

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

### 57. Steps to a Fall

#### Mark 14:26-72

Last week was such a blessed time as we walked through the flow of the Passover meal that Jesus shared with the twelve the night before He died on the cross. We learned how for over 1,400 years the descendants of Abraham commemorated their redemption from bondage and death in Egypt by way of this meal. Through the course of the meal there would be the oral recitation of the original Passover. Each food and element on the table was explained — how illustrated what God delivered them from.

We saw that at a certain point in that meal Jesus veered off from the 1,400 years of tradition so that he could explain to them that HE is the lamb — that HIS blood redeems us from bondage and death. Jesus instituted a new meal that would commemorate how HE delivered us from the bondage of sin and the wages of sin. That meal — that we call “communion” — involved bread that was blessed, broken and given (representing His and body broken) — and a cup that He gave thanks for — the cup that anticipated His blood that would be poured out to bring a new covenant for a new people. (I want to encourage you to get the resources from last week)

Last week we left off at Mark 14:26

**Mark 14:26–31 (CSB) <sup>26</sup>After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

The Passover meal was followed by the singing of the last half of the Hallel Psalms — Psalms 115-118. We just read these very Psalms in our calendar of Bible reading yesterday and this morning!

In Psalm 116:12–19 Jesus pledged to keep his vows in the presence of all the people. In Psalm 117 Jesus called upon the Gentiles to join in the praise of YHWH. In Psalm 118:17; 22-23 Jesus sang of His rejection and ultimate triumph!

WOW! I hope we never read those psalms the same way again. I pray that whenever we read them we would see that we are actually sharing in this moment of Mark 16:26 with Jesus!

What a great picture of Jesus Christ worshiping the Father with His disciples on His way to His betrayal — brutal beatings and crucifixion!

Before we look at verse 27 let's remember that the eleven men walking to the Mt. of Olives with Jesus, singing these psalms with Him have had an "eventful" night to say the least.

Jesus told them that He was going away. He told them that one of them seated at the table would betray Him. Then there was the meal itself — with all of the Passover festivity and celebration. Then He broke from 1,400 years of tradition to institute "Communion" — that they were to eat the bread (that represented His body broken) — and drink the cup (that represented His blood poured out) in remembrance of Him! Then Jesus got up from the table and washed their feet — including the feet that would walk out of the upper room to betray Him!

They no sooner finish singing a hymn with Jesus and Jesus drops another bomb on them.

**<sup>27</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will fall away,**

Remember — just a bit earlier Jesus told them that one of them would **betray** Him — now he tells them that **all** of them would fall away!

And then He quotes **Zechariah 13:27**.

**because it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.**

Who is it that will *strike the shepherd*? It is Yahweh Who will smite the shepherd. Who is the shepherd? Jesus said — *I am the good shepherd*

Right here in the margin of your Bible write Luke 22:54-62 Matthew 26:57-75; John 18:15-27

**<sup>28</sup>But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."** <sup>29</sup>Peter told him, "Even if everyone falls away, I will not." <sup>30</sup>"Truly I tell you," Jesus said to him, "today,

**this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”<sup>31</sup>But he kept insisting, “If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.” And they all said the same thing.**

REAL QUICKLY — jump down to **verse 72**

**Mark 14:72 (CSB) <sup>72</sup>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.**

As I was trying to map out our path through the rest of Mark 14 it was so clear that there is just way too much here for us to move through quickly. There’s too much depth — too much weight — too much glory. We will be taking a couple of weeks to study this event that took place in Gethsemane. In the next weeks we’ll look at the agony of Jesus and His prayer in the garden —then His betrayal and arrest. But tonight, we’re going to zero in on Peter’s denial of Jesus Messiah.

By the way — As we look at Peter’s response to Jesus we want to bear in mind that when Jesus took the disciples to Caesarea Philippi and asked them “Who do people say I am? and then, “Who do YOU say I am? — It was Peter who made the declaration:

***Matthew 16:16 (CSB) “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”***

Now Peter is taking issue with the one he called Messiah, Son of the living God.

**Back to verse 29**

**<sup>29</sup>Peter told him, “Even if everyone falls away, I will not.”**

GUYS — We NEVER want to underestimate or downplay what God’s Word says about man! Just humbly agree with it because if God says something about the heart of man it is TRUE. Our problem is that we find it so easy to believe that it’s true about everyone else’s heart — but not ours.

I will say this in the first person singular — When God tells me that something about my heart I pray that I will humbly agree with Him (that is what the word “confess” actually means) and ask God to *change me* and *keep me* close to Himself.

<sup>30</sup>“Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to him, “today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” <sup>31</sup>But he kept insisting, “If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.”

