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## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PETER AND JUDAS**

At the end of Jesus Christ's ministry two of His twelve apostles each did something that was seriously wrong. Both their actions were predicted by Jesus Christ hours before those actions took place.

**Judas betrayed Jesus Christ for a sum of money. And Jesus Christ predicted that Judas would therefore end up in the lake of fire.**

**Peter, a few hours after Judas had betrayed Jesus Christ, then denied Jesus Christ three times, each time more emphatically. These three denials Jesus Christ also predicted. And in spite of those denials Peter will be in God's Kingdom, ruling over one of the tribes of Israel.**

While both actions were wrong, the outcomes were diametrically opposite. How can that be? One man will be in God's Kingdom, and the other man's existence will be permanently erased in the lake of fire.

Let's also keep in mind that **both men**, when they committed their respective actions, **were unconverted**. They did not have God's spirit, and anybody and everybody who does not have God's spirit is unconverted. So Peter and Judas were both unconverted when these things happened.

Let's look at the circumstances in both cases.

### **JUDAS BETRAYING JESUS CHRIST**

At one point during His ministry Jesus Christ stated a serious warning for the man who would betray him. At that point in time the warning was generalized and Judas was not in any way identified, even though at that time Jesus Christ Himself already knew that Judas would end up betraying Him (see John 6:64). Here is what Jesus Christ said when He gave this warning:

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but **woe to that man by whom the offence comes**. (Matthew 18:7)

"The offence", singular, is a reference to one man betraying Jesus Christ. "Woe to that man" is a reference to the serious penalty God would impose for that "offence".

Satan is the one who inspired Judas to betray Jesus Christ. But at that earlier point in time Judas was not really Satan's first choice for that job. At that point during Jesus Christ's ministry Satan's first choice for doing the betraying was still the Apostle Peter. That is something Jesus Christ pointed out at a later time.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat**: (Luke 22:31)

From the start of Jesus Christ's ministry Satan had been looking for the man he could use to betray Christ. Whenever he can do so, Satan seeks to influence **the highest ranked person** possible to become the traitor and to do Satan's dirty work. Now throughout Christ's ministry Peter was clearly the

leader amongst the apostles. And so Peter had always been Satan's first choice for the job of betraying Christ. Have you ever noticed how often top aides end up becoming the traitors to those over them? Those cases are examples of Satan at work.

Now what do you mean ... "Satan has desired to have you"? For what? To do what? Satan had desired to have Peter **to be the traitor**. That is what Jesus Christ was pointing out with this statement.

It was only when that didn't work out, and when time was running out for Satan, that Satan then chose Judas instead. But earlier in Christ's ministry, at the time of Matthew 18:7, Judas had not been the focus of Satan's attention. On the other hand, Jesus Christ Himself, from very early in His association with all of His twelve apostles, knew that Judas would end up being the traitor. But earlier in His ministry Christ did not say anything to identify Judas.

Now by the end of Jesus Christ's ministry Satan had settled on Judas. This is something Jesus Christ knew and anticipated. So Judas then went to the Jewish leaders and agreed to betray Jesus Christ.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said *unto them*, **What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?** And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14-15)

This agreement Judas had made earlier in the day. Later that day, after sunset when the apostles were eating the Passover with Jesus Christ, Christ issued another warning.

And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, **One of you** who eats with me **shall betray me**. (Mark 14:18)

The Son of man indeed goes as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! **good were it for that man if he had never been born**. (Mark 14:21)

Question: Under what circumstances could it possibly be "good" for any human being to never have been born? Let's keep in mind that it is God's desire to give immortal life to all human beings who meet God's conditions. There is one situation, and one only, where it would be better for a person to never have been born. Do you know what that one situation is?

It is only when it is **guaranteed with absolute certainty** that a person will be burned up in the lake of fire, that then it would have been better for that person to never have been born in the first place. But as long as there is even the slightest glimmer of hope, that a person could perhaps still end up being given immortal life by God, so long it is never better to not have been born in the first place.

