

## **The Prophecy of Failure**

Mark 14:27-31

41-74

Now we come to Mark chapter 14 and for tonight, verses 27 to 31. We left off this morning in verse 26 as Thursday evening's Passover event ended, an event that began about sundown and didn't end until after midnight. Six hours or so our Lord spent eating the last Passover and introducing the first Communion. In and around that, all kinds of important events took place and our Lord did extensive teaching to His Apostles, giving them promises, all laid out for us in the wonderful chapters in John gospels, starting with chapter 13 and running through chapter 16. Closed out the evening with a great High Priestly prayer recorded in chapter 17. When the evening was finally done, they sang a hymn, Psalm 136 and they left. We pick up the story at that very moment in verse 27.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because it is written, I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.’ But Peter said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you that this very night before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.’ But Peter kept saying insistently, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.’ And they were all saying the same thing also.”

This is an insight into the weakness of the followers of Jesus. You do remember that our Lord said, as recorded in 8:38, that whoever was ashamed of Him, He would be ashamed of them. Certainly Judas falls into the category of those who were permanently and terminally ashamed of Him. But what about the other eleven? How much different than Judas were they? They didn't betray the Lord, they wouldn't sell the Lord. They wouldn't have turned the Lord over, but they certainly appear to be ashamed to be identified with Him. And before the story ends, of course, no one is more on display as one who was ashamed to be identified with Christ than Peter. The shame of Judas was the shame of unbelief. The shame of the eleven was the shame of weakness. The shame of Judas was irretrievable, without remedy. The shame of the disciples was temporary and could be turned to faith. In fact, their story, really, is ended in terms of how we view them in the fifth chapter of Acts and the forty-first verse where it says, “Of the Apostles, they went on their way from the presence of the council,” that's the same Jewish Sanhedrin, “rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Judas went out and hanged himself and went to his own place, the Lake of Fire, because his shame was permanent. The disciples ended up offering their lives in the death of martyrs because they recovered from their temporary shame. The difference is, they belong to the Lord and the resources of the Lord were at their disposal.

So what we learn here is not about the shame of Judas, not about a permanent, damning shame, but about a temporary shame from which the followers of Jesus can and do recover. It's experience that we all have had because there have been times when each of us have been ashamed to identify with

Christ because we thought we'd be rejected, because we thought we'd see hostility, because we thought it might bring about negative consequences. It was Martyn Lloyd-Jones who said, "If you have never been ashamed to openly proclaim the gospel, it is not because you are so courageous, it is because you probably don't understand the gospel." Because if you really proclaim the full gospel, you have to confront the sinner in a way that will cause the sinner to reject what you say and you along with it. And that can drive us to silence.

So it will be helpful for us to understand how these men went through that experience of shame and came out bold in the end. And that's exactly what they did. However, this text doesn't say anything really specifically about our Lord. It really is about them, that they will be scattered, that they will be recovered and then the claims of Peter. But what shines through this is the majesty and the magnificence and the glory of the Son of God.

Now if you're looking back at verses 27 to 31 and saying, "Where is it?" That's why I'm here. I want to help you to see what you might otherwise not see. You have here clearly an example of human weakness by believers in Christ. You have here, in a sense, the low for His Apostles. But against that background, what really comes through here is the shining majesty of Jesus Christ.

Now to set the scene one more time, in the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, if you totaled all the chapters and all the verses that talk about our Lord's life from birth through His silent years, it would total four chapters, out of 89 chapters, four chapters on His life up to His thirtieth year when He began His ministry. There would be 29 chapters of the gospels directed at the last week and thirteen chapters directed at Friday, the last day. So all of a sudden, we're dealing with a lot of information because this is the most important time. Now remember, the Passover meal on Thursday night after sunset being eaten, ended with the final Hallel section. Then the fourth cup and then Psalm 136 where every verse ends with "For His lovingkindness endures forever," and then they left. An evening that was full of promise and hope.

