These words were spoken on the eve of the greatest tragedy the world has ever known -- the death of the Son of God. Jesus was calm as he announced that one of his disciples would betray him. “The Son of man goeth (i.e. is going to die) even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had not been born.” Judas was often first to criticize as is seen in the case of Mary anointing the Lord with the ointment. He declared it to be a waste and could have been put to better use. But on this occasion, when Jesus declares that one of the twelve would betray him, Judas is the last to ask, “Is it I?” He knew the answer, and perhaps asked only to divert attention away from himself. Jesus knew what the fate of Judas would be in the other world. No hope is held out for his ultimate restoration. It was a dark situation indeed, with no ray of hope to brighten the dismal prospect that lay ahead. “It had been good for that man had he never been born,” was a common expression among the Jews, and Jesus borrows it and applies it to the one who should betray him.

Each time the clock ticks, someone is being born into this world. Parents of newborn babies swell with pride as they look for the first time upon the face of their child. In the face of an infant, we see everything that is symbolized by purity and as we stand there, we think of the words of the Master, “of such is the kingdom of God.” However, if while looking upon the face of that child, we could see twenty years into the future, we might be impelled to say, “good were it had you never been born.”

This past year, the lives of several men were snuffed out in State “gas chambers” or “electric chairs.” Their parents were just as proud of them; they had the same expectations that many of us have had for our children. These men and women grew into adults and fell in with the wrong crowd. Perhaps their parents failed to provide the right example and they became bad characters. They led lives of sin and vice, which landed them in prison. Last night, while many of us slept, there was no sleep for a few broken hearted mothers and fathers. “Good were it for those men, had they never been born.”
The words of Jesus, concerning his betrayer, did not die when Judas went out and hanged himself, but live on and can be applied with equal force to many persons who live today.

I. The Traitor Who Sells Him

A traitor is one “who betrays a trust or confidence; one who violates his allegiance.” We often magnify a sin when it is committed by others, and minimize it when it exists in our own lives.

The sin of betraying Jesus looks extremely bad when we see Judas commit it. Thirty pieces of silver doesn’t seem to be a very rich reward for such a betrayal. But many betray the Lord for a lot less. Anything that we permit to stand between us and our service to Christ is the price for which we sell Him.

Here is a story of a father who was raving furiously because his child had run away with a neighbor’s child and gotten married. His wife said, “Don’t be too hard on them, honey. You know we did the same thing when we were no older than they are.” “That’s a different matter entirely,” he said.

A young lady told the preacher that she didn’t come to church because instead she could make a dollar and a half by working. If this was the real reason, she sold out pretty cheap.

Many sell Jesus for:
Love of Pleasure – (2 Timothy 3:4) “lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God”
Love of Money – (1 Timothy 6:10) “love of money root of all evil…”
Love of Power and Knowledge – “O Timothy Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith…”

All these factors are powerful in the human life and unless we are careful, we will let our love for them retard our zeal for his work.

It is difficult for a traitor to get back into the graces of good people. When the names of the apostles were given, Judas came last with these words “and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

II. The Infidel Who Denies Him

It is a poor and unprofitable business in which the infidel is engaged. His work is altogether destructive: it tears down morals, virtue. It encourages immorality, condemns the principle of self-restraint,looses all animal passion, and paves the road to hell. If I had no other reason for believing
in God, the very fact that man instinctively seeks him would be sufficient. Man is religious by nature. Whether worshipping on the banks of the Ganges, with upturned face toward the sun or on his knees bowed toward Mecca, he is a creature of worship. Being essentially so inclined makes it all the more important that he be taught. (Matthew 28:19)

The bible turns one to God and a better life. Atheism never did make anyone better. Someone may say, “It’s hard to realize a Supreme being.” Something harder: “try realizing how there can be a world without one.” (Psalms 19:1) “The heavens declare the glory of God…” (Psalms 112:7) “He… shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Man is dependent. (Jeremiah 10:23) “…not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.” “Give us this day our daily bread…” (Matthew 6:11) The works of God are too evident and powerful to deny. “The fool hath said in his heart that there is no God.” (Psalms 14:1)

It would have been better if the infidel had never been born.

