I appreciate the fact that you're trying to encourage me, and we look at the promises of God as nothing more than a locker room pep talk that may or may not be true, depending. Gee, I sure hope it's true.

And our faith, instead of having faith as an absolute thing, becomes this wish-upon-a-star sort of a faith that says, gee, I sure hope God loves me. I sure hope God's going to work all things together for good in my life. I sure hope that he will direct my path. And we don't really believe it, but we hope it's true. Gee, I sure hope.

And then when something happens where God's promise is borne out to be true, we're blown away. We're like, you're not going to believe what God did. And we talk about testimonies of answered prayer as if it's like, this is incredible. And you know what they're saying? They're saying, get this, God's true to his word.

Who would have thought? That's what we're saying. We didn't believe him. We just didn't believe. We talk about, oh, boy, if our faith level was as high as our talk, wouldn't we be paragons of virtue and holiness?

But Peter's self-confidence is something that we can relate to. And he had it. I mean, you know, I'm not going to fall away. You're wrong, Lord. I'll prove it, right?

What was the next thing that led up to Peter's failure? The next thing was prayerlessness. Do you guys remember during the Gethsemane prayer time? They were told that Jesus came back to the disciples and he found them sleeping and he said to Peter, he said, so could you not watch with me one hour? And then he said, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. That's almost like a prophecy of what's going to happen or this whole denial thing, isn't it? It's like Jesus prophesied about it again because he already told Peter during the last supper, listen, you're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows, meaning before that first bit of sunlight probably peaks over the horizon, you will have already denied that you even know me. No, Lord, not me. And then later in the Garden of Gethsemane, guys sit here, pray, pray, I need you to pray.

He goes off, prays himself, comes back, finds them sleeping. Couldn't you guys pray for even an hour? And you'll notice that he says this, and he said to who? Peter. John and James were there too, but he said this to Peter.

Peter, couldn't you even pray for an hour? Listen, buddy, temptation is on the way, and if you're not prayed up, you're going to face plant when that temptation comes. Because listen, you are Mr. The spirit is willing. I mean, that's you.

That's a definition of Peter, isn't it? The spirit is willing. But, you know, Peter has another definition, and that is the flesh is weak. But see, Peter didn't know that. Peter was completely oblivious to the whole flesh is weak part.

He, you know, he saw himself as something other than what he really was. And that's kind of that whole self-confidence thing that, you know, we looked at at the first point. To see yourself as something other than what you are. Do you guys understand that when Jesus said to Peter here, when he said, listen, Pete, you need to understand something. I understand that you're willing, and I appreciate your willingness.

That's the spirit within you, and there's a willingness in your spirit that I really appreciate. I love, I love it. But you need to understand something about yourself, Peter. You are a weak man. Well, Peter didn't want to hear that.

Your spirit is greatly willing, but your flesh is incredibly weak. And it's like, Lord, come on. You're trying to bum me out here? Who is Jesus? He is the Word of God made flesh, is he not?

Right? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, later on in John's first chapter. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the Word of God.

What happened in Peter's life here? The Word of God spoke into his life and told him what he was really like, and Peter didn't want to hear it. Peter, you are a weak man. This very night, Peter, you will deny that you even know me. No, that's not me.

Later on, when he sees this first failure of Peter to even stay and pray, Peter, understand this. You are a willing man as it relates to your spirit and your desires to do right. But you need to also understand you are a very, very weak man when it comes to carrying things out. Peter's not listening. And because Peter isn't listening to the Word of God, he is going to have to see the reality of his own weakness borne out.

And that's what happens in the denial. But there's another element of what Peter did that night that kind of led to his failure, and I'm not going to put this one up on the screen. It's part of the verses that we read here today. Look again with me at verse 58. 58, just the first few words says, and Peter was following him at a distance.

Stop there. That's the third thing. We have self-confidence, we have prayerlessness, and we have Peter's position to Christ. He was following from a distance. People, can I just tell you something?

