

“Endless Love to the End”

(Part 4)

John 13.18–30

¹⁸I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’¹⁹From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

²¹When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”²²The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.²³There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.²⁴So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.”²⁵He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”²⁶Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.²⁷After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”²⁸Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.²⁹For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor.³⁰So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night. [NASB]

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I. Hearing

We begin this week in verses with which last week we ended. You see, you let me get away with something last week that this week I will not let you get away without. It is what ties last week to this week. In fact it ties together every week of all creation time... make that all eternity. I'll tell you what it is in a moment, but let me first tell you what today's verses reveal. They reveal the Troubled Teacher, Disconcerted Disciples, Embraced Betrayal, and Endless Love.

A. *Troubled Teacher*

1. *He is I AM (18–20)*

First, the Troubled Teacher. And there are two things to see. Firstly, what ties all creation and all eternity together? You'll find it in v19. “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I AM.” Once again, Jesus helps His disciples' unbelief. It is essential for His disciples to believe that he is I AM. As He said previously, ^{8.24}“Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.” Again, Jesus had said, ^{8.58}“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” As Paul declared, ^{Col1.17}“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Jesus is I AM. I AM is the name by which God called Himself in Exo3.14. Jesus is God. In a short time, His intimate friend will betray Him. Then the disciples will remember that Jesus told them it would happen, and they would know that only God could have told them this future.

Jesus is I AM. Jesus is God. What we saw last week is that you cannot serve without first being served by I AM. You cannot love without first being loved by I AM. And when you are loved by I AM, you will love as I AM has loved you. Jesus is I AM.

2. *He is troubled (21)*

Secondly, and perhaps surprisingly, He is troubled. Surprising, because He is I AM, and surprising because how very troubled He is. Daily we are rightly troubled when we see or hear of apparent injustices. Rulers with wicked agendas are voted or acquiesced into office. Rights of the powerless are trampled. The order of creation is discarded and the sanctity of marriage between man and woman is hatefully scorned. Truly these are troubling matters and troubling times.

It is comforting to know that I AM does not leave us alone to wallow in our trouble. He Himself came here to be troubled. We know, then, that He can present our troubledness to the Father as He intercedes for our comfort. It is a serious mistake to think that because He is God, troubling things we experience do not phase Him. Recall ch11 when Jesus saw Mary weeping after the death of her brother Lazarus. Jesus was “deeply moved with anger in spirit and was troubled.”³³

But here Jesus experiences a new intensity of trouble. ²¹“He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.’” Not only does He see in the sinful world rebellion and lawlessness against His Father. Not only is the holiness of God disobeyed and rejected. Something much more sinister is happening here. Here He is being given over to the enemy... by His intimate friend.

You may know the pain of an unkind word from your husband or wife. You may know the disorienting confusion of an altercation that makes you feel like enemies rather than lovers. You may know the horror and anguish of unfaithfulness. But what if, while under investigation from your government's thought police, your spouse united as one with your own flesh accepted money from them to turn you over to the enemy?

Jesus is, as the disciples acknowledged, the Teacher and Master. But they must come to know that He is I AM—He is God—and He came to be troubled... for them.

B. Disconcerted Disciples (22–25)

Second, having seen the troubled Teacher, we see *disconcerted disciples*. They ²²“began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.” “Perplexed about whom He spoke.” This was not just an idle wondering. In Luk24⁴ the women were not just gaily chatting about the surprise of the empty tomb. They were *perplexed*. In Gal4²⁰ Paul was not just a little peeved by his converts’ gullibility. He was *perplexed*. Nor in 2Co4⁸ was he just a little put out. He was afflicted in every way, but not crushed, *perplexed*, though not despairing.

Matthew says ^{Mt26.22}“Being *deeply grieved*, they each one began to say to Him, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’” This was not just a “whodunit” guessing game. I find it interesting that when we are afflicted with a headache, we automatically go into gyrations to figure out why, what caused this. “Must be the weather.” “Must be what I ate (or drank).” “Must be the tension at work.” As if knowing the cause could relieve the pain. As if investigating the second cause helps us avoid the First Cause.

How could the disciples imagine that it would be one of *them*! Yet they had seen enough now, not to discount the possibility that such vileness might actually be hiding in their own hearts.

C. Embraced Betrayal (26–30)

Troubled Teacher, disconcerted disciples, and third, *embraced betrayal*. It is one of the disciples who will betray Him, for the Scripture must be fulfilled, “He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.” But when in v18 Jesus quoted Ps41, He also said, “I know the ones I have chosen.” Then in v26 Jesus tells John, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.’ So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas.”

