

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 14:27-31; 66-72

Life Lesson

Peter loved Jesus, but his confidence in himself was stronger than his dependence on Christ. When pressure came, his courage collapsed. His failure reminds us that good intentions and bold words are not enough—we are weaker than we think. But Peter's story does not end with denial; it ends with restoration. The resurrection proves that failure is not final. When we fall, Jesus meets us not with condemnation but with grace that leads to repentance and renewal. When our strength gives way, His grace still stands.

Examine Scripture

27 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will fall away, because it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 29 Peter told him, "Even if everyone falls away, I will not. 30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to him, "today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he kept insisting, "If I have to die with you, I will never deny you." And they all said the same thing.

66 While Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the high priest's maidservants came. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth."

How to Be a Failure

There are moments we face that can only be described as the dark hours of our souls. These are moments when we face overwhelming doubt, fear, and anxiety that lead to a crisis of faith. Sometimes these moments stem from outward circumstances beyond our control. However, sometimes they come from within ourselves, from our own struggles, weaknesses, and failures.

In our text, we have such a moment: Peter's denial of Jesus. It comes just on the heels of Judas's betrayal. With Judas, it was a moment of darkness from the recesses of unbelief. With Peter, it comes from an outward display of pseudo-strength masking inner weakness. Peter was always the brash, devoted disciple, very intent on following Jesus to the end. There is no doubt that Peter's intentions and love for Jesus are authentic. However, as with many of us, intentions are not enough in the moments that challenge everything we believe. As Peter soon discovered about himself, though he may have intended to follow Jesus to the end, his outward show of strength was not enough to counter his inner weakness of doubt and fear.

V. 27

It is important to note that Peter was not the only one who would fail Jesus in His greatest moment of need. Jesus told them, "All of you will fall away, because it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (v. 27). Jesus did not single Peter out until Peter singled himself out by insisting, "Even if everyone falls away, I will not" (v. 29). Jesus is not saying the Disciples would lose their faith; far from it. However, in this moment, they would lose their courage. They would lose the willingness to follow Jesus to the cross, which, ironically, is exactly where Jesus said they should be willing to follow Him (Mark 8:34). They were afraid of being identified with Jesus, especially in the face

68 But he denied it: "I don't know or understand what you're talking about." Then he went out to the entryway, and a rooster crowed. 69 When the maidservant saw him again, she began to tell those standing nearby, "This man is one of them." 70 But again he denied it. After a little while those standing there said to Peter again, "You certainly are one of them, since you're also a Galilean." 71 Then he started to curse and swear, "I don't know this man you're talking about!" 72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered when Jesus had spoken the word to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

- Underline "All of you" in (v. 27). Write "Disciples and me" above it.
- Bracket "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" and write "Zech. 13:7" in the margin.
- Circle (v. 29 and v. 31) and draw a line to connect the two. Write "Prov. 16:18" in the margin.
- Underline each time Peter denied Jesus in (vs. 66-72).
- Circle "curse and swear" in (v. 71) to show the depth of Peter's denial.

Personal Notes

of persecution. So, all the disciples would fail Jesus in one way or another, especially during His arrest, trials, and crucifixion. This was to fulfill what was prophesied in (Zech. 13:7).

Not only does the moment fulfill prophecy, but it also exposes all of us. In our moments of greatest commitment and promise, we present an outward appearance of strength and courage, yet in reality, it is only a spiritual veneer covering our incredible weakness. Often, our words and attitudes suggest that we are willing to completely surrender to Christ and follow Him to the ends of the earth, yet our hearts are full of doubt and fear. In these moments, we ought to be reminded that intentions are not enough; we must possess a faith refined through personal struggles and experiences that have required us to cry out, "I believe. Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

V. 28

So, is there any hope? If the Disciples can so easily fail Jesus, is there any hope for the rest of us? Luckily, Jesus did not leave the Disciples in this moment of fear and doubt. After saying they would fall away, Jesus said, "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee" (v. 28). At first, this does not seem to be very encouraging, but keep in mind the mental state of the Disciples after the crucifixion. They were devastated. They hid in an upper room, fearing for their lives. Yet, with the appearance of the resurrected Jesus, the Disciples, once scared and weak, became the very ones who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). What made the difference? What turned these failures into forces of nature? The resurrection! After the sheep were scattered, the resurrection would reunite the sheep with the Shepherd.

This is the same hope for us! Though we may face times of doubt and fear, or even fail Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus gives us the hope we need in times of despair and the courage to face fear. It also gives us healing and perseverance in the face of failure.