**HERE’S THE DEAL** — Before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny Jesus three times. The end result was that Peter went out and wept bitterly — the kind of weeping where your chest is heaving and convulsing.

As we look at composite of Peter’s denial of Jesus given to us in the Gospels we discover that there were very specific steps — incremental moments of compromise. In a matter of hours Peter went from *“I will never deny You!”* to saying *“I never knew Him!”*

That’s the way sin works! Sin does not happen in a moment or in a vacuum.

**Let’s stop and pray right here!** Pray that as we look at the steps to Peter’s fall that we will take stock of our own life very carefully; open our hearts and humble our hearts before the Holy Spirit. Let’s tell the Lord — who knows our heart — *“Lord, I am allowing You - - I am asking You, I am begging of You, Lord, to fire warning shots across my bow. Lord, if I am heading in the wrong direction — If I am compromising in little ways — engaging in sins that are building upon sin — Lord, Show me.”*

## STEPS TO A FALL

### 1. Self-Confidence

**Mark 14:29 (CSB)** <sup>29</sup>Peter told him, “Even if everyone falls away, I will not.”

**Mark 14:31 (CSB)** <sup>31</sup>But he kept insisting, “If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.”

**FIRST** — We don’t want to question Peter’s sincerity here! Jesus doesn’t! Peter is sincere. How sincere? When that armed mob came to arrest Jesus Peter drew His sword.

Though Peter was 100% sincere — it was a moment of pride. Peter thought he was made of different stuff than the other ten apostles. *They might — but never me!*

*1 Corinthians 10:12 (ESV) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

We're going to see that Peter is the real-life proof of what God says about pride in Proverbs 16:18

*NLT — Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.*

*The Message — First pride, then the crash— the bigger the ego, the harder the fall.*

**2. PRAYERLESSNESS** — Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying.

**Mark 14:37 NLT** Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even **one hour**?”

*Let me get this straight Peter — You’re gonna go to prison with Me — You’re gonna die with Me — you just won’t pray with Me for an hour!*

We say we love Jesus — We want to serve Jesus — and we have these alarm clocks that we can set 30 minutes before we have to get up so we can SPEND 30 MINUTES with Jesus. The Creator of the universe is waiting to meet with us and talk with us! I understand that some of us are morning people and others are definitely not. Some of us are better early and others are better in the night. Listen — God says:

*Jeremiah 29:13-14 (ESV) You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, <sup>14</sup>I will be found by you, declares the Lord*

You can know a lot of theology — but the most profound theology is a living relationship with a living Savior. Meeting with Him, talking with Him, receiving from Him.

**Britt Merrick** — *Pray — or be prey - - - for Satan!*

Years later Peter would write —

**1 Peter 5:8 (CSB)** <sup>8</sup>*Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.*

Prayer is something that requires attention. It requires effort. It doesn't come easy. Prayer does not come natural.

Have you ever noticed that every time you go to pray, your mind and body will fight against it. You get sleepy. You suddenly start thinking about things that you would NEVER think about — like: *“Oh man, I should mow the lawn! I should clean the garage!”*

**3. As we follow Peter**, we find out what happens when we're self-confident and fail to pray — **You do things in your own strength and wisdom.**

**Mark 14:47 (CSB)** <sup>47</sup>*One of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear.*

**John 18:10** tells us that it was Peter who did this — and the servant was named Malchus.

No one aims for an ear with the sword. Peter's there — just awake from a deep sleep. A groggy fisherman with a sword. And fearlessly he draws it — trying to cut off the guy's head — and missed.

Peter was acting in his own strength — his own wisdom — his own will.

Jesus told Peter

**Matthew 26:52–54 (CSB)** <sup>21</sup>*“Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?”*

One legion equals over 6,000 troops. HERE'S THE POINT — Every resource in heaven was — and is — available to Jesus.

This is what happens when we begin to be self-confident and prayerless. We get to that place of being spiritually dull — we aren't operating on heaven's resources — and things get very chaotic for us.

Peter must have felt pretty dumb when Jesus bent down and restored the servant's ear (Luke 22:51). Did you know that the last miracle Jesus performed before He died on the cross was cleaning up the mess made by one of His disciples?

If we are overconfident and not praying, we end up doing things in the flesh. Well intended — but making messes — messes that Jesus has to clean up — just like in that garden where Jesus had to pick up the ear Peter had hacked off and place it back on the man.

