

Our Silent Sin-Bearer

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Date: 27 September 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Well my friends, tonight we turn to the point in Mark's Gospel where it is decided and agreed upon by the religious authorities that our Lord should be crucified. He spent Thursday evening in the upper room with his disciples and he's then gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane where he's prayed to his father and then he's been betrayed, arrested and abandoned.

And we're now in the very early hours of Friday morning and our Lord has been brought into the house of the High Priest and the various council members, the priests, the elders and the scribes have all assembled together to put him on trial. And this trial that we read about here is a complete sham. These wicked men are not here to give him a trial, they're here to condemn him. The verdict was decided a long time ago. The verdict of this trial here was decided when the first waves of jealousy rose up in their hearts. And so the first thing we're going to consider tonight is the illegal nature of this trial. That this is a complete farce, it's a hoax. It's not a genuine trial at all. I use the word trial in inverted commas because so many aspects of this trial were completely against what the Jewish laws taught. As we already said, it was a complete farce. They had no intention of giving him a fair trial. The verdict was already decided and there's three things that are illegal about it. First of all, this court met in the High Priest's home. That wasn't allowed. They were meant to meet in a public place. Secondly, courts weren't to be held on Sabbaths or feast days. And executions certainly weren't to be carried out during feasts. And yet they're right in the middle of the Passover celebration doing all this. And then finally, courts were only to be held during the day between sunrise and sunset. No doubt to prevent conspiracies taking place like this. Yet here they are doing their business during the night, probably somewhere in between the hours of one and three a.m. Now what if at this point someone had confronted them about this? What if someone had stood up and showed them all this, the dubious nature of this trial? What if someone had pointed out to them all the laws that they were breaking at this time, that this man should not be on trial in this way? Well, no doubt they would have found ways to get round all these things, wouldn't they? No doubt they would have said, well this isn't technically a court, it's just a preliminary inquiry. And they would have formally passed their business after they break. They would have found excuses. And you know my friends, we can always find excuses for our sin. We can always find loopholes that will work for us. We can always find ways of excusing the things that we know are wrong, but we think, well we are the exception to God's rules. People say it all the time, you don't know, you don't know what I was going through. I had to sin in that way. You don't know what day I had. I had every right to sin. I had no choice in this matter. I had to pick that way. My friends, we always have a choice not to sin. But these people here, they were consumed with legal technicalities, weren't they? They would have been very quick to condemn others for the least little thing, but only until it didn't suit them. They would revel in straining at nats until it became inconvenient. And the wickedness of these men is just so clear in these passages, isn't it? And why is that? Because they stand in the light of our Lord here. And when we encounter the Lord Jesus Christ, His glory just radiates from Him and it exposes us for what we really are. The Lord Jesus came and He confronted and challenged those religious leaders and He does so with us. He doesn't just mollycoddle us as we continue to sin. He exposes our hearts and shows us what we are doing wrong. And as this happens here, the jealousy and the hypocrisy of the sin heeding is brought to light. They couldn't handle it. They couldn't handle this man, could they? He won the people.

He did things they could not do. He taught with an authority that they did not have. They were losing their hold over the people. They were losing their fame so they plotted to kill him. And here we see this plot being worked out. And we read in verse 55 that they were seeking people to testify against Jesus. Okay, here we go. There's a fourth thing that makes this trial illegal. Because the point of a

court trial is that the court was meant to hear the witnesses that came forward. The purpose of the court is not to seek out witnesses. The court meets because there are witnesses to hear. This whole thing is rigged.

And we see in verse 56 that many came forward. Many came to offer evidence of Jesus breaking the law. Perhaps they were offered a bribe as Judas was. So many came forward. Now all the court needed was two witnesses. Two witnesses whose statements agreed at every point. If they could get that, then they had a legal case against Jesus that was watertight. But we see in these verses that they couldn't even get that. Every single one of these many witnesses that came forward, all of them proved themselves to be false witnesses. And if you read Deuteronomy chapter 19, it says there that false witnesses were to be put to death.

[8 : 07] The council was meant to punish them for bearing false witness. That certainly didn't happen. Upholding that part of the law wasn't on the agenda that night. But eventually it seems that they managed to round up a few witnesses who accused him of the same thing. They accused him of threatening to destroy the temple. Now we find this event in John chapter 2 where Jesus cleanses the temple and drives out the moneylenders. And these witnesses claimed that Jesus said that he himself would destroy the temple. But that's not what he said, is it?