John 18:1 says that He left with His disciples and headed for the Mount of Olives. Obviously, starting in verse 27, this is when the incident here occurs, after they have left the upper room and are on their way to the Mount of Olives.

Now on the Mount of Olives, on the slope of the Mount of Olives was a garden called the Garden of Gethsemane where there was an olive press because the Mount of Olives was called the Mount of Olives because it was an olive grove. What was going to happen on that mount in the middle of the night was a rendezvous with Judas and the arrest of Jesus would take place. He would be tried in the morning, crucified later in the morning, to die in the afternoon as the sacrifice as the Lamb.

He will always be known as the Lamb. In the book of Revelation, He is referred to more as a Lamb than any other term. I think 20 times or so in the book of Revelation which gives you the future and heavenly view of Christ, He is referred to as the Lamb. So the Lamb who will be slain in a few hours, leads His little group to the Mount of Olives. Out of the upper room, around midnight, out the temple gate toward the eastern slope of the temple mount, the temple mount being elevated, they would go down the slope out the east side, across the Kidron Valley where the Kidron Brook would be flowing at this time of year in the spring, a time of rain and the water flowing in the brook would be mingled with the blood from all the lambs that were being slaughtered and the blood would trail down the slope into that little stream and Jesus then would cross with them the bloody stream draining out of the temple.

As they made their way that direction, the houses of the city would be lit with candles because they would all be awake, all the exciting events of that weekend and some of them from Galilee would be celebrating that night the Passover meal, others would be preparing the Passover meal for the next day. The temple gates were to be opened at midnight to let any other pilgrims in for the Passover on Friday.

So they would cross the brook and they would climb the western slope of the Mount of Olives, perhaps along the place where He had sat with them on Wednesday night and given them the great message about His Second Coming. The Lord may be reminded as He made this little walk of the fact that He was basically following the same route that David had walked when he was fleeing from the pursuit of Absalom, according to 2 Samuel 15. You remember David went up the Mount of Olives barefoot and weeping.

So as the Twelve leave the throbbing city to find quiet in a very familiar place, they were about to have a confrontation with the Lord in which they affirm their trust and strength and courage and He tells them the truth about what they will do. In this confrontation and exposure of their weakness, you see the majesty of Christ. There's no point in looking at their weakness, we see that and that we can identify with. But what the Holy Spirit has placed in this text which is not necessarily on the surface is what I'm going to show you as we look at our Lord.

First of all, we're going to see His knowledge...His knowledge. We would conclude that they are ignorant. They don't know the future. They don't know what's coming, even what He told them about, they're not sure about. They're not sure they can embrace it. In the midst of their ignorance, they are full of fear and doubt that will become panic, terror, cause them to flee and even deny Christ repeatedly, as in the case of Peter. That's against the backdrop of their ignorance, fear rising out of their ignorance.

In contrast to that is the knowledge of Christ, wonderful, wondrous, supernatural knowledge. Let's look at verse 27. "Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away.'" Wow. You will all fall away. The Greek verb is *skandalizo*. You will be scandalized, you will be offended. You will defect. That, dear friends, is indicative of His supernatural knowledge. He knew they would do that. He didn't know it because they gave Him that information, they gave Him the opposite testimony. But He knew because He knew everything, the things that hadn't yet happened were as well known to Him as the things that had happened. He knew the moments ahead. He knew the hours ahead. He knew what would happen this night. Matthew 26 says, "You will all fall away this night." He knew what was coming in the very hours ahead of them. He saw the black clouds. He felt the plot of the Jews coming to its completion. He anticipated the arrival of the entourage of the Roman soldiers and the Sanhedrin and Judas into the Garden, in the midst of the night.

It was all known to Him because, please notice, it was written...it was written. He knew it and it had been written down in Scripture and He even quotes the Scripture in verse 27, the Scripture from Zechariah 13:7, "I will strike down the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." "It is written" is a common, Old Testament formula. Jesus said, "I know what's going to happen because I know everything, even what hasn't happened. And I know what Scripture says. So He knew...He knew the events of the future and He knew the meaning of the past. He knew what was coming because He knew everything and He knew how to interpret Zachariah 13:7, "I will strike down the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." He knew. He also knew His own future, that He would be struck down

and that that would cause them to be filled with fear and terror and scattered.

