

Failure and Faithfulness at Gethsemane (Zechariah 13:7 and Mark 14:27-52)

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Zechariah 13:7

The Shepherd Struck, the Sheep Scattered

⁷ “Awake, sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who is close to me!”
declares the Lord Almighty.

“Strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered,
and I will turn my hand against the little ones.

Mark 14:27-52

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

²⁷ “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for 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 into Galilee.”

²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

Gethsemane

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ “*Abba*, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Jesus Arrested

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷ Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸ “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple

courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him,⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Mark 14** starting at verse 26.

Let me pray first...

Context/Jesus predicts the disciples' failure (vv27-31)

The **Context**

Jesus has just had his last meal with His disciples

At that meal, He announced that one of them will betray Him

After the meal – v26 – they sang a hymn and they went to the Mount of Olives

We pick up the story in vv27-31 where...

Jesus predicts the disciples' failure

He says they will all fall away that very night

He quotes from the **OT prophet Zechariah** – from **520BC** –which is our **OT reading - Zechariah 13:7**

“I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered”

Jesus is **fulfilling this prophecy** – He is the **shepherd** and the disciples are the **sheep!**

Jesus (the shepherd) is going to be arrested, unfairly tried in a kangaroo court, and be crucified – and the disciples (the sheep) will run for the hills!

Good old Peter – with his usual foot in mouth disease – boldly insists “*even if all fall away, I will not*” (v29)

But Jesus predicts Peter will deny Him three times this very night – before the rooster crows twice (v30)

Why three times? Three is God’s number! It’s like Peter will deny the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Jesus already knows the disciples coming failure – yet He also promises **restoration**...

Look at v28 – Jesus says “*After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee*”

This is amazing – even before the disciples’ failure – even before Jesus’ death – Grace is promised! Jesus will die but rise again! The disciples will all fall away but in Jesus’ grace they will all see the risen Jesus in Galilee (see Matthew 28:16-17; John 21:1-4)

Application: For us, **Jesus knows our weaknesses before we fail**. But if we do fail - 1 John 1:9 says “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*”

Failure does not cancel out our relationship with Jesus

When we fail, sincere repentance leads to restoration with Jesus – not rejection!

From this passage in Mark 14, we can learn...

- Lessons from Peter's failure
- Lessons from the Disciples' failure
- And lessons from Jesus faithfulness

Lessons from Peter's Failure (vv29-31)

[Slide-Peter]

1st then **lessons from Peter's failure**

Peter sincerely means it when he says "*Even if all fall away, I will not*" (v29) and when he says "*Even if I die, I will never disown you*" (v31)

But sincerity is not the same as strength

Peter's pride blinds him to the fact that he is vulnerable. Once Jesus is arrested – Peter and the other disciples will be vulnerable without their master and shepherd!

Being over confident can lead to spiritual collapse

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)

Application:

But we're not like Peter are we?

(pause)

We might think:

- *"I would never fall into that kind of sin."*
- *"That could never happen to me."*

But then we find ourselves in situations where temptation is strong—such as -
unwise relationships, private internet use, or environments that weaken our
resolve.

Like Peter, the intention may be sincere, but **confidence in ourselves replaces
watchfulness and prayer.**

We might say, *“Of course I would stand up for Jesus.”*

But:

- When colleagues at work mock Christianity
- When friends question biblical teaching
- When family members disapprove of our faith in Jesus

suddenly it becomes easier or safer to stay quiet or distance ourselves from
Jesus.

Peter’s story reminds us that the danger is not that we want to fail Jesus. Peter
didn’t want to fail Jesus at all! The danger is trusting our own strength instead of
depending on the Lord.

When we think we are strong, we are actually at our weakest.

Jesus has already taught the disciples in John 15:5

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will
bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing**”*

Peter and US need to have an intimate personal close relationship with Jesus at
all times – so that we don’t get over confident in ourselves. We must remember
we can do NOTHING without being close to Him!

Lessons from the Disciples' Failure (vv32-52)

[Slide-Disciples]

2nd then **lessons from the Disciples' failure**

We continue the story from vv32-33 – Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, with Peter, James and John

The name **Gethsemane** means “*oil-press*” and it was a place where olives were **crushed** to produce olive oil.

And we see in v34 – that Jesus Himself is **crushed!**

He's feeling so overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death!

We will come back to Jesus in a moment.

But let's focus on the disciples for a few minutes.

Jesus tells the three disciples to “*stay here and keep watch*” (v34) and He goes to pray alone.

Three times – v37, v40, v41 – when Jesus comes back to the disciples, they are asleep!

