

"Battles of the Heart"

Throughout Scripture we're exposed to choices people make. They'll either follow their own will or the will of God. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today, we're exploring three battles of the heart.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures not only reveal the heart of God, they also help us to see ourselves. They help us understand the temptations and challenges we face, that they're not unique to us. The Scriptures do not shun revealing the good and evil found in our lives. They honestly reveal when people have done the right thing and when people have failed. Through the Word of God we can see the results of choices people make, some for blessing and some not. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

I want to tell the story of three battles of the heart. Three men, who went through a tremendous strain, discovered a lot about themselves. Battles of the heart teach us a lot about ourselves. These battles define what kind of person we are. They reveal our strengths and our weaknesses. They reveal our commitment to God and what is right or what we are willing to permit in our lives. They show us our priorities and what we truly value.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:20 to 21, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Where is your heart? What are your treasures? Romans 8:5 to 6 says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." You're making choices now that will affect your eternal destiny. Will you win or lose?

We offer this study free on battles of the heart. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org. We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Luke 22:31 to 34, and explore three battles of the heart.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 22 verses 31 to 34, and this event takes place, this discussion takes place on the night when Jesus of course was betrayed, the night before He was to be crucified. "'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.' But he said to Him, 'Lord, with You I'm ready to go both to prison and to death!' And He said, 'I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.'" Ah, one of the great battles of the heart. Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that You love us and that You care for us, and that You realize when we go through those difficult times. We pray Father that we may have faith and strength to endure the battles that face us in our lives. And now Father we pray that You'll bless us as we study, and help us always to do Your will and to love You. In Jesus name, Amen."

Battles of the heart come to all of us, tempting and testing us. The New Testament tells of three people who faced critical battles in their hearts over right and wrong. Now each of them faced the

consequences of their choices but each in a different way. These challenges of faith, morally all of us. How we respond to matters makes a difference. And so let's look closer at these three people.

First, we take a look at what Scripture tells us about the heart of Judas Iscariot. Judas had a problem with greed and money; he was in a position to use money that didn't belong to him, and since he carried the money box for Jesus and the disciples. Judas, got into the habit of pilfering money to meet his own desires. You'll remember that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, broke an alabaster vial of perfume, to anoint the feet of Jesus. Well this perfume was a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard. Mary anointed his feet and wiped His feet with her hair. Well the house was filled with fragrance.

John 12:4 to 8 says: But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

Well, Judas apparently had heard of the plot to kill Jesus. Matthew 26:14 to 16 says: Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. Luke 22: says that "Satan entered into Judas." When Jesus and the disciples were observing the Passover on the night before Jesus died, Matthew 26:20 to 25 says: Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

Later that night in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed Him. Matt. 26:47 to 50 says: While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He's the one; seize Him." Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

Later Judas regretted the great sin he committed. Matthew 27:3 to 5 says, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself!' And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself." The name Judas Iscariot will always be associated with betrayal and shame. And this ending is sad beyond measure.

The second person to face a battle of the heart that night was the Lord Jesus himself. Matthew 26:36 to 39 says: Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. And then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." Jesus is here accepting what He knows that He will be condemned. And He knows He's going to suffer humiliation, false charges, beatings, scourging, and crucifixion. He knows He will die a long,

agonizing death. There was indeed a great battle going on in his heart, do I save myself from death and fail my Father's purpose, or do I die an agonizing death and fulfill His will? Thankfully, His love for the Father led Him to do what was right. And His death blessed us all.

Hebrews 5:7 to 9 describes that night, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Because the Lord Jesus willingly offered His body as a sacrifice in obedience to His Father, we have hope in our obedience to Him.

The third person to face a battle of the heart that night is Simon Peter. The Lord Jesus said to Peter in Luke 22:31 to 34, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death." And Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny me three times that you know me." Well these four verses reveal a prediction, telling us of the battle of a heart.

Jesus had said to Peter, James and John, "The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak" in Matthew 26:41; and this is certainly true. We want to do what's right, we plan to do what is right, but circumstances can lead our fears and our flesh to battle against our best desires.

Matthew 26:69 to 74 tells the story of what Peter did: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I don't know what you're talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed.

Luke 22:61 says that the third denial took place in the Lord's presence, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Can you imagine how ashamed Peter felt when he realized how he had failed Jesus? Matthew 26:75 says, "And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and he wept bitterly." Have you ever wept bitterly over your sins? All Peter's boasting and good intentions didn't keep him from shaming himself in front of the Lord. Just as the Lord saw and heard Peter, the Lord also sees and hears us when we sin (Proverbs 15 verse 3).

Thankfully, this is not the end of the story. Peter did turn back and strengthened his brothers. When the women came and told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, Peter went with John to the empty tomb. They saw for themselves the grave clothes without a body. When Peter saw Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, he professed his love for Jesus three times. And on the day of Pentecost, Peter with the eleven boldly preached and served the Lord for the rest of his days. Peter faced a crisis of fear and temporarily lost, but he later gained his strength enough to endure all that came his way. Let's apply these battles to our lives.

Like Judas, some people fail God and decide life is all over. They believe they can never be saved, so they withdraw from God and die bitterly sad and alone. Judas regretted what he did, returned the thirty pieces of silver, but did not repent. Judas didn't face up to his failure and come back in repentance, asking for forgiveness. Instead he withdrew from God and took his own life.

I wish Judas could have realized how great the grace of God truly is. The chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16, "It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." I hope you know God stands ready to forgive you, when you turn to Him in obedience.

Like Jesus, some folks know what they have to do, as hard as it is, and decide to do it, because they love God, and they love others, and they're committed to doing what is right. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:8 to 11, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I've spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Keeping God's commandments brings joy not regret.

Like Peter, many grow afraid, deny the Lord by their actions, and then later weep bitterly when they have to face it. Peter faced his sin, but he was able to grow from it and bless the lives of others. He knew what it was like to be frightened by persecution, but he also understood the forgiveness that God gives to the penitent and the help He gives to the persecuted. 1 Peter 5:8 to 10 says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Let's pray together. "Father help us in our times of temptation, when we have battles within our heart to do the right thing and avoid giving in to our sins. Help us to love You and to love others always. In Jesus name, Amen."

There's likely a battle in your heart. We all face them. Don't give up on yourself if you fail. Everyone fails at some time or another. And many of us have failed often. We may even have developed a sinful habit that controls us. When you fail, recognize what you've done, be honest with yourself, admit what you've done, and repent. As long as you hold on to a sinful behavior, you'll have to live with a guilty conscience; and you won't like yourself. Like the prodigal, you won't feel worthy to be called the Father's son or daughter.

You can let your guilt overcome you, as Judas did; or you can learn from your mistakes and repent. You can turn back to God. Even slaves to sin can become servants of God! Romans 6:16 to 18 says, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, that you're slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

No matter what your past has been, you can change! Slaves of sin became slaves of God when they obeyed from the heart what God says. You can become a child of God. Believe with your heart Jesus Christ is God's son, repent and turn from sin to the Lord, confess your faith, and be baptized into Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 verse 38). You can have a new life and a good conscience. Obey the Lord today!

We hope our study of three battles of the heart has stirred you to consider your soul and your eternal destiny. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your

request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there is also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Now when you subscribe be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps us spread the program to other people. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program, let them know that you watch and that you care about the program and encourage them to watch as well. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.