Vs. 29-31

Jesus' words did not sit well with Peter. Deceived by his own pride, Peter thought he could never betray or deny Jesus. Peter's words are forceful, even confident, but not truly strong: "Even if everyone falls away, I will not" (v. 29). Though seemingly heartfelt and passionate, these words are built on straw. Jesus even calls Peter on his declaration: "Truly I tell you, today, this very night, before the

Personal Notes

rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times” (v. 30). As intense as Peter’s declaration was, Jesus’ reply is even more forceful and stern. Jesus systematically dissolves Peter’s egotism and pride. First, Jesus uses the phrase, “Truly I tell you.” This phrase is usually used when Jesus speaks authoritatively about difficult truths. Surely Peter would have understood this familiar tone in Jesus’ voice and the power of His solemn words. Secondly, Jesus tells Peter that this is not a distant denial but an imminent one. It will be “today, this very night” (v. 30). Peter would not have to wait long to see the fulfillment of Jesus’ words and the failure of his own heart. Thirdly, Jesus tells him that he will not only deny Him, but will do so three times before the rooster crows. Ironically, these words will not pierce Peter’s heart until the rooster’s crows pierce his ears.

Even after Jesus’ stern words, Peter’s pride still prevents him from seeing the truth. He responds even more emphatically, “If I have to die with you, I will never deny you” (v. 31). Not only did Peter say he would never deny Jesus, he insisted he would die before doing so. In his pride and arrogance, Peter did not realize how weak he truly was. Peter was always headstrong, speaking and acting before thinking. Once harnessed, these traits would be useful in building the kingdom, but in this moment they only reveal Peter’s immaturity. Yet Peter is able to convince the other Disciples to begin saying the same thing: “And they all said the same thing” (v. 31). All of them were weaker than they knew. Their knowledge of the truth and their experiences with Jesus led them to view themselves as stronger and more mature than they actually were.

Peter’s insistent declaration is a prime example of (Prov. 16:18): “Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.” Though we know of his imminent fall, Peter did not. He truly thought he would die before denying Jesus. However, there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance; the more passionate and determined we are, the more tempting to cross that line, slipping into pride and arrogance that eventually lead to a fall.

Vs. 66-72

And now the fall! Yet, before we judge Peter too harshly, we have to admit that he was faithful to his word. In fact, of all the disciples, he is the only one who stayed close to Jesus amid the trials, mockery, and beatings. Peter truly loved Jesus and was deeply concerned about him. He intended to follow Jesus even to death.

Personal Reflection

1. Where in my life am I relying more on good intentions than on faith strengthened through prayer and dependence on Christ?

2. Have there been moments when pride or overconfidence blinded me to my spiritual vulnerability? What did that reveal about my heart?

3. When I face pressure, fear, or the possibility of rejection, am I tempted to subtly distance myself from Jesus?

4. After I fail, do I respond like Peter—with brokenness and repentance—or do I hide in shame and self-reliance?

5. How does the reality of the resurrection give me hope that my failures are not final and that Christ's grace can restore me?

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

Mt. Zion's Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY
disciples of Jesus Christ.

Yet, Peter was spotted by one of the high priest's maidservants. She recognized Peter and even said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth" (v. 67). Notice the maidservant's contempt for Jesus; she referred to Him as the man from the small, insignificant town of Nazareth. Peter must have felt the accusatory words of contempt because he used a traditional formula of rabbinical denial: "I don't know or understand what you're talking about" (v. 68). Then, he left, and the rooster crows.

With his great concern for Jesus, Peter did not go very far. He loved Jesus too much to leave Him completely. The maidservant found him and accused him again. This time, she involved other sinners in the crowd, telling them, "This man is one of them" (v. 69). Peter again denied knowing what she meant. But the maidservant was persistent. Perhaps she and others picked up on his Galilean accent. So she accused him again, with even more vigor: "You certainly are one of them, since you're also a Galilean" (v. 70). This time, Peter's denial was even more intense. Peter even invoked a curse and swore, "I don't know this man you're talking about!" (v. 71). The first two times, Peter denied being with Jesus, but the third time, he denied knowing Jesus. Then the second crow of the rooster. Peter immediately remembered the words of Jesus. In Luke's Gospel, we read that when the rooster crowed, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter" (Luke 22:61). With the disappointed, yet gracious eyes of Jesus on him, the rooster crowing in his ears, his failure broke his heart: "And he broke down and wept" (v. 72). Immediately, there was heartbreak and repentance. Peter knew he had failed Jesus in the moment of His greatest need.

There is not much good from this dark moment in Peter's life, but there are a few comforts. First, Peter went as far with Jesus as he was able in his own strength. He went when no one else did. Upon realizing his sin and failure, Peter was immediately heartbroken and repented.

We can take comfort in knowing that even in our failures, some good may come from them. While Peter failed Him, Jesus looked at him not with judgment but with grace. Though hurt and disappointed, Jesus did not glare at Peter in vengeance, but with grace and mercy, allowing His goodness to be seen in His eyes: "God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). These are the same eyes that look toward us when we fail and sin, not eyes of judgment but eyes of mercy and grace, full of kindness and goodness to lead us to repentance.