No he said to them at that time destroy this temple. Meaning if and when you destroy this temple, my body. And they added in this temple made with hands. Well Jesus never said that at all. So it was lies that were telling against him. And in verse 59 we see but not even then did their testimony agree. So we have a sham trial and we have many false witnesses and no true witnesses against Jesus. What does this show us? Well all this stands to show us that the man on trial here is innocent. The man on trial here is sinless. He has not broken the law at all. They have nothing on him. They cannot touch him. There is no sin that they can charge him with. And so now it falls to Caiaphas the high priest to question onward and to try and get him to condemn himself with his own confession. And so that's what the high priest does in verses 60 and 61 says there. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But he remained silent and made no answer. You know reading through the gospels how pure and perfect and lovely Jesus is. You know that he has done nothing wrong. And yet here he is on trial and about to be put to death. I don't know about you but as you read this, don't you just want to cry, speak, Lord Jesus. Show them you're innocent. Show them that you're not guilty. Show them who you are. The Son of God, the sinless one.

But that's not part of the divine plan. So he remains silent. Let me suggest to you three reasons for his silence. Judgment, fulfillment and atonement. So first of all his silence is a judgment because you see there's no point in replying to these people. Their attempt to condemn him has been absolutely pathetic. None of their witnesses could agree. These accusations just do not warrant a reply. These people are beyond the pale. Their hearts are hardened. They are set upon killing him. He's been among them for three years and he's spoken to them the words of life. He's shown them the way to the Father through himself.

He's shown that true life is found in him. But the time for hearing is past. So in his silence our Lord is saying to them, you don't want me? Okay then, you won't have me. My friends, this is the worst situation that a person can possibly find themselves in. When God and his patience has tied up while and he's continued to speak, when Christ has continued to stand at the door and knock, but you've resisted, you've put him off and you've refused to surrender, you're all to him. Is that you tonight? Are you resisting? Well God will not strive with you forever. There'll be a day for it and then there will be a time when

God is silent. And so here God gives these people over to what they want. He gives them silence. This has been the desire of these religious leaders to silence him. So this is what they're getting. Do you refuse to believe upon Christ? Do you refuse to come to him for salvation? So the second reason for his silence is to fulfill scripture. Because the prophets in the Old Testament, they foretold that he would be silent at this time. His I of 53 verse 7, he was oppressed and he was afflicted. Yet he opened not his mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shears is silent. So he opened not his mouth. How worked of you they had of the Messiah. They thought he would bring in his kingdom by human force and might. One who would come and raise an army shouting in the streets with a battle cry. But yet he would be one who would not cry out nor raise his voice nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. Actually the Messiah's work would be accomplished by him coming and suffering silently for his people. And then finally the third reason

for his silence atonement. He's silent because he stands there as his people's substitute. These religious leaders were meant to be God's representatives. If someone was on trial before them, it was meant to show that they were on trial before God.

[15 : 46] So even though this actual trial is so corrupt, this is what was meant to represent someone before God being represented by the priests. And what two charges do they level at Jesus here? Blasphemy and treason. We see the blasphemy charge here that he claimed to be God. But that wasn't enough to get him condemned by the Romans. And the Romans had to be the ones that killed him. So how did they twist it so that Pilate would also condemn him? They called it treason. Blasphemy saying I am God. Treason was rebelling against Caesar and saying I am the king. And that's what they needed to get so that the Romans would put him to trial. Blasphemy and treason. My friends, in our sin, these are the crimes that we have committed against God. Blasphemy and treason. Because every sin we commit, we are saying

I am God. I am the best. Every sin we commit, we are saying no, God will not be king. I will be king of my life. I will be on the throne of my life and I will rule how I want to. Every sin we commit, we are dethroning God. And we are saying no, I will sit on his throne. We make ourselves God. But the thing is Jesus Christ is God and Jesus Christ is king. He is completely sinless. He is committed no blasphemy. He is committed no treason.

But he stands before God on trial as our substitute. And so his silence is a guilty silence. As he is accused of being a blasphemer and a traitor, he doesn't answer back. He stays silent in agreement. Not because he is guilty, but because we are guilty. And he is there in his people's place bearing their sin. He bears our sin and it's guilt. And so being accused, he stands there and says yes, that charge can be levelled at me. I am a blasphemer, I am a traitor. Not because he has any of those sins of his own, but because there he's bearing Jonathan Baxter's sins. He is standing as a substitute for Jonathan Baxter who is a blasphemer and a traitor. He is standing there as a substitute for Myrtle Campbell who is a blasphemer and a traitor. He is standing there as a substitute for every single one of his people who has blasphemed and who has committed treason before God. If you are a