1. Self-confidence — 2. Prayerlessness — 3. Acting in his own wisdom and in his own strength.

**Mark 14:54 (CSB)** <sup>54</sup>Peter followed him at a distance, right into the high priest's courtyard.

**Matthew** tells us that Peter followed from a distance. **Luke** tells us that Peter followed from a distance.

The Holy Spirit wants to drive the point home that

**4. Peter followed Jesus from a distance.**

**DON'T MISS THIS** — The Holy Spirit isn't giving us three testimonies to that fact so we can examine Peter and say: Look at what he did. These things were written and repeated so Peter's life can **examine us** — so Peter's life can **preach to us** — so Peter's life can **warn us!**

Which of us can say that we have NEVER followed Jesus from a distance? AGAIN — We have to give Peter some credit here! Judas is in the process of going out to hang himself. There were eleven of the apostles left. NINE of the remaining apostles ran off into the darkness. Peter may have followed from a distance — but at least he was following Jesus.

If you're a follower of Jesus — I am so thankful for that. Maybe you're not following Him as close as you should — but I am thankful you've followed Jesus here this evening! And I pray that all of us will leave here following Jesus closer than ever before.

The best way to follow a person is to stay as close as you can. Let's say that you want me to go to your house after church on a Monday night. I don't know the way there, so you say, "Follow me!" I would be foolish to follow you from a distance. Trying to be a Christian while following Jesus from a distance is NEVER successful.

**1.** Self-confidence — **2.** Prayerlessness — **3.** Acting in his own wisdom and in his own strength — **4.** trying to follow Jesus from a distance

## **5. Warming Yourself at the Enemy's Fire**

**Mark 14:54 (CSB)** <sup>54</sup>**Peter followed him at a distance, right into the high priest's courtyard. He was sitting with the servants, warming himself by the fire.**

We're told in **John's** Gospel (**John 18:18**) that they lit a fire because it was cold! Peter was exhausted. He was discouraged. He was cold and shivering. In the midst of the utter insanity of the past few hours — and I have no doubt that Peter was feeling like all of this was a nightmare — he's watched them take Jesus — and watched Jesus yield himself to them — and he does not understand what in the world was going on! Now he is warming himself in the company of the enemies of Jesus!

**LISTEN** — When life isn't making sense to us — and even when the way Jesus is working isn't making sense to us — and it's like we're exhausted and out in the cold — **There are places we should go to warm us**

**Hebrews 4:16 (NLT)** *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*



The Word of God warms our hearts as it reveals to us the love, the grace, the faithfulness and power of Jesus (faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God). The people of God warm our hearts.

*Hebrews 10:23–25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

**That fire** in the courtyard of the high priest’s house was not **that** place.

These are the people that have been plotting against Jesus. These are the ones who gave Judas the money. These are the ones who would soon be yelling “Kill Him!” They These are the ones who would kill the Lord.

**HERE’S THE POINT** — Those who are organizing their lives without God have a whole lot of idols they snuggle up to for warmth when life has left them cold and broken — when life doesn’t make sense to them. The obvious would be using drugs or alcohol to numb or elevate. But there are other things that people look to for warmth when life is cold and dark: The fire of materialism — the pursuit of the awesome, the stimulating, the pleasurable. The fire of relationships. The fire of success. The fire of personal advancement — “followers” and “likes” on social media — the pursuit of whatever it is that will make you feel happy and feel good about yourself.

Peter’s life tells us that when we are sincere but self-confident; prayerless; operating from our own fallen wisdom; following Jesus from afar — WE can find ourselves cozying up to the idols that fallen culture look to for warmth.

There was an article in *The Atlantic* that adds *work* to the list of idols people are snuggling up to

*The Atlantic* — *Some people worship beauty, some worship political identities, and others worship their children. But everybody worships something. And workism is among the most potent of the new religions competing for congregants. What is workism? It is the belief that work is not only necessary*

*to economic production, but also the centerpiece of one's identity and life's purpose... To be a workist is to worship a god with firing power.*

Humanity has been trying to get warm around those fires since [Genesis 3](#).

So there was Peter — just sitting there — head down — holding his hands out over the fire trying to stop shivering and just trying get a grip. Imagine what the conversation was like around that fire! *Who is this Jesus guy? Who does this carpenter from Nazareth think He is? They paid us to drag Him here because He claimed to be the Son of God — He claimed to be able to forgive sins.* Peter was just sitting there listening — not saying anything.

**HERE'S THE PICTURE** — Even as the enemies of Jesus were gathered around that fire in the courtyard of the high priest's house — today there are men and women who don't believe the Gospel — or who might even be hostile in their opposition to the Gospel — gather in the break room at work — or at a favorite coffee shop or bar — to talk about the latest and greatest ways to warm themselves without God.

And genuine followers of Jesus who aren't looking to heaven for warmth — aren't looking to God's Word and God's people for warmth — drift into those gatherings hoping to warm themselves with the same fire they're using. (please do not think that I am advocating isolation from those individuals or groups. Jesus was in the house of Levi to rescue broken lives — like a good doctor would be in the company of those who are sick). That was NOT why Peter was with that group around that fire.