For every single human being who eventually ends up in the lake of fire **it really would have been better if those people had never been born**. But that is not true for anyone who eventually ends up in the Family of God.

So at His last Passover observance Jesus Christ, for all practical purposes, stated categorically that the man who would betray Him would end up in the lake of fire.

Then Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, **you have said (it)**. (Matthew 26:25)

This was hours after Judas had already, of his own volition, agreed to betray Jesus Christ for money. So **Judas knew that Jesus Christ knew** that he was going to betray Christ a short while later. The fact that he still voluntarily went back to the priests anyway, to fulfill his promise to betray Christ, reveals a

significant aspect of **the character of Judas**.

What Judas did was clearly premeditated and very deliberate. Judas was not acting on some sudden impulse of greed.

So the situation was as follows:

1) **Judas planned** to do something that was wrong, even as we ourselves might sometimes contemplate doing something that is clearly wrong. What Judas did and what we might perhaps contemplate doing (e.g. I am aware of men who planned in advance to go out and commit adultery, even when their wives knew what their husbands were planning to do, etc.) are completely different things. But **the consequences are the same**.

2) Judas then received **a stern warning** from Jesus Christ. That also frequently happens with us when we contemplate doing something wrong ... that in some way we are warned to not do what we are thinking of doing.

A powerful example for this point can be seen in the life of David, before he became king. David had very respectfully asked Nabal to give him some food supplies. When Nabal then insulted David, David totally lost his cool (i.e. he succumbed to a temptation from Satan) and he planned to kill every single male in Nabal's household (see 1 Samuel 25:22). **That would have been cold-blooded murder!** Apart from Nabal himself, none of those men or boys in his household had done anything to David. Cold-blooded murder would have been an extremely serious sin on David's record, and it might have disqualified him before God from ever becoming king?

So **God sent Abigail** to warn David against committing this sin. Abigail clearly said that "... the LORD has withheld you from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging yourself with your own hand" (see 1 Samuel 25:26). And David accepted Abigail's advice. He did **not** carry out his sinful intentions. Many other people in the same situation would not have heeded Abigail's advice, and carried out their original intentions ... and sinned grievously in the process.

David's response to the advice to not commit murder was:

And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* **the LORD God of Israel, who sent you** this day to meet me: And blessed *be* **your advice**, and blessed *be* you, who have kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand. For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, except you had hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any male. (1 Samuel 25:32-34)

So where **David listened** to the warning he received from Abigail, **Judas did not listen** to the warning Jesus Christ had given him.

3) There was still time for Judas to back out of his intention to betray Jesus Christ, even as there was time for David to back out of becoming a murderer. Consider that usually, when we are tempted, you and I also still have time to not carry out our wrong intentions.

4) While Judas only later said "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (see Matthew 27:4), **Judas in fact knew all along** that he was planning to betray a totally innocent person! He knew all along that what he was doing was wrong before God. Judas did not face any external pressure to betray Jesus Christ ... no other person forced him to do the betraying.

**The only pressure Judas faced was internal! The only pressure Judas faced came from Satan**

**pressuring his mind to think selfishly. Judas's motivation to betray Christ was totally selfish! He was not acting out of fear for anyone. He didn't even fear Jesus Christ's warnings about the second death! When he betrayed Jesus Christ, Judas was not scared of what anyone might do to him, or what anyone might think of him.**

He had **the same frame of mind** as many of the people at the end of the millennium will have, when Satan is set free for a short time (Revelation 20:7). They will know in advance that any rebellion against Jesus Christ will automatically reap the second death. But tens of millions, if not even hundreds of millions of people will follow Satan anyway ... their number will be "as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8). They know that their punishment is inevitable, even as any members of God's Church today know that, if we plan to go out to sin, **our punishment will be inevitable**. God will simply not let us get away with stealing or with committing adultery, etc.

Judas did not back out of his clearly perverse intention to betray Jesus Christ for money.

5) This means that Judas had **a perverse character**, one that clearly lacked the fear of God. He had witnessed dozens of miracles during Jesus Christ's ministry. But that still didn't cause him to fear to betray Jesus Christ, let alone treat Jesus Christ with genuine respect and with reverence.