Christian Jesus Christ stands there for you. He stands there in silence making no plea because your sin has been accounted to him in God's sight. He is the only human in the universe who can say in absolute truth that he is God and he is King. He is the only one who has not committed these sins, the one in whom the Father is well pleased. Why the silence, why not cry out and declare his innocence? Because he bears our guilt. He bears that guilt against God. My friends, each one of us is going to stand on trial. A trial in the heavenly courtroom and this will be a trial that is completely just. This will not be a sham trial at all. It will be before almighty God who is completely just. And all the testimony against us will be true. Everything that we have done and said and thought will be known to the omniscient God who sits on the throne of judgement. Imagine in that courtroom the evidence files were brought out. Imagine if every single word you said, everything you've done and every thought that's ever gone through your mind was put on display before God. Every single thought. Well we don't need to imagine that because God knows every single thought that we've ever had. He knows every single one of them has been tainted with sin and he absolutely detests all sin. He hates it, he abhors it, he cannot look upon it. And what could we do at this point? Absolutely nothing. All each of us can do is stand there in guilty silence. Paul writes in Romans 3, 19, one of the purposes of the law, that every mouth may be stopped. All we can do is stand there conscious of every sin we've ever committed. Martin Lloyd Jones said, the Christian is someone whose mouth has been shut because we stand there, know ourselves to be guilty before Almighty God. And in and of ourselves we know that we have absolutely no hope because we are all like an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. But there is a plea that we can make before the throne room of heaven and it's that this man stood in my place. Jesus Christ the righteous. We have an advocate with the Father and it's him.

[22 : 50] And he himself will declare and he is declaring right now for his people to his Father, I have stood and I have been condemned and I have suffered in their stead. The sinless one in place of the guilty. The hymn says bearing shame and scoffing good in my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, what a saviour. This is our only hope before a holy God that Jesus Christ who committed no sin has stood in our place and that his sinlessness, his perfection will be attributed to us so that we can stand in God's presence now and forever. And Peter just overflows as he writes about this in his first epistle in chapter 2. Peter writes there, for to

this you have been called because

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled he did not revile in return. When he suffered he did not threaten but continued and trusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Jesus Christ did that for us. Boring our sins, our sins which are so repulsive to him. He's perfect, he hates sin. He cannot think upon sin, it would make him shudder. The thought of all sin and he took his people's sin upon himself and bore its punishment in full on the tree. The Father laid them all upon him and crushed him. Yet you and I still have our darling little sins that we insist on committing every day, don't we? We know what it cost our Lord but we can't give them up. They're too precious to us. They're just too good to let go off. So our Lord remains silent and he committed himself to the one who judges righteousness. He committed himself to his Father. What we have to remember here is that God is completely sovereign in all of this. As they plot against our Lord, God is working out his plans and purposes. Who actually delivered up Jesus to be crucified?

Was it the Jewish leaders here? Was it the Jewish, Judas Iscariot? Was it the Roman soldiers? Was it Herod? Was it Pilate? Was it you and me and our sin? All true to some extent.

But ultimately it was God, God the Father who did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all. Octavius Winslow asked that question. Who delivered up Jesus to die?

[27 : 01] He answers that not Judas for money, not Pilate for fear, not the Jews for envy but the Father for love. And the son long will obey and his silence now is part of this obedience. But we see at the end of verses 61 and verse 62 that the time to be silent is soon over and it's now time for him to speak. The High Priest, we're told in the other Gospels, puts him under oath before God so he's now required to speak. And the High Priest asks him if he is the Christ, that is, is he the Messiah, is he the Son of the Blessed? That was a common way for the Jews to refer to God as the Blessed One. And Jesus readily accepts those titles.

He is the Messiah, he is the Son of God. But he doesn't just stop there, he doesn't just say I am, no, he says, yes, I am all this and so much more. And he goes on to also declare himself to be that Son of Man that we read about in Daniel 7. That he is the cosmic ruler who has been given a kingdom by the ancient of days. Jesus is saying I am this one. At this point it seems Jesus, he's beholding the joy set before him, isn't he? He knows this isn't the end, he knows the cross isn't the end. He goes now to secure this kingdom. And he does so by hanging on a tree. But one day he will consummate that kingdom when he returns upon the clouds of glory with the armies of heaven at his sight.

They trample upon him now, but one day they shall all tremble before him. He will no longer be in the form of a servant but be in the form of a king. And so now he stands before his father condemned, bearing his people's sin. But one day he knows just as Daniel tells us that he will stand before his father's throne and be given this kingdom. And he will stand there glorified with all his people behind him who have been redeemed by his blood.

