

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 26:31-35 | Never Say Never**  
Sunday March 15, 2026

**WELCOME:**

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

**REVIEW:**

We continue in our verse-by-verse exposition of Matthew's Gospel this morning.

We are in the last 24 hours of Jesus' life—this timeframe is called “The Passion.”

For the past several weeks, we have watched Jesus transform the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper.

**Last Week KEYPOINT 1:**

*Just as the Passover was only for the Jews (and converts), the Lord's Supper is only for the Church.*

In both instances, God tells His people exactly how to come before Him.

God does so because He is holy and we are not.

We do not come to a holy God on our terms. *- impossible*

In fact, there are only two ways to come before the One True Living God:

1. By His standard of perfection/Law.
2. By His grace of His Son.

**Last Week KEYPOINT 2:**

*Scripture consistently shows a pattern of rapid baptism following conversion, leading to church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper.*

Every time we teach baptism and the Lord's Supper, this pattern tends to surprise people.

There is nothing wrong with theological surprises—it's what we do next with that information that's important.

Are we going to be faithful to the Word of God? Or are we going to be wise in our own eyes?

Which brings us to today's passage

### INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're going to eavesdrop on the ongoing conversation Jesus has with the eleven Disciples as they leave the first Lord's Supper in Jerusalem and walk to the Garden of Gethsemane.

As they walk, Jesus gives the Disciples some very disturbing news.

We've watched Judas betray the Lord Jesus Christ during the Passover meal.

Jesus dismissed Judas before He instituted the Lord's Supper. *-because the Lord's Supper is only for believers.*

And now Jesus tells the remaining Disciples that they too will fall away and betray the Lord Jesus. *-Even though they believe.*

So, Matthew continues with his theme of betrayal in this chapter.

How can understanding the Disciples' failures help you in your own spiritual walk? Let's find out!

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

### SCRIPTURE:

**Matthew 26:31**— Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight all of you will fall away because of me, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

† **Matthew 26:32**—*But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.*"

† **Matthew 26:33**—Peter told him, "Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away."

† **Matthew 26:34**—"Truly I tell you," Jesus said to him, "tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

† **Matthew 26:35**—"Even if I have to die with you," Peter told him, "I will never deny you," and all the disciples said the same thing.

*These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God. I pray we receive them as such.*

† **PRAY:**

*I am ridiculed by all my adversaries and even by my neighbors. I am dreaded by my acquaintances; those who see me in the street run from me. (Psalm 31:11)*

*My loved ones and friends stand back from my affliction, and my relatives stand at a distance. (Psalm 38:11)*

† **EXEGESIS:**

After closing the Passover meal and instituting the Lord's Supper, the Lord and the Disciples sang a praise song.

† **Matthew 26:30**— *After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Jesus and the eleven Disciples now walk about a mile from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives.

Remember that Jesus dismissed Judas, so there are now only eleven Disciples.

It's probably around midnight because the Passover meal was celebrated after sundown, and that meal takes several hours.

In addition to the meal itself, the institution of the very first Lord's Supper also took some time.

As they are walking to the Garden of Gethsemane late at night, Jesus drops a bomb.

✝ **Matthew 26:31**— *Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight all of you will fall away because of me,*

Just a few hours ago, Jesus told the Disciples that *someone* would betray Him.

Now that *Judas* is gone, Jesus lets the remaining Disciples know that the rest of them will betray Him too.

Not only does Jesus predict the betrayal, but also its timing.

✝ **Matthew 26:31**— "Tonight all of you will fall away because of me,

Tonight—This very night.

This is the first of two times Jesus refers to the divine timing of "tonight."

✝ **Matthew 26:31**— all of you

Keep in mind that just a few hours ago, during the Passover meal, the Disciples asked themselves if they had the capacity to betray Jesus when they found out there was a trader in the group.

Now, Jesus tells them that they will all betray Him to some degree.

They won't cease to be His Disciples, but they will fail Him when Jesus needs them most.

like Judas

**Matthew 26:31**— *all of you will fall away*

The Greek verb is *skandalizō* (fall away), where we get *scandal*.

*Skandalizō* literally means “to set a trap, snare, or stumbling block.”

Jesus uses this word in explaining the Parable of the Soils...

**Matthew 13:20** —*And the one sown on rocky ground—this is one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.*

**Matthew 13:21** —*But he has no root and is short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the (word, immediately he falls away.*

why?