Jesus was very deliberate. He knew that He must be given over to the enemy in order to defeat the enemy and deliver His bride. He knew that as a Substitute He must suffer the deepest distress of any He might save... and what greater distress in this world than to be betrayed. It appears that Jesus quietly embraced His betrayal, for the other disciples apparently did not hear the clue He gave to John.

Even in embracing His betrayal, Jesus offered Judas one last opportunity to repent and be reconciled. Judas instead eats and drinks judgment to himself as he receives the dipped morsel from Jesus. Judas did not discern the Person of Christ rightly. Rather than allowing himself to be taken captive by Jesus, Judas gives himself to be possessed by Satan.

Jesus embraced His betrayal, and told Judas to go do it quickly. The other disciples were still perplexed, but Jesus was in control. The time for pitying Judas has come to an end. He went out and it was night. Judas was swallowed up by darkness, for he loved darkness rather than the light. To Judas the ointment with which Mary anointed Jesus was worth 300 pieces of silver, but Jesus was only worth 30.

Jesus embraced His betrayal. ^{Mt26.24}“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.” Horrifying irony! Elsewhere Jesus says it would be better to have a heavy millstone tied around your neck and drowned in the depth of the sea than to lead a believer into sin. ^{Mt18.6} But here... better never even to have been conceived?!

We can understand being drowned and we can understand how that would be better than leading a believer into sin. But we who exist cannot possibly conceive of nonexistence. It is

entirely outside of our experience. So great, then is the horror of betraying the Son of Man, that we cannot even conceive of it. Such horror our Savior embraced to save you and me.

D. Endless Love (1–30)

Troubled Teacher, disconcerted disciples, embraced betrayal. We recall from v1, “...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” Jesus has served the disciples in the lowliest way. He has washed their feet. He has freely loved them. And now He divulges how His disciples are going to serve Him. Judas will betray Him and Peter will deny Him.^{13,38} Jesus loved Judas until Judas irredeemably loved Satan. Jesus loved Peter through Peter’s redeemable denial. Peter and the other disciples were “His own.” Jesus embraced even betrayal by one who was not His own, and in this way Jesus loved His own to the end. Which is forever and endless.

E. Doctrine

The troubled Teacher Who is I AM embraced betrayal with endless love.

II. Investigating

Before we consider how we might receive this doctrine, let us ponder two evident truths of our Savior. One, I AM can be troubled; and two, I AM cannot be tricked.

A. I AM can be troubled

One, *I AM can be troubled*. This is not news to us, as we found in ch11 when He saw Mary weeping. I think it may have been news to Judas, however. He did not expect a great Deliverer should be one who could be troubled. He had great power at His hands. He could do great miracles. When He spoke people listened. Surely overthrowing the Roman oppression would not be a troublesome matter for this promised deliverer.

Did Judas forget his history? Did Judas forget that great King David—the model and type of the Promised One—on occasion found himself very troubled? ^{Ps6.2}“Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled. ³My soul also is greatly troubled; but You, O LORD—how long?” ^{Ps22.14}“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within me.”

No, clearly if Jesus had come to overthrow the Roman oppression, it would have been no trouble at all. When Elisha’s servant feared the Aramean cavalry, ^{2Ki6.17}“Elisha prayed and said, ‘O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the LORD opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” When Peter drew his sword to fight the whole army in Gethsemane, Jesus told him to put it away, ^{Mt26.53}“Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”

There is an enemy far more formidable than Iran or North Korea or Rome or Mohammad. That enemy is death itself. With armies, a nation might defeat nations. But with all the armies, all the sciences, and all the politics, we can never defeat death. “In the day you eat from it you shall surely die.”^{Gn2.17} In the first man Adam we have all eaten of it and we must surely die. It is written. The wages of sin is death.

But Jesus did not come merely to overthrow Roman oppression. He came to overthrow death. And to overthrow death, He Himself must die... and arise from the dead. How unthinkable must death be for the eternal living God! ^{Jn12.27}“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

In fact, because He is Holy God—and because He is holy human in no way desensitized by sin—His experience of being troubled is unimaginably more acute than ever ours is. When you are troubled, then, you know that I AM understands.