Likewise, when we are specifically warned to not do something, if we then methodically plan to do that something anyway, then that is evidence that our character is perverse. The definition for "a perverse character" is: **a character that God Almighty cannot work with!** And if we don't heed God's warnings, then God cannot work with us. And that then makes us perverse.

6) Now Judas knew in advance what he was going to do. And **Judas also knew that Jesus Christ knew** what he (Judas) was going to do. So the betrayal by Judas was a brazen act of disregard for the power of God! It is not as if Judas thought that he could somehow deceive Jesus Christ into not realizing what Judas was doing. No, Judas knew full well that Jesus Christ understood that Judas was going out to betray Him.

It reminds me of cases where one spouse in a marriage was planning to do something wrong. And that guilty spouse knew that the innocent spouse clearly understood what the guilty spouse was planning to do. But the guilty spouse went ahead and did the wrong anyway ... at times ruining both their lives in the process.

7) So when Judas then returned with the mob at his heels, and greeted Jesus Christ with a kiss (see Matthew 26:49), that was **total hypocrisy!**

And as soon as he was come, he goes straightway to him, and says, Master, master; and kissed him. (Mark 14:45)

The hypocrisy involved here is absolutely staggering! Judas could just have pointed a finger at Jesus Christ and said "that's Him". But instead he pretended to come as a friend. **Hypocrisy is probably Satan's most outstanding character attribute**, and it is something that God absolutely hates. Employing hypocrisy to betray Jesus Christ was a way of making the betrayal more emphatic. With this hypocrisy Judas was crossing his Rubicon. There was no turning back after this hypocrisy.

Judas knew that Jesus Christ knew Judas was in the process of betraying Him. The hypocrisy of the "hail Master" salutation (see Matthew 26:49) was extremely perverse! And it was also a brazen expression of a lack of the fear of God. Surely all of us realize that God is never deceived by hypocrisy? Judas had witnessed scores of occasions when Jesus Christ had exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. And Judas's own hypocrisy here was no better than that of the Pharisees. The die was cast.

8) Now once he had carried out his premeditated plan, **then** Judas was sorry for what he had done. That's when it sank in that he was now heading irreversibly towards the lake of fire. He understood the penalty his action had incurred. And so then he felt sorry for himself.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented himself**, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (Matthew 27:3)

In the New Testament the translators have unfortunately translated two different Greek words into English as "to repent". But only one of those two Greek words actually means "to repent". The other Greek word only means "to feel sorry", and typically that is to feel sorry for themselves. These two Greek words are thoroughly explained in my November 2013 article "What Is Real Repentance?".

The Greek word used for Judas in Matthew 27:3 does not at all mean "to repent". Real repentance involves a changing of the way we use our minds. The word used for Judas in this verse only means that Judas **felt sorry** for what he had done. But that was not real repentance. He was really primarily concerned for himself, and that is seen by Judas then committing suicide (Matthew 27:5). Suicide is never, under any circumstances, an expression of real repentance. It is an expression of concern for self. This is also discussed in my December 2014 article "Depression Is Not A Disease".

Notice also that Judas didn't feel sorry "towards God". No, Judas "repented **himself**", i.e. **he felt sorry for himself!** Have you ever noticed how often people who commit serious crimes feel sorry "**for themselves**"? They are sorry because they got caught; they are not sorry for what they did, at least not as much as they are sorry for themselves. It reminds me of a song that was popular a few decades ago, which song dealt with the subject of being sorry. The punch line in the song then was "**and more than anything else I'm sorry for myself!**" That is an extremely common situation, that guilty people feel sorry for themselves. But that's not the kind of sorrow God will ever accept.

Judas felt sorry for himself. But Judas did not really repent. He didn't change the way his mind functioned and reasoned. He felt sorry for **the consequences** that his betrayal of Jesus Christ had precipitated. But Judas never considered **the cause** that led up to him betraying Jesus Christ. The cause for Judas betraying Jesus Christ was rooted in the way Judas's mind worked. Real repentance always requires us to examine the causes underlying our wrong actions. But that is not something Judas did.