If you go back to the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah for just a moment, you get a bit of the setting in which this prophecy is given. Verse 7, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man, my associate, declares the Lord of hosts. Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be scattered and I will turn my hand against the little ones."

This is amazing...amazing. Zechariah has been talking about false prophets. He's been talking about false prophets who would be wounded in their idol houses, the houses where they worship idols. But now he turns to the true shepherd and he says, "God's Shepherd, My Shepherd, My associate," declares the Lord of hosts, "that Shepherd, that true Shepherd will also be wounded." And Jehovah here is the speaker and Messiah is the one of whom he speaks. This is a messianic prophecy.

Jesus again was afflicted by God. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd." God is calling His own sword against His own Shepherd. It is God who strikes Messiah. "O sword, strike the Shepherd." Then again I say, it isn't Judas who led Him to the cross, although he played a role, it isn't the Sanhedrin, the Romans, it isn't Pilate, Caiaphas, or Herod. It is God, My Shepherd. God's personal representative. My Associate, My fellow, say some texts. Literally the Hebrew is "The Man of My union, the Man who is united with Me, My equal." And the word for "man" here is not the normal Hebrew word for man, it's the word for a strong or mighty man. All of these are messianic references not only to the Messiah but the Messiah who is the Son of God.

So the prophet said that God Himself with His own sword will slay one who is His personal representative, who is His equal. This is a statement to the nature of Christ as bearing the same essence as God Himself. The result of the Shepherd being smitten by God will be the scattering of the sheep...the scattering of the sheep.

Some see this as referring not just to the Apostles, some would extend it to the scattering of the whole nation, the worldwide dispersion of Israel after their rejection of Jesus Christ. But it certainly refers to the Apostles primarily because that's how Jesus applies it. If He is the exegete of Zachariah 7 and applies it to the Apostles, it certainly must be applied primarily to them. And it could be extended to the fact that Israel in its rejection was also scattered. But the primary emphasis here is to the Apostles because that is how our Lord interprets it. The Twelve, or the Eleven become the first casualties, in a sense, to His death. There will be more casualties, do you see how Zechariah 13:7 ends? Zechariah 13:7 has a quite interesting ending. I'll just point it out to you again because it refers, I think, beyond the Apostles. "I will turn My hand against the little ones."

What is that? "I will turn My hand against the little ones." That probably refers to the fact that God is going to allow His own to be persecuted...to be persecuted. For the sake of the purity of the early church and the purity of the gospel, there will come persecution. It came first to the Apostles and then to the early church, as we know, and continues through history.

The point here is simply this. Jesus knew the future. He knew what was coming. He knew what was going to happen to the disciples. He knew what was going to happen to the nation. He knew the persecution was going to follow against them and against believers, even beyond them. This was all prewritten in the scriptures of the Old Testament. He knew all that was going on with Judas, all that was going on with the Jews, how it would all come into focus in a few hours and what would happen.

This is no mere man, this is the Messiah, the Son of God. The best, the most devout, the truest of the true in Israel were these Eleven Apostles. They were true believers in Christ. They had confessed Him as Lord and God and Messiah. They had been given salvation. They were the devout. They were the best. But the truth about them was really sad.

Why would the Lord assume that that would happen to them? Because He knew and because it was written. This is so important, I think, for them to learn a lesson, that no one can know the future but God and no one can predict what is coming but God, and He did.

David Thomas wrote, "Christ knew well all that was coming upon Him that night. He not only saw all the clouds that would blacken His heavens, but knew every peel of thunder, every flash of lightning, every drop of rain they would send upon His Spirit that night. All was foreknown and forearranged. The very prospect of all our life trials would crush us long before they came, but Christ had that sublime magnanimity that enabled Him to look at them in all their enormity in the distance, approach them without a faltering step, enter them with a Spirit of unconquerable loyalty to heaven and pass through them with the moral energy of God," end quote.

