

Luke 22:47-48

(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; John 18:1-14)

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd appeared, and the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He came near to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

The Battle is Personal

I hope everyone is more familiar with them now. They come in your email inbox. The message asks you to click here. You have won some prize, or you have been personally selected for some special honor. Perhaps the message even appears to be from a legitimate entity with whom you do business all the time. You click the link and log in to change your password, or check your billing information, or to do whatever it is that the email says might have been compromised.

The problem is, you haven't *actually* logged in to your real bank, or your real Amazon account. You have fallen for a phishing scheme and have just handed over your login information to a hacker. In the case of some of the prize emails, you may have clicked a link that installs some malicious code that sits in the background of your device, just waiting for you to log on to your various banks and other sites, when it can copy *all* your login information.

This kind of background program waiting to collect your information is called a Trojan horse. It gets its name from the Trojan War between the Greeks and the Trojans. The Greeks built a large wooden horse and set it outside the walls of Troy and then left. When the Trojans saw it, they pulled it into their city. As it turned out, there were soldiers hiding inside that horse who opened the city gates at night so the returning Greek army could get inside the gates and defeat Troy.

I.

There is a tragic story in the Scriptures about one of the 12 special men who had walked beside Jesus on all those rocky paths in Israel. This individual had heard his sermons, had watched his miracles, had prayed with him, and had even done some mission work for him. But this man became the betrayer. Satan had inserted a Trojan horse into his heart, had gained control, and had turned him against Jesus.

As we examine what happened to him, it becomes very clear how important it is that Jesus is our warrior who fought for us. To this day he helps us fight our own battles with the devil, who wants to use our own sinful flesh against Jesus and our faith in Jesus.

We realize that **the battle is personal**. We can lock our doors to keep out thieves and robbers. We can carry mace when we walk or jog to try to ward off attackers. But more often than not, our worst war is almost always like that of Judas.

It was right after Jesus and the disciples had their last meal together. They had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane near the Mount of Olives. There Jesus prayed. When he finished, he returned to his disciples, who had fallen asleep. Jesus woke them up. “While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd appeared, and the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He came near to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸But Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’” (Luke 22:47-48, EHV).

Matthew tells us in *his* gospel that Judas then went up to Jesus and singled him out for the soldiers by dramatically kissing him. A kiss of greeting is still common for many today. Well, it *was* until very recently. Now we don't want to shake hands, or even come within six feet of a person we are greeting.

To some it might have looked as if Judas were greeting his very good friend Jesus. But the soldiers, Judas, and Jesus all knew what it *really* meant: he was *using* a display of close friendship to betray and hand over our Savior to his enemies. Jesus even gives him two more chances, calling him by name just as he had done hundreds of times before: “Judas!” Finally “Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why are you here?’ Then they advanced, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him” (Matthew 26:50, EHV).

What had turned Judas from a friend into someone who would betray Jesus? What Trojan horse had entered his heart to make him a traitor within the ranks of the 12 men closest to Jesus for the past three years?

- ▶ Judas had been the treasurer for the disciples and had been helping himself to some of that money (John 1:6).
- ▶ Satan had entered into Judas and pushed him to go to the chief priests to get paid for betraying Jesus—30 silver coins was the price set on Jesus' head (Luke 22:3, Matthew 26:15).
- ▶ Just a few hours earlier Jesus had mentioned that one of the disciples would betray him (John 13:10-11). He had said it was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Psalm 41:9. Judas was not touched by the warning.
- ▶ During the Last Supper we learn these terrible words yet again: "As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, 'What you are about to do, do more quickly'" (John 13:27, EHV).

What a sad life. It's obvious that Judas experienced a huge struggle inside him, especially at the end. Satan had gained control of the sinful nature within Judas and had driven him to commit the worst sin ever committed by someone who called himself a disciple of Jesus. Can you think of a sadder legacy than that of Judas?

When Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper that one of them would betray him, did they all turn their heads to look at Judas, as *we* might do when we see a movie about the Last Supper? No. They didn't *know* who would betray Jesus. But what did they do? "The disciples were looking at each other, uncertain which of them he meant" (John 13:22, EHV).

Why did they suspect one another? They knew their own weaknesses. Each one had a sinful flesh that Satan could attack and use to drive them away from Jesus. Which of them could possibly do this?

II.

The disciples knew themselves. The battle against Satan is a personal one for Judas and for *all* the disciples of Jesus. Each of us realizes that the struggle is within us.