B. I AM cannot be tricked

I AM can be troubled. But two, I AM can never be tricked. Judas went out into the darkness thinking He could trick I AM. He knew where I AM would go with the disciples. All he had to do was lead the Pharisees and the soldiers to Gethsemane and the trick would play itself out with a kiss. Of course Judas was fooling himself. Before Judas was born, yes before the universe was created, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit communed in perfect agreement that the Son must be betrayed. Given over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put to death.

In this very plan He should be raised up again, putting an end to the agony of death, for it was impossible for Him to be held in death's power.^{act2.23f} I AM can be troubled, but I AM cannot be tricked. Man and woman could be tricked, and were. They were tricked into thinking that they needed something other than the Word of God in order to be happy. They were tricked into believing disobedience to the Word would make them more happy and complete than the Word Himself.

I AM can never be so tricked. Doing the will of His Father was the food that satisfied Him with supreme happiness. ^{Jn4.34}“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” The will and the work of Him who sent Jesus, was to save all His chosen ones from death and eternity in the possession of Satan who possessed Judas. I AM can never be tricked out of accomplishing the will of the Father who sent Him to save you and me.

Instead, Satan was supremely tricked by his own trick. We have a liberty for laughter in such glorious wisdom of God.

III. Receiving

The troubled Teacher Who is I AM embraced betrayal with endless love. With this in mind, let us consider the trickery and trouble we may experience. Ordinarily we would not view trickery and trouble as pleasant. But on account of our Teacher and Lord we can be sure that trickery and trouble will not overcome us.

A. Trickery

Firstly, Jesus was betrayed—given over to the enemy—so you never will be. You may be abandoned by friend. You may be abandoned by lover. Unthinkable as it may be, you may be given over to the enemy by a lover. George Orwell in his book *1984* painted the poignant betrayal orchestrated by a repugnant government. Winston Smith and Julia together tried to rebel against the dehumanizing control of Big Brother. But they were out-tricked in the maze of Newspeak and Doublethink. Not surprising in a system where “The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation.”

Winston and Julia were not as strong as they thought they were. They mutually betrayed one another under the mind-and-heart-crushing torment of fear. They each gave the other over to the enemy in order to save their own souls. All hope for love and meaningfulness was snuffed out.

In the non-fiction world in which we live, however, we are born given over. We are born betrayed. Tricked and betrayed. Tricked—deceived—in our first mother Eve, and betrayed—given over—in our father the first Adam. He willingly gave us over to the ruler of this world when he willingly sinned against the Ruler of heaven and earth.

But now the second Adam, Jesus, has come to be betrayed—given over—in your place. Something in us likes to be tricked... but the Spirit of Christ in us rejoices in our liberty from such betrayal. Heartbreaking beauty will trick you; Jesus never will. Broken vows will trick you; Jesus never will. Fancy gadgets will trick you; Jesus never will. Job security will trick you; Jesus never will. Children’s good behavior may trick you; Jesus never will.

Our real, non-fiction world is full of things that will trick you into thinking they will make you happy... all is fiction. Jesus is Truth, and He will never trick you. When you receive His assurance that He will never trick you, then and only then will you be free to serve and love others without trickery up your sleeve... or up your heart.

B. Trouble

Secondly, Jesus’ trouble because of betrayal frees you from yours. Peter writes in his letter, ^{1Pe3.14}“Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, ¹⁵but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

Yes, we will be troubled in this life. But you who trust in Jesus cannot be given over to the devil. You must not fear what those who are without Christ fear. They fear betrayal by friends, but Jesus gave Himself over so that He might be closer to you than a brother.^{Pro18.24} They fear the judgment of God, but Jesus gave Himself over to God’s judgment in your place. They fear the bitter hatred and utter loneliness that will fill every moment of all eternity in the rule of darkness. But Jesus gave Himself over to that unthinkable trouble for you, so that you might be filled with joy inexpressible through all eternity in the Kingdom of light and of life.

Are you free from such trickery and trouble? Are you free to cry for the trickery to which your sins have subjected other souls? Are you free to weep for the trouble you have brought upon other souls? Are you forgiven by Him who took your trouble into His own soul? Have you sought forgiveness from those whom your unfaithfulness has crushed? Have you been washed and healed by Him who took upon Himself the defilement into which the first Adam betrayed you?

Yes, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Embrace the grace then, which the One who embraced your betrayal offers freely to you. Embrace Him today, tomorrow, and every day for all eternity. You will never go out and find it to be night. In Him, you will forever be in the light.