If we knew everything that was going to happen to us in the future, we would be traumatized into a paralysis. Our Lord knew every detail, every move that would come upon Him and His followers. The disciples thought they knew themselves, they didn't. They didn't.

So we see, first of all, His knowledge coming through in this incident. Secondly, we see His courage...His courage. He says, go back to the text, "You will all fall away. You will all fall away." That's a prophecy. You will all be caught in a trap. That's what that word means. The fear of man brings a snare, Proverbs 29:25 says, "You're all going to be trapped by your fear." You're going to end up being disloyal. You're going to be lured into the sin of unfaithfulness by the fear of persecution. You're going to leave Me. Just like Zechariah said, "You're going to scatter." And that's exactly what happened. When the pressure was on and Christ was taken captive to be killed, the inseparable Eleven separated. It blew that little group that had been together for three years apart.

They continued with some connections, Peter and John are seen together. But the group essentially dissolved. This explains, for example, the absence of Thomas on the Sunday night after the resurrection. This explains why you have two disciples just wandering off the road to Emmaus. These men who had been inseparable for three years are now fragmented. This explains why in Galilee when the Lord came to appear to them, there are only seven of them together when the Lord meets them by the lake. And it was only some time later, Matthew 28:16, that all eleven of them, minus Judas, of course, came back together. They were brought back together for His Ascension. They were brought back together for the sending of the Holy Spirit. But on the day of the Lord's death, their little group fragmented out of fear. You will all fall away, "Because of Me....Because of Me."

Our Lord meant that being identified with Him would be threatening to their lives. It would become dangerous to be associated with Christ. That's how they perceived it. They were set to kill Christ and they did it. The disciples could only interpret the fact that their close connection with Christ could mean they were next. And they were not willing to pay that price of being associated with Jesus. They were not ready to give their lives.

In Matthew 26:56 says, "All this took place to fulfill the scriptures of the prophets. Then all the disciples left Him and fled." They ran for their lives. They couldn't face the danger.

What shallow love they returned for His perfect love. That is so cowardly...so cowardly. Admittedly, identifying with Jesus Christ can be dangerous. It can be dangerous today. It has been dangerous through all of church history. Hebrews 11 talks about how Moses was willing to bear the reproach of Christ even in his day, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, he was willing to put his life on the line.

But on that night, the price was just too high, the moment was too scary and they fled to safety and scattered. The sudden event literally dissolved them. Peter sneaks around in the darkness on the fringes at a distance, trying to deal with the tension that he feels between his love for Christ and his fear for his own life. And they're weak and cowardly.

And in contrast to that, what do you see? The amazing courage of Christ. And this again is why I say, this passage puts Him on display without even saying it. He has courage beyond any mortal, to bear the hatred, to bear the pain, to bear the indignity, to bear the betrayal, to receive the betrayer's kiss, to face death, death on a cross, to bear sin willingly for the sake of men who forsook Him in His darkest hour, men who not only scattered at the cross, but slept in the hour of His agony in the Garden.

His knowledge is perfect, and it's set against the background of their ignorance. His courage is magnificent and its set against the background of their cowardice. He stands apart from the ignorant cowards who were the best of men but no match for His character. He is majestic in contrast and His defective disciples cannot diminish the majesty and dignity that we see in His person. Hard to really fathom the disappointment that our Lord must have felt. They were ashamed of Him, ashamed to be identified with Him and yet in Hebrews it tells us that He is not ashamed to call them and us brothers.

Paul rises above this, doesn't he?, in Romans 1:16 and says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation." He says to Timothy, "For I am not ashamed to suffer for Christ."

Why should we be ashamed? Apparently Timothy was struggling with this, even later. And Paul writes to him in that same chapter, 2 Timothy 1, "Do not be ashamed of the Lord." Peter sends the same message in 1 Peter 4, "Don't be ashamed of Christ."

