

## Exhortation 3- The Living Word Arrested Charles Herle (1598-1659)

Luke 22:54

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. Luke 22:54

1. "Then they took him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off," (Luke 22:54).

### II. The Explanation and Doctrine from the Text

#### A. Doctrine: Christ needs no defense other than his words for he is the Living Word.

##### 1. Christ Arrested and Led to the High Priest

- a) The last evening Christ would spend prior to his death included a meal of bread and wine with his closest friends in observance of Passover.
- b) After dinner, they retired to a quiet garden, a place he often went for respite (Luke 18:2).
- c) But tonight would be different, for armed soldiers led by traitorous Judas would soon overtake them here.
- d) Luke describes the narrative, "a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came with lanterns and torches and weapons," (Luke 18:3).

*(1) What a contrast of good and evil we find that night in the garden.*

*(2) Hate-filled soldiers, fueled by the rants of religious hypocrites and traitors trample through the garden with the mission to apprehend innocent majesty, one who only exhibited peace and love in both word and deed.*

- e) And yet it soon became clear that Christ needed no defense other than his words for he was the Living Word, and the truth he spoke was sharper than any two-edged sword.

*(1) Though Christ already knew the answer, he asked them who they were looking for.*

*(2) They responded, "Jesus of Nazareth."*

*(3) Israel had long before been too busy, in borrowing the Philistine's religion, and now it seems they will be bold with their policy too, their old policy of plowing against Samson, with his own heifer, his own familiar friend, (as our Savior himself says), like an untamed heifer, "hath lifted up the heel against him," (Judges 14:18; Psalm 41:9; Hosea 4:16).*

*(a) Samson, the true Nazarite, is here taken again, bound, abused, blind-folded.*

*(b) By the envious elders Christ is taken, bathing in a bloody sweat, surprised in the Garden, yet not without some instance of that ever-victorious self-armed majesty of innocence, in comparison to the heartless self-betraying cowardice of guilt in Judas and the soldiers, with the least glimpse of which majesty struck them.*

*(c) And when he answers simply, "I am he," they all fall backward onto the ground because of the sheer power of who he was and from which he spoke.*

- f) The Son of God, who not even the heaven of heavens can comprehend, is now, like a malefactor, being apprehended by the very worst of men on earth.

*(1) The one before whom the elders of heaven cast down their crowns, (Rev. 4:10-11), is the same Christ against whom these sons of the earth lift up their swords.*

(2) He that leads his people like sheep beside the waters of comfort is here himself being led like a sheep to the slaughter, (Psa. 23:2; Isa. 53:7).

(3) He that is able to bind kings in chains is now himself being bound and led away in cords to suffer torture and death.

g) The earth could have mediated in an instant to drop these murderous miscreants directly into hell itself, much like when Korah and his followers who rebelled against Moses and Aaron were swallowed up by the earth, (Num. 16:1-33).

(1) What better situation for God to rain fire from heaven to consume this traitorous captain with his forces, to make one entire holocaust of them all.

(2) Christ himself says to them, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).

(a) A single angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night (2 Kings 19:35).

(b) Imagine what 72,000 angels could have done to these wicked men!

h) But that is not God's purpose and will here.

(1) The Son of Man must be taken to be beaten and to die, otherwise God's covenant plan of redemption would be thwarted and Satan would be the victor.

(2) This is why Christ did not resist arrest.

(3) This is why God did not answer this event with fire from heaven or an earthquake to swallow them up.

(4) Christ's response came in a soft and gentle voice instead. Speaking to Judas, "Friend wherefore art thou come," (Matt. 26:50), and, "I taught daily in the temple, and are you now come with swords?" (Luke 22:53).

i) Without this response from Christ, how else would the Scriptures be fulfilled, as in Isaiah 53:7, "he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before the shearers."

(1) So do not triumph, you enemy soldiers, that you conquered your captive, for he is the Redeemer.

(2) Christ's love for our hopeless souls in regard to our debt to the Law, as well as his obedience to God the Father, brought about his capture.

(3) He could have easily broken those binding cords in two.

(4) With a word, he could have cast his enemies into hell itself.

(5) The account of what happened with Malchus' ear was enough to prove that he was a restorer and not a destroyer (Matt. 5:17).

(a) Further, Peter is instructed by the Master to put away his sword, for, "he that strikes with the sword, shall perish by it," (Matt. 26:52).

j) So, it was not the soldiers who arrested Christ or the religious leaders who sealed his fate.

(1) But rather it was my sin and his undying love for me that led the spotless Lamb of God down Calvary's road.

(2) He chose to give himself over to these evil, wicked men to do their worst, that I might know God's best.

B. "Then they took him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off," (Luke 22:54).

1. We should never be surprised when God doesn't work the way we think he should in a situation.

a) As Isaiah 55:8 tells us, God's ways are not our ways.

- b) A prime example occurs in the Garden of Gethsemane the night the soldiers came to arrest Christ.
- c) Man's way of dealing with the situation is demonstrated by Peter, who drew his sword and swung at one of the soldiers, cutting off his ear.
  - (1) *God's way of working his plan through this situation was for Christ to willingly surrender to the arrest without a fight. Christ, therefore, will not strike, lest he lose the victory.*
  - (2) *Christ did not come to fight, but to conquer, and his weapon is not the sword, but the cross.*

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Amazed at such an occurrence.

1. But what is even more amazing about this particular occurrence is that the entire band of soldiers, at least according to Scripture, appear to be unfazed at the miracles that occurred right before their eyes that night.
  - a) First of all, in plain view to all who were there, Jesus picked up Malchus' ear off the ground that Peter cut off with his sword and restored it to its place, as if it had never been severed.
  - b) The second miracle occurred when Jesus simply responded, "I am he whom you seek," and every last soldier in unison fell backward to the ground without any external force causing them to do so.
  - c) How could they see such a cure and such a phenomenon of force without believing the omnipotence of Christ's tongue and hand that worked these miracles?
    - (1) *How could they see that with a mere few words he could knock them all down and not consider that they were in the presence of God, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah?*
    - (2) *How could they observe that hand that restored a severed ear with nothing more than a touch and not realize they were about to arrest one much greater than themselves?*
  - d) And yet this was not an uncommon response of some who saw Christ's miracles with their own eyes, in particular, those religious leaders who were present when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44).
    - (1) *Immediately after observing this miraculous event, they assembled a council and concluded that "if we let him alone, everyone will believe in him."*
    - (2) *It may have certainly seemed so to them simply because they were afraid of losing their power over the people.*
  - e) But God alone holds the key to the heart. And the truth is that if God locks up the heart, it is not within man's power to open it, (John 12:40).
    - (1) *The secrets of the Lord are known only to those he chooses to reveal himself to.*
    - (2) *He shows his ways to the meek who seek him and to those who fear him.*
    - (3) *In short, men remain blind to the truth unless God himself opens their eyes of faith.*
    - (4) *Only then do we see the miracle of Christ and his Gospel and those wondrous things he makes available to us through his law, his mercy, and his grace.*

#### B.