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The Coop Report...

Guilt, Regrets, and God's Ultimate Will...

> [50] Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him… At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.
>
> *Matthew 26:50-56 (NIV)*

When reading the accounting of Jesus' arrest and trial, it seems as if His 11 remaining apostles acted cowardly by distancing themselves from Jesus, lest they too might be arrested, scourged, and crucified.

What would you have done had you been one of these close followers…*personal friends* of Jesus? Would you have stepped forward to defend our Lord from those who came to arrest him? Would you have intervened when he was placed in front of Pilate or would you have deserted our Lord as did the apostles?

After having separated themselves from Jesus under these circumstances can you imagine how guilt-ridden they all must have been while He alone was scourged and then nailed to a cross to die a horribly slow and painful death? Have you ever done anything that left you with any feeling of guilt or regret? I can think of no one who has been born in the image of God who can honestly say they have not, "been there, done that!" Perhaps it was the neighborhood bully who picked on one of your best friends while you kept your distance. Perhaps, you have made an investment decision that has begun to unravel a retirement nest egg or a marital decision that has shattered your home.

So, with all of us convicted of times like these when we have made mistakes (some small ones and some pretty BIG ones), what kind of *recovery* from the pains of guilt and regret can we expect? Just how can we expect to get out of these situations in which we often find ourselves? On occasion, we see ourselves so deeply mired in the cistern we dug for ourselves that we simply cannot fathom how we will ever get out of it.

What if….

Let's go back to the events that occurred after that night in Gethsemane and consider what could have happened if the apostles *had* accompanied Jesus to the house of the high priest. Peter would not have been in the courtyard to deny the servant girl's accusation that he was "one" of them. Additionally, he would probably have been arrested and followed in Christ's suffering and physical death. The other apostles would also have suffered the identical fate had they, one-by-one, or even as a group intervened.

OK, suppose this is what *did* happen. What would have happened next? Where would this have left the state of the fledging church? Who would have taken Peter's place as the rock upon which Christ built His church?

> [18] And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
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> *Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)*

Who would have had the first-hand knowledge of the Son of God that could only have been acquired through the very close three-year relationship that these otherwise ordinary men had with Jesus? Who would have been around to witness the resurrected Son of God and testify that He indeed has risen from the dead? Without these bold witnesses, who would have proclaimed Christ crucified in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and throughout world?

What is….

Just as God did then, so he has and will continue do for us when we "mess" up and go on a "guilt trip" that casts us into our own dungeons of despair. Remember, God remains Sovereign throughout our lives just as He has always been before, during, and after His creation of all things, including ourselves. He and He alone has the game plan for His Kingdom. Sometimes we find ourselves in a position we don't understand or really like. Remember that God's game plan is an eternal one… one that may have far-reaching ramifications that we

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simply cannot fathom right now. Remember too, that as we live out our lives for Christ, it is all about Him, not about us.

No, it was not God's plan for the apostles to intervene when Jesus was arrested, scourged, or crucified. First of all, God and the Son had a plan for our redemption and it would only work if Jesus did go through what he did…the shedding of His blood for our sins…past, present, and future.

Secondly, God's game plan included using the matchless and unique qualities of these men to continue to launch and grow His church to the ends of the earth. God's game plan also includes *your* matchless and unique qualities.

Perhaps a situation you find yourself in now seems like quicksand, but remember, as God's disciples, we must be ready and willing to endure whatever our transitional lives here on earth may encounter. If we got ourselves into the muck and mire, by our own doing, God will get us out if we call upon Him, confess, and repent of our wrong doing. If we're there and don't know why, perhaps God put us there for a reason. Like Paul, let's be confident that God's ultimate will *will* be done for His Kingdom.

> [12] Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. [13] As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. [14] Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.
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> *Philippians 1:12-14 (NIV)*

God is always faithful and true to us…to those that love the Lord.

We are together in Christ,

Brian