One way to express the differences between a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow is as follows:

**A worldly sorrow focuses on the consequences of our wrong actions and behavior. A godly sorrow focuses on the causes for our wrong actions and behavior. What this means is that when it appears to us that there are no "bad consequences", then a worldly sorrow never kicks into gear. In that situation the carnal mind does not see a need for any kind of sorrow, because it cannot see any bad results.**

By contrast, **godly sorrow** focuses on **the causes** for the wrongs we have committed. For example, when Paul said "o wretched man that I am" (see Romans 7:24), Paul was focusing on the real cause for his own shortcomings. Job, once he came to a real repentance, had that same focus on the real cause for his problems when he concluded "behold I am vile" (see Job 40:4).

We should understand that whether or not those causes resulted in bad consequences is only a secondary consideration. When we entertain a wrong feeling or emotion or attitude, **once we come to recognize that** (or it is pointed out to us), then that wrong feeling or emotion or attitude needs to be dealt with ... even when **thus far** no bad consequences have come to our attention.

Repentance means that we change the wrong ways of using our minds, by rooting out wrong feelings

and emotions and attitudes, and replacing them with godly emotions and attitudes.

But that is something Judas did not do. Judas was sorry once the "bad consequences" became apparent to him. That is what the statement "when he saw that He was condemned" tells us. Now the point is this:

Speaking totally hypothetically, if the Jewish priests had decided to let Jesus Christ go, then Judas would not have felt sorry for what he had done. His sorrow was based solely on the consequences of his actions. But even if the Jewish authorities had set Jesus Christ free, **what Judas had done was still despicable and perverse, and deserving of the lake of fire!**

Judas's action of betraying Jesus Christ for money was perverse and deserving of the lake of fire, irrespective of whether that betrayal led to Jesus Christ being killed or to being set free. **Any betrayal itself** is a perverse way of dealing with the calling God has set before us, and had set before Judas, for that matter. Whether the immediate consequences are bad or not is only a secondary consideration.

As Jesus Christ said:

But whosoever shall deny me before men, **him will I also deny before my Father** who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:33)

"Denying Jesus Christ" is in exactly the same category as "betraying Jesus Christ". We'll examine this more closely when we look at the Apostle Peter. But I will say up front here already that a cold and calculated, deliberate and premeditated **denial** of Jesus Christ is just as bad as a premeditated **betrayal** of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ "denies a man or a woman before God the Father", then there is **no way** for that man or that woman to ever become a part of God's Family. For Jesus Christ to deny someone before God the Father is a one-way ticket to the lake of fire. Let's recognize Jesus Christ's statement for what it really tells us.

So to put the whole picture for Judas together:

Judas in a calculated and very deliberate way betrayed Jesus Christ. His action was premeditated. He was not threatened or pressured into betraying Christ. He was not acting out of fear. He agreed to betray Christ purely to get his hands on some money. And for this premeditated betrayal Jesus Christ told Judas that he would end up in the lake of fire.

Now let's look at the Apostle Peter.

### **PETER DENYING JESUS CHRIST**

After Jesus Christ had eaten His last Passover, He predicted that all of the apostles would be "offended that night" and flee (see Matthew 26:31). In that setting the Apostle Peter then said:

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of You, **yet will I never be offended**. (Matthew 26:33)

This was not a premeditated statement. This was simply Peter's spontaneous response to the scenario Jesus Christ had presented. And Peter was certainly sincere and genuine when he made this statement. But Peter did not yet understand how his own mind would respond when his own life might appear to be

threatened. At this point Peter was also not yet converted.

All of us are sometimes also like that, aren't we? We are sincerely committed to God, and then along comes something that seriously threatens our physical or financial situation ... and then it is easy for us to spontaneously respond from a motivation of fear, isn't it? We almost spontaneously do whatever is required to save our lives or our livelihood. And it is easy for us to forget to look to God for immediate help. When a spontaneous action or statement is required of us in such situations, it is easy to not really "cast our cares on God" (see 1 Peter 5:7) until after that situation has passed. That's what happened to Peter.