Whenever you follow Jesus from a distance, you're in for trouble. And do you know why we follow him at a distance? It's because we think it's dangerous to follow too close. And that's exactly what was going on with Peter. It was too dangerous to be too close to Jesus because he would have been clumped in, probably just hauled in, you know, that night, maybe with him or who knows?

Who knows what would have happened? So Peter decides that he needs to put a safe distance, a buffer between him and Jesus, because sometimes following Jesus is dangerous. And let me just reiterate that in the sense that when it comes to, in terms of what the world considers, it is unsafe to follow Jesus, okay? Just know that Jesus told you and I that, he said, listen, when they hate you, just remember this, they hated me first, right? He made it very clear to you and I that following him was going to be a dangerous proposition, but that's only as the world considers danger or as man considers danger.

Do you understand people that following close with Jesus? Had Peter decided that night, had there been a true buildup of strength in him where he followed close with Jesus through the whole night? And it wasn't going to happen. It wasn't to happen because Jesus had to do this all alone. I know that, I understand that.

But had he done that, he would have been safer than he was right here, following in the shadows. In fact, one of the other gospel accounts says that being cold, he warmed himself by the fire. Listen, whenever you follow Jesus at a distance and you warm yourself by the fires of the world, you are going to find problems cropping up in your life. And pretty soon compromise is the eventual result. And that's exactly what happened with Peter.

He compromised his very knowledge and connection, you know, to Jesus. Here's, but please understand something about what happened to Peter that night. It was absolutely necessary. It was absolutely necessary. Listen, Peter went out and wept bitterly and I'm sure you understand what that's all about.

But that was the most important cry that Peter probably ever had in his life. You know, big, husky, burly, sunburned fisherman probably didn't cry real often. But he went out after he realized the kind of a man he really was. And that's the point. When he looked into the reality of the word of God and he saw the man he really was, it broke him so much.

He wept bitterly. But people don't feel sorry for Peter because this is the this is that watershed event in his life that prepared him to be who he would be in the future. Peter desperately needed to come to terms with who he really was. A weak man who needed Jesus Christ 100 percent and who, apart from Christ, could do nothing. And don't you believe, Christians, that that same need lives within you and I to see ourselves in the light of God's word.

We pick up the Bible and sometimes we don't like what it says, just like Peter. It talks to you and I about us. It talks about our lives. It talks about our failures. It talks about our weaknesses.

And we're just kind of like, I don't want to think about that. I don't want to know. I'm going to I'm going to do something to distract my mind or whatever. I don't want to look at this. I don't think Peter wanted to look at this for the longest time, you know.

But but Jesus is slowly telling him, Peter, you need to understand the man that you are or you will never be the man that I created you to be. You have to understand, Peter, you're not a strong man. You're not a bold, courageous man. You are a coward. You are a weak man.

And apart from me, you can do nothing. Let me tell you something, Peter, there's going to come a day after you come to the revelation of who you really are, there's going to come a day when I'm going to fill you with my Holy Spirit and you're going to stand in front of these same people that arrested me and put

me to death. And you're going to say with the courage and the boldness that only comes through me, you crucified the Christ. And he is the son of God. And that'll be a new man that day.

But but the coming of that new man must go through this event right here where you shed the reality of who you are, the weakness and all of the despised things that you never, ever wanted to look at before. But I'm sorry, my son, I made you look at them because you had to. Had you gone on had gone on in the deception of who you believed yourself to be, you would never be my servant and be effective in the kingdom of God and Christians, may I just say to you that unless you and I peer into the revelation of God's word and see ourselves as we are, we will never be the people that God created us to be until we look into that word and see the conviction. That that word reflects back to us just this morning, I picked up my devotional and I read the page for today and I just. I was busted all over the place, I mean, just absolutely busted.

We've got to do that, you guys, we've got to be willing to to to let the word speak into our lives and tell us who we really are. So that God can begin to take then that empty, broken cup that makes up you and I say, all right, now I'm going to fill it with me, it was filled with you before. It was full, filled full of all kinds of braggadocious claims and self-confidence, but that's all been broken now, that's all been it's all been leaked out and now you are that vessel prepared for godly things and godliness and the work of the kingdom of God.