There was Peter — hearing people say things that were just begging for Gospel answers — but he was so tired — so discouraged — that he said nothing. **Saying nothing** was the last step before his fall — and actually **became the first step** to denying Jesus.

In light of that I believe I have to add another idol — I mentioned this last summer in our study in Mark 4 and people were offended by it. CHECK OUT this quote from Alistair Begg —

*“the average American Christian finds it natural to worship the idol of politics. We think and pray and speak as though if our guy wins, the kingdom wins; and*

*if he loses, then it's hell. In other words, we treat our favorite for President, or our political party, as a god. American Christians are used to having a political home, and we have forgotten that this is Babylon—it may be Republican Babylon or Democrat Babylon, right-wing Babylon or left-wing Babylon, but it is Babylon nonetheless—and we have forgotten that the kingdom of God is not of this world.”<sup>1</sup>*

## 5. The Denials

**Mark 14:66–67 (CSB)** <sup>66</sup>While Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the high priest's maidservants came. <sup>67</sup>When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.”

She was spot on — Peter **was** with Jesus — but he wasn't anymore.

Peter — an apostle of Jesus Christ, lies to a servant girl — who in that culture was very inconsequential

**Mark 14:68 (CSB)** <sup>68</sup>But he denied it: “I don't know or understand what you're talking about.”

“Jesus who?”

**Then he went out to the entryway, and a rooster crowed.**

**Mark 14:69–71 (CSB)** <sup>69</sup>When the maidservant saw him again, she began to tell those standing nearby, “This man is one of them.” <sup>70</sup>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.” <sup>71</sup>Then he started to curse and swear,**

This does not mean that he used foul language. In that culture, it means that he put upon himself a curse if he was lying — *May God kill me and damn me if I am lying. I don't know Jesus!*”

**“I don't know this man you're talking about!”**

*I got out of the boat and walked on water with Him — but I don't know Him.*

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Begg. “Brave by Faith.”

*I saw Him on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah and God spoke out of heaven saying “This is My Son! Listen to Him!” But I don’t know Him!*

*Only six months ago He asked me who I thought He is, and I told Him that I believed that He’s the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And He told me that heaven revealed that to me — But I don’t know Him!*

**LISTEN** — When unbelievers are calling you out on your relationship with Jesus — you’re in trouble!

Think of the opportunity that Peter had at that moment! Peter could have looked right at this young girl and said: *Do I know Him? Let me tell you something. The ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum had a daughter. She was about your age. That little girl died. But Jesus took me with Him into her house and he touched her lifeless body and said, “Talitha Cummi” — and that little girl came back from the dead. Ya! I know who He is!*

*I spent my life on the Sea of Galilee. We found ourselves in a storm one day — I’d never seen a storm like that, and I was certain that all of us were going to die. And He stood up and rebuked the wind and the waves , and the wind went dead calm and the sea turned to a sheet of glass. I know who He is.*

*He stood at the tomb of a dear friend of His who had been dead for four days. He cried out “Lazarus, come forth!” And Lazarus walked out of his own grave. I know who He is!*

Think of all that he could have said to that young girl in front of the men who dragged Jesus to the house of the high priest.

Only 15-20 minutes earlier Peter was willing to die for Jesus. Now he denies his association with Jesus in the face of young girl. Peter discovered that it was easier for him to risk dying for Jesus than it would be to stand up and live for Jesus when he was worn out and tired — discouraged, and confused — and surrounded by the adversaries of Jesus.

**We want to make sure that we don't confuse** Peter's denial with Judas's betrayal. Judas betrayed Jesus because Judas felt that Jesus had failed to deliver earthly position, power and possessions.

Peter loved Jesus — period — full stop. Peter was undone by everything that had just happened because **he couldn't connect the Jesus** who exercised absolute authority over the realm of nature, absolute authority over armies of demons and absolute authority over death itself — **with the Jesus** who willingly let himself be dragged away by mere humans in the dark hours of the morning.

**Mark 14:72 (CSB)** <sup>72</sup>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.

In Luke's parallel account of this moment (**Luke 22**) we're told that at the moment the cocked crowed, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. And the eyes of Peter met the eyes of His Lord.”

I'll tell you what the eyes of Jesus said, “Son, I love you. I knew that you would leave me. But, I'll never leave you. I will never forsake you. Peter, I will meet you in Galilee in a few days. We'll be best friends again.”

**That's our Jesus!** Jesus would restore Peter and make him ten times the man he ever was. Jesus would never call him Simon again, but Peter the Rock. .

## **CLOSE**

If you need to repent today, PLEASE, **DO NOT** take this lightly. If the Lord is calling you to do some business with Him, you do business. If you have someone around you, confess and pray for one another. The Bible says that you will be healed when you do that. Let's do business with Jesus Christ!