Why three times? To parallel the prediction that Peter will deny Jesus three times!

And notice the first time Jesus returns to the sleepy heads in v37 – Jesus calls Peter - “*Simon*” – his old name!

Peter must have been a bit startled to hear Jesus call him Simon. This was the old sleeping Simon, not the new man Peter. Peter was ready to resist any attack, except the attack of Mr. Sandman!

The disciples failed in a few ways:

1st failure – **the disciples were sleeping instead of praying**

Jesus told them in v38 “**Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation**”

Spiritual danger requires spiritual vigilance

Good intentions (“the spirit is willing”) are defeated by human weakness (“the flesh is weak”)

2nd failure – **the disciples misunderstood Jesus’ mission**

When Judas arrives with the temple guard from the religious leaders – v42 - and betrays Jesus with a kiss – v45

One of the disciples – which we know from the other Gospels was Peter – v47 – drew a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus – the servant of the high priest.

Luke’s Gospel tells us that Jesus healed the damage done by Peter (Luke 22:51; John 18:10). “If Jesus had not healed Malchus, Peter would have been arrested as well; and there might have been four crosses at Calvary.” (Barclay)

3rd failure – **All the disciples abandoned Jesus**

Mark tells us something quite devastating in v50 – “**Then, everyone deserted him and fled**”

We’re told – even a young man who was following Jesus – when the guards tried to seize him – he fled naked – leaving his garment behind (vv51-52)

We’re not told who this young man is

But many Bible commentators seem to think it is Mark - who wrote this Gospel

The young man is included because:

- He is a credible eye-witness

- And it's likely it is Mark because someone had to hear what Jesus was praying in the Garden because the three disciples with Jesus were all asleep!
- Also, in the book of Acts 12:12 – we read that the disciples used to meet at the home of Mark's mother – so Mark is well known to Jesus and the disciples – and most likely followed Jesus and the three disciples in to the Garden

It also just shows – how scared all of Jesus' followers were – their shepherd has been arrested and they feel afraid and helpless!

But we're not like the disciples are we?

(pause)

Application

Unfortunately, we can be just like the disciples...

1st – **We can be tempted to rely on our own strength instead of prayer**

Like the disciples, we may genuinely want to be faithful to Jesus. But when life becomes busy or stressful, it is easy to push ahead in our own determination rather than **slowing down to pray and depend on God.**

Jesus reminds us that spiritual strength does not come from effort alone, but from **watchfulness and prayer.**

The Apostle Paul reminds us in **Philippians 4:13**

We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

2nd – **We can be tempted to give in to discouragement**

When difficulties come—things like - conflict, disappointment, criticism, or loneliness—it is easy to start thinking:

- *What's the point?*
- *Maybe it's easier to step back from Jesus?*
- *Maybe it's not worth trying anymore.*

When pressure came, the disciples scattered. In the same way, discouragement can tempt us to **withdraw from Jesus rather than persevere**.

3rd – **We can be tempted to act in the flesh**

When we are tired, hurt, or under pressure, it becomes easier:

- to respond defensively
- to hold on to resentment
- to speak harshly
- to withdraw from people

Jesus' words remind us that **"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

Without dependence on God, our natural reactions take over.

4th – **We can be tempted to carry burdens alone**

The disciples slept instead of praying with Jesus. In the same way, people can often try to handle life's pressures by themselves.

Instead of bringing struggles to God in prayer or sharing them with other believers, we may internalize everything and try to cope alone.

But God never intended His people to carry life's burdens without help.

Galatians 6:2 says - *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

5th – **We can be tempted to lose sight of God's bigger plan**

In Gethsemane the disciples could not see that God's plan of salvation was unfolding through the cross.

When circumstances in our lives become painful or confusing, we can also lose sight of God's purposes and assume that everything is going wrong.

Faith reminds us that **God is still at work even when we cannot see what He is doing.** And God can bring good even out of bad situations!

To avoid all these temptations we need to understand there is a **spiritual battle going on inside us** – the Apostle Paul in Romans 7 – describes this battle as the old sinful nature (the flesh) pulling us towards sin and the new life (in the Spirit) pulling us towards obedience to God. It's like a bad dog and a good dog fighting. Which dog wins? The dog we feed. If we feed the good dog with prayer, reading God's Word and following it – the bad dog will be defeated!

We also have another tool to help us avoid temptation – and that is to **put on God's armour every day and pray for protection from temptation each day!**

(Ephesians 6:10-20)

Lessons from Jesus' Faithfulness (vv32-42)

[Slide-Jesus]

3rd then **lessons from Jesus' Faithfulness**

Unlike the disciples, Jesus demonstrates perfect obedience!