Anyway, to this emphatic statement from Peter Jesus Christ replied as follows:

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow, **you shall deny Me thrice.** (Matthew 26:34)

In his own mind Peter was totally and unconditionally committed to Jesus Christ. He really believed that he was incapable of denying Jesus Christ. That idea was inconceivable to Peter. So Peter again stated his unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ.

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with You, **yet will I not deny You.** Likewise also said all the disciples. (Matthew 26:35)

Peter fully believed his own words, even as we ourselves might be fully convinced that when push comes to shove we will resolutely rely on God for help. And the motivation underlying that response is fine. But we also need to learn to recognize the shortcomings of our own minds in threatening or provocative circumstances, like Job and Paul had learned.

We need to recognize that in stressful situations **our own minds will try to deceive us**, so that "... the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (see Romans 7:19). We need to recognize that we are just as capable of falling short as anyone else. Paul's statement "wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12) applies just as much to the way our minds work, as it applied to Paul, and as it applies to every other person.

To continue with Peter's actions:

Once Judas appeared with the mob to arrest Jesus Christ, Peter lived up to his intentions to fight for Jesus Christ. We all know how Peter cut off one man's ear. Here is the relevant statement.

Then **Simon Peter** having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and **cut off his right ear.** The servant's name was Malchus. (John 18:10)

Now the point is this: in any kind of sword fighting situation it is extremely difficult to cut off the ear of an enemy fighter. And it could not have been a vertical stroke with the sword, because then the man's shoulder would have been smashed by the descending sword, in addition to having his ear cut off. So what it means is that Peter took a wild horizontal swing, **intending to cut off the man's head.** The man ducked under the swinging sword, but not fast enough to prevent his ear from being cut off. It was a close shave indeed for the high priest's servant.

The point is: Peter was making good on his commitment to defend Jesus Christ, even putting his own life on the line (i.e. he could have been sentenced to death for trying to kill the priest's servant). Peter was trying to protect Jesus Christ. This was fully in line with Peter's earlier statements of commitment. At this point in time Peter, who for a few brief steps had walked on water at a previous occasion, was still

fearless. At this point Peter was courageous.

The soldiers then bound Jesus Christ and took Him off to Annas, the high priest's father-in-law (see John 18:12-13). They did not arrest any of the apostles. It seems that the high priest's servants didn't care what the apostles would do. They left the apostles alone.

So note! Even though none of the apostles were threatened by the mob that had come with Judas, they all fled, meaning that **they were all fearful**.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then **all the disciples forsook him, and fled**. (Matthew 26:56)

However, Peter was more courageous than the other apostles, except for John. Both of them went to the high priest's house. It turned out that the Apostle John "was known to the high priest", and with that connection John managed to get in.

And **Simon Peter** followed Jesus, and **so did another disciple**: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out **that other disciple**, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and **brought in Peter**. (John 18:15-16)

The Apostle John here referred to himself as "that other disciple". Through his connection to the high priest John then also managed to get Peter in, and **John then witnessed Peter's three denials**.

First the young woman that watched over who came in and who went out confronted Peter. That was the young woman John had asked to let Peter in.

Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Are not you also *one* of this man's disciples? He said, **I am not**. (John 18:17)

Why did Peter respond like this? Why did he deny knowing Jesus Christ? Had he planned this answer in advance? No, of course not. He was afraid of being identified with Jesus Christ, and so he spontaneously lied to protect himself.

Some time later:

And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, **I am not**. (John 18:25)

Peter was afraid of being identified as a follower of Jesus Christ. And so he again spontaneously lied, to protect himself.

Now Peter had been the most prominent person, aside from Jesus Christ of course, when the mob had come to arrest Jesus Christ. Having cut a man's ear off was a very noteworthy incident during the events in the garden. So someone else now recognized Peter.

One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with him? **Peter then denied again**: and immediately the cock crew. (John 18:26-27)

The Apostle John personally knew that this man was related to Malchus, whom John had identified earlier, because of his (i.e. John's) contacts to the high priest's household. While John records the three denials, he does not say anything else that could be construed in a negative light for Peter.