Jesus had warned his disciples that all of them would desert him. He had given a special warning to Peter, who had strongly insisted that *he* would *never* disown him. On the same night, after they had received the Lord's Supper from the Savior, they all deserted him in the Garden of Gethsemane and fled. Peter swung his sword, but then he fled, just like all the rest. Still, Peter followed the soldiers into the courtyard of the high priest. Once there, he kept denying that he was a disciple of Jesus. He even took an oath denying that he knew who this Jesus was. Peter, too, was a betrayer. The Trojan horse of fear in his heart was Satan's way to turn even Peter against Jesus.

Do *you* think about that when you look at your own life? I know *I* do. What kind of Trojan horse will Satan use in *this* heart—in *my* heart? I'm just like you—just like Peter—just like Paul, who said: "I certainly delight in God's law according to my inner self, ²³but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members. ²⁴What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:22-24, EHV).

There is spiritual war going on inside each of us. *I want* to trust Jesus with all my heart, but my faith is under attack. As Jesus told the disciples: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41, EHV).

Sometimes there is guilt from the past. You get flashbacks and you feel dirty and unworthy of Jesus.

Could it be something going on right now? "Idleness is the devil's workshop" goes the saying. With nothing to do but watch TV and surf the internet, have you been feeding your improper thoughts and can't seem to stop? Are you living right now in disappointment? Maybe depressing thoughts have been working against your faith. I'm sure it has been tempting to be spiritually lazy.

Church is being livestreamed, but you know that no one is going to notice if you're not watching. No one is there to suggest that you take more time for your personal Bible study and prayer life. Do you see the Trojan horse within?

III.

There is good news. We have a hero. Our hero loves us every day of our lives. We have a warrior who can help us fight these battles and sneak attacks. With the Apostle Paul we say: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25, EHV).

There is a stronger hand on our hearts, pushing closed the gates against the Trojan horse of Satan's war within our hearts. Jesus is the defense against our sinful flesh and Satan's battle for our hearts.

Our betrayed Jesus never betrayed us! He went through all that physical abuse alone. He went before God's throne of judgment, piled high with all our sins, to experience the full misery of hell in our place, with the prize in his sight of earning full forgiveness for every sin we've ever committed.

When Jesus voluntarily gave up his life on the cross, God cleared sinners of every charge against you, me, and the entire world. The only thing God sees in us is the holy, perfect life of Jesus. He has made that freely available to all who turn to him in faith.

Jesus is the starting point in our personal battle against the Trojan horse Satan keeps trying to use against us and our faith in Jesus. We need this stronger warrior in our active battle against sin. He has given us some wonderful war weapons to help us grow stronger in faith and become more like him. Those weapons also brighten our vision of our final home in heaven and give us a bolder life, increasing the daily joy we already have in him.

IV.

Here are some of those weapons. First is his powerful Word with all those promises. The Word is a double-edged sword—it exposes all the things we try to keep hidden, but at the same time cuts all the guilt away as it brings Jesus into sharp focus. God's Word makes our faith stronger. God's Word even alerts us to the Trojan horses of Satan. It is both our armor and offensive weapon (Ephesians 6).

Tonight is the night of a special meal—the Lord's Supper. Our Warrior provides each of us personally with his true body and blood. It's as close as we can possibly get to him on this side of heaven. It's as if we were in that upper room when Jesus looked at each of the disciples as he passed around the bread and the wine, assuring them that in the Last Supper he was actually touching them with his real presence.

Do you see yourself there—at the end of the table? Whenever you feel yourself slipping in your struggle with the devil, this meal can point you back to Jesus. He gives forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation in this sacrament. The forgiveness, life, and salvation he has battled to win—for *you*. The battle against Satan is personal. But so is this Supper. Your Warrior's flesh and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine to strengthen you.

Right now the Holy Spirit is working inside you with the gospel to strengthen you in your battle with Satan and sin. Together with the believers all around you—in spirit, if not in person—we are all to be encouragers of one another. We encourage each other to stay close to Jesus and his Word so that our faith might grow and get stronger, nourished by the grace of God through Word and Sacrament. In the Supper we greet one another in Christ, show our concern and care for one another, and pray for each other's needs as we express our Christ-centered love in words and actions.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, fully equipped soldiers of Christ our Savior and hero: "Take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to take a stand on the evil day and, after you have done everything, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13, EHV).

God bless your life of faith. God bless you as you fight your personal battle. Onward, Christian soldiers. Amen.