And with them all we shall ascend to the top of Zion's hill and there the gates shall be opened wide for Christ and his bride. This is what Jesus Christ has done. He has born the wrath and the punishment for his people's sin that we might be brought into his eternal heavenly kingdom and have been made fit to dwell there with him forever. And it's by his death he has brought this about. That's what we remember as we sit at this table.

We remember his death and we look forward to eating with him at the marriage supper of the land. Here's the thing. Jesus isn't actually on trial before these men here.

[30 : 32] He is the son of God. He is the king of glory. He doesn't need to stand on trial before men. No, do you see these men are actually on trial before him. They stand face to face with the Messiah. They stand before the son of the living God, the defying son of man who has been given an everlasting kingdom. And how do these men fare before the king of kings and Lord of lords? Well, they have been laid in the balances and found wanting.

They reject him. Just as the scriptures say that he was despised and rejected by men. They condemn him to death as a liar and a blasphemer. And if anyone else made these claims about themselves, they would be right to do so. If I was to stand before these men and say that I am God, they would be right to condemn me as a blasphemer. But not with this man, not with Jesus. It's all

true. And it was all there before them. They'd seen the healings, they'd seen the miracles. They'd heard his teaching. They'd heard the command that he had of scripture. But their hearts are hard. And they suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

And how do they respond? Well, the high priest tears his clothes. But the law required him to do. That was similar to a judge putting on the black cap before passing a death sentence.

And Caiaphas didn't really understand the significance of what he did there. Because in condemning Christ and putting him to death and then tearing his clothes, while he was bringing to an end the priesthood in the air. And Caiaphas wouldn't need his clothes after that. There would be no more need for an ironic priesthood. Because the true high priest was about to offer up himself as that once for all offering for sin. And then those present publicly mock him and beat him. Which they weren't supposed to do. Because trials were meant to be conducted in a dignified manner. And they mockingly command him to prophesy.

They ridiculed and condemned him as a false prophet. That's what they were doing there. And they weren't, they didn't realise that actually as they're doing that, one of his prophecies came to pass. Because what comes in the next chapter? What comes right after this? Peter denying Jesus. Which our Lord had foretold. And then they lent him away to his death. And they were in fact destroying the temple that he had spoken of. He's not a false prophet as they say. He is the true prophet of God. Three days later he would rebuild this temple in rising from the dead. But this temple will extend beyond his own glorified body. And it will be a spiritual temple that includes all believers everywhere in every age and generation. So my friends, the question is how do we respond to this man that we are confronted with tonight? Do we reject him or do we embrace him? Because see if we choose not to accept him. We're just doing the same thing as those who mock him and beat him and spit upon him. You can say yourself, I wouldn't do that to Jesus.

[34 : 20] I'm just, I don't want to commit. I'm just, no that's not for me. I'm happy for other Christians to do their thing, but no, not me. He is the Messiah, the one of God. There is no other way to be saved apart from in him. If you refuse him, you are doing just that. You are mocking him, you are spitting on him. If you choose not to give your life to him, you're saying he's not worthy to have you. If you choose not to come to him for salvation, you're making him out to be a liar and a blasphemer. And on the day of judgment, you'll be condemned for doing so. Christ is offered to you this night. And in eternity, this day, this night will be brought up. Christ was freely offered to you. Why didn't you come to him? And you won't be sent to hell because you weren't one of the elect. You'll be sent there for refusing to believe upon Jesus Christ and come to him for salvation.

So we come to this table tomorrow because we have embraced him, not tomorrow on the Lord's day. We can tell our priests of Sermon another time on a Saturday night. But we come to this table because we've embraced him as our prophet, our priest and king. And we remember his death until he comes. Because his death has changed the course of our lives and our eternity. He is stood condemned in our place. So my friends, think much upon Christ this night, our silent sin bearer who has taken our place that we might forever be with him in his place. And we might be with him at the Father's right hand in glory. Amen.

Let's come before the Lord and pray. Our gracious God, we thank you again for your son. We thank you for what he has accomplished for his people on the cross of Calvary and that there is a full and free forgiveness. There is eternal life for all those who will come to him by faith. Help us then to rejoice in him this night. Help us to mourn over our sins that pierced him. And help us then to go out and live for him day by day in this world. O Lord, may we know your presence with us in these days. And may you build your church as Christ has proclaimed. May you draw sinners to yourself and glorify your name. But before us this night we pray, bless our time of fellowship together now. May your name be honoured in all that we say together. Blessed food we will eat as well. For Jesus' sake. Amen.