1st – **Jesus shows honest sorrow for the situation He is in**

V34 – He is so sorrowful for what lies ahead for him – He almost dies there in the garden!

He is faithful and obedient – but that doesn't mean He can't be honest about the severe anguish He feels.

In v36 – Jesus pleads to His **Abba** (Hebrew for Father – meaning Daddy!) and He asks if it is possible for this **cup** to be taken from Him!

What **cup**?

In several places in the Old Testament (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15-16; Ezekiel 23:32-34) – **a cup is used to describe God's anger or wrath on wickedness and sin.**

At that moment, Jesus realizes He must take the sin of the whole world on His shoulders and then drink the cup of God's anger and wrath for that sin. The thought of having to do this is excruciatingly painful – and Jesus – in His humanness – can't bear the thought of drinking this cup.

Like Jesus - we too can be honest with God how we feel – when life is tough! It's perfectly okay to tell Him how hard it is for us!

2nd – **Jesus prayed**

Unlike the disciples – Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane!

In fact, **He prays the same prayer three times!** (v39)

I have heard people say that we don't have to repeat the same prayer – and that it is unspiritual and shows a lack of faith. But my answer is – Jesus does it – and that is good enough for me – and no one can accuse Jesus of being unspiritual or lacking faith!

When we pray...

- Sometimes God makes us wait.
- Sometimes God says – I will help you through the problem rather than remove the problem
- And sometimes God says “*my grace is sufficient*”

3rd – **Jesus submits to the Father's will**

Despite the agony!

Despite what lies ahead

Jesus says at the end of v36 – “*Yet not what I will, but what you will!*”

This is so important

If Jesus had not submitted to the Father's will

He would not have died for our sins – and we would remain in our sin – and would not have forgiveness and we would have no hope of Heaven!

In the Garden, Jesus obeys the Father's will completely – even if the path leads to suffering and the cross.

The Bible contrasts 4 gardens:

- The Garden of Eden – where Adam and Eve did NOT obey God's will

- The Garden of Gethsemane – where Jesus DID submit to the Father’s will
- The Garden at Jesus’ tomb – where Jesus fulfilled the Father’s will and defeated death!
- And the Garden in Revelation 22 with the Tree of Life – where things were restored to perfect Eden conditions!

In Matthew 16:24 - Jesus also tell us what the Father’s will is for us – we are to ***“take up our cross and follow Him”***

This reminds us that the Christian life will involve **cost, sacrifice, and perseverance**, just as it did for Jesus. It will mean that we too have to submit to the Father’s will and not give in to our own will!

It’s the Father’s will for Christians – to follow the way of Jesus’ sacrificial life and love

But Jesus doesn’t expect us to go it alone.

In **Matthew 11:28–30** Jesus says:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The picture of a **yoke** is powerful: two animals pull the load together. Jesus does not call us to carry the burden alone—**He is yoked with us.**

And at the end of **Gospel of Matthew 28:20** Jesus promises:

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So when we take up our cross, we never walk that road alone.

4th – **Jesus had the courage to trust God's will**

When the arresting party came

Jesus could easily have performed a miracle to have them all disarmed or fall over!

He could have even run away!

Jesus does not fight, panic, or flee. His courage is seen in **calm submission to God's will!**

Most of us will never face arrest for our faith, but we will all face moments where following Jesus is costly – like —

- telling the truth when it would be easier to lie
- standing for what is right when others disagree
- remaining faithful when it would be easier to walk away

In those moments, Jesus' example calls us - to quiet courage: trusting the Father and obeying Him whatever the cost.

Conclusion

To finish up then...

The disciples looked at the situation that night and everything seemed to be falling apart. Their teacher was arrested, their hopes shattered, and fear took over. **They were walking by sight.**

[Slide-2 Corinthians 5:7]

But the Christian life is different. As **the Apostle Paul** later writes in **2 Corinthians 5:7**, ***"For we walk by faith, not by sight."***

Even when circumstances seem dark, even when we feel our own weakness, we must trust the faithful Saviour who went to the cross and rose again. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Him.

So the call of this passage from Mark 14 is simple:

Do not trust your own strength — trust the faithful Christ, and walk by faith, not by sight.

Let's pray...

Gracious Father, thank You for showing us the faithfulness of Your Son when others failed. Forgive us for the times we are sleepy, fearful, or overconfident. Teach us to watch and pray, and to trust Your will even when the path is hard. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to stand firm, and fill us with gratitude that Jesus stood alone for us. In His precious name we pray, Amen