Matthew records this in much stronger terms, but Matthew also records Peter's ultimate response. Coming to the third denial, Matthew wrote:

**Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, you shall deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:74-75)**

That concludes Peter's three denials. Here is what we have:

- 1) At no point in this episode did Peter premeditate to deny Jesus Christ. He had no plans of any kind. He certainly did not deny Jesus Christ to obtain any kind of personal advantage for himself.
- 2) Peter's motivation in denying Jesus Christ was basically fear and embarrassment: a fear of being associated with Jesus Christ. It was somewhat like some people in the Church today who don't really want other people to know that they are **Sabbath-keeping** Christians. It was somewhat like wanting to avoid the stigma of being associated with "some strange fringe-group".
- 3) Throughout the three denials Peter didn't realize that he was fulfilling perfectly what Jesus Christ had predicted he would do. He just spontaneously dealt with three consecutive uncomfortable and embarrassing situations.
- 4) It was only after the third denial that Peter "remembered the word of Jesus". **It was only at that point that Peter realized what he had done!**
- 5) When that realization hit him, Peter repented **immediately** and spontaneously. This spontaneous response means that these three denials did not shape Peter's character!
- 6) Peter didn't "weep bitterly" because his denials had any effect on whether Jesus Christ would be condemned or released. Peter wept bitterly because he saw "**the real Peter**". He saw what Job and Paul had come to see ... their own carnal minds which so easily do "the evil which I would not" (see Romans 7:19). Peter recognized what his own mind was capable of doing.
- 7) Peter came to understand **the cause** underlying his three denials, that cause being his own natural mind. Peter repented with a godly repentance. Peter changed the way he used his mind. Peter determined to **not allow fear to control his actions** and behavior. And so in Acts chapter 2 we see a very bold Peter very openly identify himself as a follower of Jesus Christ, the total opposite of how he had behaved when he denied knowing Jesus Christ. Acts 2 shows that Peter really had changed.

## **THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO**

So how did Peter and Judas differ?

- 1) Judas **planned in advance** what he was going to do. Peter did not at all plan to deny Jesus Christ. Peter himself had no idea that a few hours later he really would deny Jesus Christ.
- 2) Judas's **motivation** was premeditated greed, proved by his question: what will you give me? Peter's motivation was spontaneous fear, fear of being identified with Jesus Christ. Peter was not at all motivated by wanting to get anything for himself.
- 3) Judas felt sorry for himself **after** he saw the consequences of his actions roll in. Peter repented

immediately, by changing the way he used his mind **before** any consequences of his actions could be determined. Peter's denials were not going to have any effect on whether Jesus Christ would be condemned or released. Peter repented for what he had done, not because of what consequences his denials might have had. The doing itself (i.e. the denials) was the problem, and Peter clearly recognized that.

4) Judas felt sorry **for himself**, proved by committing suicide. Peter repented **towards God** for having denied Jesus Christ, proved by weeping bitterly. Peter changed, while Judas never did change.

5) Judas was totally **hypocritical** in the way he betrayed Jesus Christ. But at no point in his denials was Peter acting hypocritically. I don't think that most of us today grasp the monumental and inevitably devastating consequences of hypocrisy. When we are dealing with God, then **hypocrisy is absolutely deadly!** It is impossible for God to work with a hypocritical mind.

6) Accepting responsibility only **after** we realize that we cannot get away with a denial of responsibility is never real repentance. In such circumstances accepting responsibility is never evidence of a changed mind; it is only evidence of seeking to receive a lesser penalty. In other words: accepting responsibility **after** we realize we cannot possibly get away with a denial stems from **a very selfish motivation**.

In that situation we realize that those who judge us will be more inclined to be lenient with us if we admit guilt, compared to if we continue, in the face of incontrovertible evidence against us, to deny any guilt. In that situation the more remorse we **appear** to show, the more leniency we are likely to receive. That is a very simple selfish calculation! Act remorseful so you can get a lesser penalty.

