



## **John 18:7–14**

7 Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they said. 8 Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.’ 9 This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: ‘I have not lost one of those you gave me.’ 10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Mal-

chus.) 11 Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?' 12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him 13 and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. 14 Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

## **Reflection**

Battle hardened soldiers are picking themselves up off the ground. Their hackles are raised, hands inches from their swords, all

the while filled with a kind of numinous dread knowing that there is something more than flesh and blood to fear in the one who stands before them. All their lives they've been trained to respond in a heartbeat to authority and no-one ever spoke like the man who stands in front of them. They'd heard him in the temple, the past three years, his legend growing with each intervening year. Untold miracles, unmatched wisdom, a steely-eyed authority and boldness unlike any Jew (or any Roman for that matter) that they'd ever encountered. They'd come out to arrest him like cowards in the middle of the night – there's no honour in that – and two hundred of them against just him and eleven fishermen, barely a sword between them. And it's like he's the one arresting them. Such was the confrontation just moments

earlier and the command in his voice that the whole cohort had fallen to the ground at the sound of the man's voice, momentarily pinned to the ground by his presence. Their hackles raised, eyes only on this one man, Jesus continues to make demands of them in today's passage, reading from John 18:7–14,

7 Again he asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they said. 8 Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.' 9 This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: 'I have not lost one of those you gave me.' 10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right

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The temple guard, a cohort of Roman soldiers under the jurisdiction of the high priest, brace themselves a second time. They'd come out to arrest Jesus, 200 armed soldiers come in the dead of the

night with the element of surprise. But it is Jesus who is giving the orders. For the second time Jesus asks them,

‘Who is it you want?’

When they had answered falteringly the first time,

‘Jesus of Nazareth,’

The power of Jesus’ reply had pinned them to the ground. They replied using the same words this time, and brace themselves again.

‘Who is it you want? ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they said. 8 Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he.

Again, that numinous dread, the dread authority in that voice and this man's presence. It's often this sixth sense that saves soldiers in battle. And their battle instinct is correct. Right now Matthew 26 tells us that there are twelve legions of angels looking intently down out of heaven. They're lead by the commander of the armies of the Lord, in 2 Kings 19 just one of these angels had slain 185,000 soldiers on one night; and there's twelve legions of them standing ready to save their king (Matt 26:53). They're just waiting for Jesus to give the word. But there's no word.

'Who is it you want? 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they said. 8 Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he.

But the soldiers don't dare do anything

until Jesus goes on and gives them permission. 'If you are looking for me, then let these men go.' If you are looking for me, take me, but let these men go. Jesus is about to die, but he's still only thinking about protecting his disciples. 'Let these men go.'

The tension of the moment proves too much for poor Peter. He charges forward wielding a sword with all the accuracy of a fisherman. Reading from verse 10,

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) 11 Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given



me?’

Again, such poetry. We’re taken back to the Garden of Eden, with flaming sword barring the entrance for ever. In the Garden of Gethsemane the sword is sheathed; the pathway to Eden about to re-opened forever. Sword drawn, Peter risks the salvation of the entire world by trying to take matters into his own hands. His blow most likely glances off Malchus’ helmet, cutting off his right ear. Malchus is the high priest’s servant, sent no doubt as an eyewitness to report directly back to his master. In the other gospels, Jesus matter-of-factly heals his ear, no doubt to the wide-eyed astonishment and superstitious mutterings of the soldiers who’d seen many battlefield gorings not end so well. John’s emphasis however is on these words from Jesus,

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

Jesus' command this time is to Peter. The cup he is referring to is the cross. The cup of judgment that we should have drunk. Someone had to drink it. Jesus took upon himself our punishment in those hours of darkness on the cross. We could not have paid for our own sins even if we were punished for them for all eternity. That's what's at stake on this Friday. This is the path that the Son of God now willingly walks.

Both the soldiers and Peter follow Jesus' commands. The disciples go free; remarkable considering what has just occurred. And Jesus willingly hands himself over; according to plan.

Verse 12 says that they bind Jesus, they put ropes around God, they bind the one who'll bind Satan and his demons, they tie up the one who right now is holding the whole universe into being, the one who right now is regulating the very beats of each of these soldier's hearts; and they think they can hold him with rope. He lets them. And he is taken to a hastily arranged trial in the dead of the night before the one who had prophesied, steeped in irony, verse 14,

that it would be good if one man died for the people.

## **Think**

This is a heavy scene. A heavy scene

stamped with the heavy authority of the Son of God. 200 men pinned to the ground with a word from Jesus. One day, every knee on heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow at his name. What do you take away from today's passage? What new insights into the character of Jesus and the purposes of God? See again how very much in control Jesus is of every moment. This is true in your life as well. Consider Jesus' presence, his power and his willpower after the agonies of Gethsemane to resolve himself towards the cross. Matthew Henry said of our King,

When the people would have forced him to take a crown, and wished to make him King, he withdrew and hid himself (John 6:15). But when they came to force him to his cross he of-

ferred himself. He came to this world to suffer, and went to the other world to reign.

Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?’

## **Pray**

Praise God this morning for our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise him that he drank the bitter cup down to its dregs. Praise God that his full and righteous wrath was poured out in full measure on Jesus who bore it in our place. For the joy set before him he endured this punishment for us. His joy is welcoming us into his Father’s house and family forever. Pray that you and I today would live a life worthy of what Christ has done for us. That never even for a moment

would we take his sacrifice for granted; that we would recoil from every new sinful temptation as though to indulge it were to drive one of those stakes an inch more deeply into the wrist of our Lord, writhing there in agony for us. In his name we pray. Amen.