(Jesus)

The parable's about to be lived out in real time.

**Matthew 26:31**— *Then Jesus said to them, “Tonight all of you will fall away because of me,*

Practically, it's one thing to be bold in our faith, sitting comfortably in Church this morning.

It's one thing to be courageous in our small groups and Bible studies.

It's one thing to share the Gospel with friends and family with purity and passion.

But what happens to us when that personal safety is removed?

We've heard stories of men and women who became martyrs throughout church history.

Don't you wonder what you would do if you were put in that situation?

We hear stories and have even seen videos of people walking into a church, disrupting the service, or even worse, shooting the place up.

How would you respond if that happened here?

We think we know how we would respond—but the reality is that we don't really know until we are put in that situation.

Well, in just a few hours, the Disciples are going to be thrown into a situation they didn't see coming.

Their fear will overwhelm them.

But there's also something else when it comes to the Disciples—and that is their inability to grasp God's purpose in all of this.

And it's not just them who don't grasp it—it's us.

The Disciples take a lot of criticism for their betrayal, running, and falling away.

It's really easy to be an armchair quarterback sitting in our prayer chair, reading Scripture with a hot cup of coffee, judging the Disciples for their actions.

But here's the thing. These remaining Disciples represent us—because if we were in their shoes, we would have done the same thing.

How do we know?

**Matthew 26:31**—*for it is written:*

Matthew reveals the mystery of God's sovereignty.

God's sovereignty is His absolute and unrivaled rule over all His creatures and their circumstances.

While the Disciples' defection is indeed tragic, it doesn't fall outside God's sovereign plan to save His elect.

We should marvel at these words, "it is written."

These three words reveal the Father's plan for His Son to save His people.

Part of that marveling involves seeing the sovereign hand of God in the death of his Son.

Jesus not only knew that Judas Iscariot was the one setting the trap, but He also knew what the Disciples, what the religious and political leaders, what and the soldiers would all do.

Because Jesus is the very Son of God, He could see every movement as if it had already happened.

Jesus could hear every word as if it had already been spoken.

Jesus is not reacting to human decisions but rather physically experiencing what the Father planned before the world began.

This redemptive plan is no afterthought.

God's sovereign plan of redemption was implemented before Genesis 1, let alone Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sinned.

How Jesus will die and why Jesus will die is about to unfold—and it's out of love and concern for the Disciples that Jesus tells them this in advance.

**Matthew 26:31**—for it is written: ***I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.***

Jesus refers to the OT prophet Zechariah. — *Bad text*

In this OT passage, God speaks through Zechariah, promising a cleansing from all the false prophets in Israel.

However, Zechariah's prediction was veiled in the OT—this passage is cryptic and difficult to read.

Without Jesus' explanation here in Matthew, it would have been impossible for the Disciples to understand correctly.

So in chapter 13, Zechariah was speaking about false prophets whom the Lord was about to remove.

But in verse seven, Zechariah abruptly turns to a man whom God calls “My Shepherd.”

**Zechariah 13:7(a)**—*Sword, awake against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate—*

We're familiar with people being called “shepherds” in Scripture, but who is this “associate”?

“*My Associate*” is the Hebrew noun *‘āmîṭ* (ah-meet).

It could be translated “the mighty man of My union” or “the mighty man equal to Me,”

Equal to who? Answer: God the Father!

This man, “shepherd/associate,” is the same person and is clearly a deity.

It is against this divine Shepherd-Associate that God (the Father) commanded.

**Zechariah 13:7(b)**—*Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.*

Jesus uses that OT passage to bring clarity.

BTW, that's what the NT does.

The NT Scriptures clarify OT passages.

We always want to start in the NT. Why?

Because Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT!

Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophets, priests, and kings. — *King & Kings.*

*→ No Temple in Jer.*

**Matthew 26:31**—for it is written: **I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.**

Who's the "I"? Answer: God the Father.

Who's the shepherd? Answer: God the Son

The implied subject of both verbs is God—God is the agent.

The shepherd is Jesus, and the disciples are the sheep (Matt. 26:31).

To "strike" means to kill—God the Father is going to kill God the Son.

As we know, Judas Iscariot, the Jewish leaders, and the Roman government carried out the action, but God the Father ordained it.