By contrast, acting remorsefully **before** we are caught or found out is typically evidence of a changed way of thinking; i.e. it is typically evidence of repentance.

7) Committing **calculated and premeditated transgressions**, while being fully aware of the inevitable consequences of those transgressions, leads to the unpardonable sin, because such transgressions demonstrate how that particular human mind deals with the knowledge of God. They reveal a mindset that is contrary to God. When such transgressions are accompanied by **hypocrisy towards God**, then that seals the case, and such transgressions cannot be repented of.

By contrast, all transgressions that are **spontaneous and unpremeditated** can be repented of. They do not necessarily lead to the unpardonable sin, because they do not really reveal how that particular human mind deals with the knowledge of God. Acting on impulse is not necessarily evidence of a certain mindset, whereas premeditated actions do reveal a mindset.

What we do after having acted on impulse will reveal the real mindset. If afterwards there is real repentance, then the mind will also be set to from then onwards not act on impulse in similar situations, to not be caught off-guard again.

So the conclusion of the matter is:

While Judas will be burned up in the lake of fire, the Apostle Peter will be in God's Kingdom, ruling over one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

## **SO WHAT ABOUT US?**

We all still fall short, right? As the Apostle John tells us:

If we say that we have no sin, **we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

It is not a question of "if"; it is a question of "when". There are a thousand different ways in which we can and do fall short. And when we do fall short, then the question becomes: **will we be like Peter, or will we be like Judas?**

Sometimes we ourselves can recognize that what we have done was not right. And at other times it may be pointed out to us by other people that what we have done was not right. Either way:

When that moment of recognition hits us **our immediate response** is the most important factor!

Is our spontaneous response one of freely acknowledging guilt and responsibility? Or is our immediate response one of defending and justifying ourselves? That immediate, spontaneous first response to being confronted with our own guilt reveals our true character more than anything else. Do we admit or do we deny?

**All subsequent responses, if they are at odds with our spontaneous first response, are in most cases the result of thinking things through, considering all the angles and ramifications of our initial spontaneous response. Subsequent responses, when they differ from our initial response (e.g. initially denying guilt, but subsequently admitting it, and vice versa), are aimed at achieving a certain effect or result. They are no longer a sincere expression of the inner mind. Thinking the whole matter through has told us that it may be advantageous to admit guilt after all, or it may be advantageous to deny guilt after all.**

We need to understand this when we deal with people who "change their plea" as it were. And we need to recognize how our own minds try to deceive us about our own motivations. We need to recognize that Jeremiah 17:9 is true for all human beings; and we should also understand that what the Apostle Paul said about himself is also true for us.

But I see another law in my members, **warring against the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

A confession **after an initial denial** is in most cases not particularly valuable in God's scheme of things, though human courts will lap up such "confessions". Everything else that is said in such "changed plea confessions" is frequently also a give-away that such confessions aren't really expressions of sincere hearts, for example the "okay, I'm sorry so let's get this thing over with" attitude.

So how do we respond when our failings come to our attention?

Do we unconditionally accept responsibility? Or do we have a "yes, I'm guilty, **but ...**" attitude? If our wrong actions or conduct have **not yet** resulted in any negative consequences, do we already admit guilt? Or do we only admit guilt if there are clearly negative consequences to what we have done? Or do we continue to deny any guilt, even in the face of bad consequences?

Did we **plan ahead** to do something that is wrong? Were we **pressured** into doing something wrong? Or were our wrong actions a **spontaneous** and unpremeditated response to some unexpected temptation or provocation?

Do we correctly identify **the real cause** for our wrong actions? The real cause is not the temptation or provocation that confronted us. The real cause is that we did not exercise any control over that "other law" in our minds (see again Romans 7:23).

A premeditated and planned-in-advance transgression is always far more serious than an unplanned spontaneous transgression. And the premeditated transgression is also far more difficult to repent of, and far less likely to be repented of.

When we do fall short, and our faults come to our attention, then let's be like Peter and repent immediately, even before any negative consequences become apparent.

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