

BETRAYAL OF THE BODY OF CHRIST—JOHN 17:20-18:27

I. Context: John 13-17

To capture the meaning of Peter's denial, we will need to spend some time in the preceding chapters, especially 13:20 ff. and 14:6-23. Key ideas are (a) Jesus' identity with the Father and the Father's in Jesus, (b) the Holy Spirit's mutual indwelling with both Father and Son, and (c) our mutual indwelling with the three persons of the Godhead.

II. This morning's text: Standing in the Path of Sinners

"...And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them" (18:5).

"Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' And the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself" (18:17-18).

"Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, 'You are not also one of His disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not' " (18:25).

These texts call our notice to where the characters stand, or more particularly, *with whom* they stand.

III. With Whom do we Stand?

Our identity is bound up with the company we keep, and our company testifies to where we have placed our allegiance. This is true of Judas and Peter, and happily, true also of the women who did stand by Christ:

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' " (19:25-26).

From here we realize, first, that our identity is not centered on what we think or what we believe. We are more than our ideas.

Second, we necessarily keep company with some community or other; we are not islands. There is no neutrality. See Peter: in denying his affiliation with Christ, he affiliated with those who were against Him. But others did stand with Christ, even in his humiliation.

The story is even larger than this. Christians must reckon their individual identities as buried into one another, even as we are in Christ and Christ is in us (John 17:21, Eph. 4:1-6, etc.). Peter dissociated himself from the Church, the company of Christ, His body. But consider Peter also, who in Scripture typifies the Church, even in this narrative (see 21:15ff.). The picture in John 18 is of the Church divided against itself, and in John 21 of the Church reconciled.

In a season of slander or controversy, we must own one another as brothers. We must do this even if it might result in getting muddled by the slander ourselves, or perhaps muddled by the more apparently (but not actually) benign "misunderstanding."