*Don't Miss this:*

The Holy Spirit, writing through Matthew, clearly wants us to know that this redemptive plan was written by God the Father. — *Sagged little pill.*

*Remember*

Scripture explains Scripture, so let me provide an example as to the Father's role in all of this. *in the N.T.*

*Beginning in Acts, the church is exploding*

Peter prays to the Father for boldness when the Apostles are being persecuted in the book of Acts.

† **Acts 4:27**—“For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed,

† **Acts 4:28**—to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans,

† **Romans 8:32**—He (God the Father) did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.

So don't miss that this plan of redemption has been orchestrated by God the Father.

Now, Jesus was struck, and the sheep were scattered.

Now, although Jesus gives the eleven Disciples such disturbing news, notice what He says next.

† **Matthew 26:32**—But after I have risen,

Jesus immediately encourages the Disciples.

Because Jesus brings up the resurrection once again.

Jesus is crystal clear—He will be raised from the dead.

Jesus is not a martyr—He is God wrapped in flesh and bone!

A martyr is someone who dies for their faith—and stays dead.

Jesus is not a martyr—He tells the Disciples again and again about His resurrection.

His resurrection proves everything that He's already said about Himself—that he is very Son of God.

**Matthew 26:32**— *I will go ahead of you to Galilee.*"

Once again, we see the sovereign plan of a holy, loving God being unveiled.

Although Jesus knew the Disciples would be ashamed of Him and even desert and deny Him—Jesus was not ashamed of them.

He will be their Good Shepherd again, leading them to Galilee.

Galilee is where they live.

Galilee is the very place He called them to be Disciples just three years prior.

The big city of Jerusalem is so intimidating—Jerusalem is where they kill God's people.

So Jesus tells them to go home.

**Matthew 26:32**—*But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.*"

How do the Disciples respond?

Do they say:

- “That sounds like a great plan, Lord?”
- “Please forgive me in advance for betraying and leaving you.”
- “Do they weep over their sins?”

**Matthew 26:33**—Peter told him, “Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away.”

Peter was only half listening.

Because he was only half listening, he made three mistakes that we can all learn from:

First, Peter’s ego turns emotional.

An emotional faith is a disappointing & deadly faith. — Emotional faith leads to disappointment in God.

It’s best to keep our mouths shut when we don’t have self-control.

Second, Peter betrays the other Disciples.

He throws his friends under the bus.

In doing so, his mouth writes a check he can’t cash.

Third, he completely missed what Jesus said about His resurrection and the plan to regather.

What did Pete hear? Answer: His ego.

What did Peter feel? Answer: Hurt

Pete’s hurt because Jesus didn’t believe him.

There is no doubt that Peter loved Jesus and was fiercely loyal.

However, Peter does what Peter has always done.

He shoots first and aims second.

At this moment, Peter probably blurts out what the other Disciples think.

† **Matthew 26:33**— *I will never fall away.*”

The “I” is conclusive, decisive, emphatic, and passionate.

In other words, *You can count on me, Lord. I’m solid as a rock.*

We chuckle because we sometimes sound like him.

The small rock (petras) had a great big fall!

Pete was certain he was made of better stuff than the other Disciples.

He has just vowed to stand by Jesus no matter what.

But Jesus refused to leave him in his self-deceived self-confidence.

† **Matthew 26:34**—“*Truly I tell you,*” Jesus said to him, “*tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.*”

This is the second time that Jesus mentions “tonight.”

Can you imagine how this prophecy must have hit Peter?

It was supposed to hit Peter like the bus he was driving when he threw his friends underneath it just a moment ago.

† **Matthew 26:34**— “*Truly I tell you,*” Jesus said to him,

In other words, *I solemnly declare, or thus says the Lord.*

Not only would Peter “slip up” and “backslide” into sin.

Peter doesn’t slip up—Peter denies his Lord, not once but three times.

His sin is epic and tragic.

In fact, because of Peter's big mouth, Jesus is showing him that as the leader of the Disciples, he will be even more disloyal than the other ten.

Don't miss this imagery...

✦ **Matthew 26:34**—“tonight, before the rooster crows,

Have you ever seen a rooster crow?

Have you ever wondered why God programmed roosters to be so cocky? *Illustration.*

Don't miss Jesus analogy—Peter looks like this silly cocky rooster.

Does Peter catch on? Does he back down? Does he repent?