III. The Apostate Who Renounces Him

An apostate is one who “totally deserts principles of faith; a renegade.” In order for one to commit this sin, he must first be a Christian. He must know the truth, and taste the good things of God. There is a difference in apostatizing and backsliding. To Israel, Jehovah said, “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you…” (Jeremiah 3:12) In Hosea 14:4, he promises to “heal their backslidings.” One can backslide without entirely denouncing the principles of the faith, without becoming an infidel with reference to the truth. A backslider may indulge in the works of the flesh, but all the while realizes that he needs to reform and return to Christ. On the other hand, the apostate becomes so hardened that he no longer respects the church; he openly curses and blasphemes and declares that there is nothing to it.

In such a state, he totally deserts all the principles of faith and becomes a renegade.

(Hebrews 6:4-6) “For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

(2 Peter 2:20-21) “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning, For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”
These teachers had a clear perception of the principles of Christ which they had now repudiated.

“Better for them…” i.e. in view of their subsequent apostasy – (a) would not have brought reproach on the cause of Christ, (b) would not have fallen to such a level of depravity that now characterized them, (c) would not suffer as great punishment in the last day. With increased knowledge, comes increased responsibility. What a horrible state of affairs. This shows the danger of becoming careless and indifferent. These are the first steps toward backsliding and backsliding is the first step toward complete apostasy.

(1 John 5:16) “If any one sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death, I do not say that he should pray about that.”

God will forgive every sin we confess and of which we repent. (1 John 1:9) The sin unto death is one we commit with no repentance. We continue to commit that sin until we die. No need to pray for this sin. Like Judas, it is better for these people who sin unto death, that they never were born.

IV. The Hypocrite Who Dishonors Him

A hypocrite is “a deceiver, a cheat.” He is an enemy in the Lord’s camp – not fit to live and unprepared to die. Israel’s hypocrisy dishonored Jehovah among the other nations of the Old Testament, and God is dishonored by the same thing today. The Pharisees were masters at this vice, and Jesus compared them to putrid decay that is found under the beautiful monuments in our cemeteries – outwardly beautiful - inwardly corrupt. (Matthew 23:23) “…pay tithe of mint, anise, cumin – omit weightier matters of the law…” Strain at a gnat, swallow a camel. (Matthew 23:25) They would “cleanse outside of cup and dish, while the inside was full of extortion and self indulgence.”

One old preacher described hypocrisy as “going around with two faces under one hat.”

Someone said, “Some in the pulpit preach so well that it is a pity that they should ever come out; but when out so live that it is a pity they should ever go in.” This is hypocrisy. This is a deadly sin, because it professes religion where none exists. It is used for the basest purposes, usually with some personal and selfish aim. The warnings in the bible make it plain that the hypocrite has no chance of entering heaven. (Ezekiel 33:31) “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and; they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness.” David said, “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wicked; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue.” (Psalms 5:9) For the good of the community, the church, and the
hypocrite himself, it would have been far better had his existence never become a reality. People should not judge the church by this man, but they do. They don’t judge the new car by the old worn out model, or the new house by the log huts of years ago, but just as surely as a church member does wrong, they judge the whole church by his conduct. Sinners often use the hypocrite as an excuse for not becoming a Christian. What a mistake and a shame. Christians often use the hypocrite as an excuse for not doing more in the service of Christ.

V. The False Teacher Who Leads Men Astray

There have been false teachers from the beginning of time, i.e. the devil. In the days of Christ, He warned against such. *(Matthew 7:15)* “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” *(2 Corinthians 11:13)* “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.” *(2 Peter 2:1)* “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

False teachers give false hope and direction by failing to tell people the whole truth, and warn of the consequences of sin. They deceive in word and action; they set a double standard by keeping back part of God’s revelation. They promise what they cannot deliver -- such things as miraculous healing, raising the dead, and such like. Some even promise the forgiveness of sins. They point people in the wrong direction, by telling them denominationalism is right, when it is wrong. They become prophets for profit, taking money from unsuspecting individuals. They do not preach the truth, the whole truth. It would be better had they never been born. *(Revelation 20:10)* “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”