No, he doubles down!

✦ **Matthew 26:35**—“Even if I have to die with you,” Peter told him, “I will never deny you,”

✦ **KEYPOINT 1:**

*Peter continuously fails to listen; therefore, he will fail the test.*

*Jesus said, “You will deny Me.” — NOT “You might.”*  
But Peter can not hear the truth through his bravado.

Peter has a blind spot, and although the Lord has rebuked him several times for it, we see it again here.

The blind spot goes like this:

Jesus, the Son of God, says something—and Peter disagrees.

It's a game of "you say, I say" with the Lord Jesus.

The last time Peter played this game was when Jesus first told the Disciples about the resurrection.

How did Pete respond?

**Matthew 16:22**—"Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to you!"

*What bravado! Such machismo. ¡El estúpido!*

**Matthew 16:23**—Jesus turned and told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you're not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns."

In other words, Pete is not aligned with God's sovereign redemptive plan.

Peter thinks he is, but his actions speak otherwise.

He didn't learn the lesson by being called "satan."

Speaking of Satan, Luke's Gospel provides more details...

**Luke 22:31**—"Simon, Simon (not Peter), look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat."

**Luke 22:32**—"But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail."

Notice that Jesus didn't pray that the Father would take away the test.

He prays for Peter's faith—that his faith would allow him to pass it—to go through it—not around it.

† **Luke 22:33**—“Lord,” he told him, “I’m ready to go with you both to prison and to death.”

† **Luke 22:34**—“I tell you, Peter,” he said, “the rooster will not crow today until you deny three times that you know me.”

Pete oozes pride. It’s so disturbing and ugly.

But here’s the thing....Peter’s not alone.

† **Matthew 26:35**— and all the disciples said the same thing.

These men have the same attitude as ungodly men in the OT.

Goliath said to David...

† **1 Samuel 17:44**—Come here,” the Philistine called to David, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!”

King Nebuchadnezzar asked a pompous rhetorical question...

† **Daniel 4:30**—Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?”

† **KEYPOINT 2:**  
*Pride is faith in oneself.*

The Lord hates pride:

† **Proverbs 6:16/17**—The LORD hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him: arrogant eyes,

Pride is the first one on the list.

+ **Proverbs 16:18**—Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

+ **Proverbs 26:12**—Do you see a person who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

The problem with Peter and the other disciples is that they still have visions of greatness.

They still don't get the sovereign plan of a holy God.

These men are not aligned with God.

BTW, do you know how God aligns His people after repeated efforts? Answer: He breaks them.

What we see as strong, God sees as weakness.

+ **1 Corinthians 1:25**—~~because~~ God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

+ **1 Corinthians 1:27**—~~instead~~, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

+ **2 Corinthians 12:9**—But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.

+ **2 Corinthians 12:10**—So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The opposite is also true: When I think I'm strong, God is weak.

**KEYPOINT 3:**

*God aligns His people through tests, trials, and hardships.*

God's ways are not our ways.

Jesus came to save sinners—not give us a wonderful life.

Back to Pete and the Disciples...

**Matthew 26:35**—“Even if I have to die with you,” Peter told him, “I will never deny you,” and all the disciples said the same thing.

Notice that Jesus doesn't rebuke them again.

It's almost as if Jesus allows Peter to have the final say.

But Peter doesn't have the final say.

Pete has just enrolled himself in the school of hard knocks.

He is about to do something that he will have to live with and regret for the rest of his life.

This is something very interesting about God's sovereignty—The Lord said, “that the sheep will scatter.”

He didn't say that Peter *had* to deny him three times—Pete has brought that particular prophecy upon himself.

**APPLICATION:**

*Consider answering one question per day during your devotional time with the Lord.*

1. How does the denial of God's truth and reality impact your faith in Him?
2. In what area of life, do you have a blind spot that leads to pride?
3. How can we prepare ourselves spiritually for moments when our faith might be tested?
4. In Keypoint 3, we said that "God aligns His people through tests, trials, and hardships." Do you think you're passing or failing your current test? If you're failing, what can you do to turn things around?
5. How can understanding the Disciples' failures help you in your own spiritual walk?
6. What steps can we take to align our hearts with God's sovereign plan in our lives?
7. How can we cultivate a deeper dependence on God to avoid the pride that leads to spiritual failure?

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