All of this indicates that we're not impervious to the very same kind of temporary momentary shame that comes on us out of fear. So we see the ignorance...they don't know what's coming, and the cowardice, they fear for their lives, the disciples against the beautiful backdrop of the magnificent knowledge of Christ, supernatural omniscience and His wondrous courage as He steps into the vortex of this hurricane of divine wrath which is about to break on His head and take His precious life. And in it all, He'll be absolutely deserted by those who should have stood by Him.

We also see here His power, verse 28. "But after I'd been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Our Lord sees beyond the cross to...what?...to the resurrection. After I have been raised. That's another indication of His omniscience. He knows He will die. He knows they will scatter, but He also knows that He will be raised from the dead. He has said it again and again. He will die and rise

again. It's recorded that He has said that specifically three times already in the gospel of Mark. He believed what Abraham believed. Hebrews 11, verses 17 to 19, that if God took the life of Isaac, He would raise him from the dead. Well Jesus not only believed in His resurrection, He knew it would happen because He knew everything. He knew He had power over death, He had displayed that power in raising others from the dead, most recently actually raising Lazarus from the dead.

The disciples feared death, that's why they ran. They feared death, that's why they scattered. They feared death, that's why they disappeared into the darkness and into the crowd, as it were, filling up Jerusalem. All of this because they feared death. Our Lord had no fear of death. He looked death in the face, it wasn't death that He feared, the horror that came upon Him in the Garden wasn't death, although He had never died, of course, and it was only a physical death, but He feared the horrors in a normal way of the wrath of God and He feared being the sin bearer cause He had never been touched by iniquity. That's why He cried out necessarily, "Let this cup pass from Me." He had no fear of death itself because He knew that He, as Revelation 1 puts it, had the keys of death and hell.

Scripture makes a strong emphasis about His resurrection power. The beginning of His ministry in John 2 verses 19 to 21, He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." In John 5 He said that John had given Him the power delegated to Him, all authority and all power for the resurrection and He would raise people, some unto life and some unto damnation. In John 6 He said, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I will lose none of them, but raise them up." He said, "Because I live, you will live also." He said, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in Me will never die." Over and over again He repeatedly expressed His power of resurrection.

The writer of Hebrews says that He shattered the power of Satan who had the power of death temporarily. So Jesus here says, "After I have been raised." No doubt He knew He would be raised, as I said, He said it repeatedly.

And then He said, "I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Literally, I will lead you forward, that's what that means. It doesn't mean I'll...I'll...I'll go there and sometime you'll show up. I will lead you there, personally, I will shepherd you into Galilee.

He makes a promise then to return after His death and personally, listen, bring together the scattered sheep, personally bring them together. And that's what He did. He brought them together.

It didn't take long. Matthew 28, Jesus met them, greeted them, brought them all together as the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew goes on, "Do not be afraid. Go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee and there they will see Me." He brought them together there. The eleven proceeded to Galilee, verse 16, to the mountain that Jesus had designated and when they saw Him, they worshiped Him as some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority is given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

He got them all together at the end. They were all together when He ascended from an area near Jerusalem, again they were all together. They were all together in the upper room and the Holy Spirit came. He recovered them all. He restored them all. This was not an irremediable kind of defection, like that of Judas. This is not apostasy, this is a momentary failure, weak faith, weak love, cowardice.

But our Lord recovered them all. He promised He would and He did. So we see here His knowledge as against their ignorance, against their cowardice, His power against their weakness.

There's something else, I guess, to say here about the contrast, let's just call it His humility. And, in a sense, it's contrasted against their pride. Verse 29, "Peter said to Him," here's the proud confidence of Peter who speaks and they all agree, as it says at the end of verse 31, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." This is the proud confidence of Peter. This is really very, very persistent pride. Why? Because if you go back to the upper room, let's go back a little while, maybe a few hours earlier in the evening, and Jesus is sitting at the table in the upper room, having the Passover, and Simon Peter in John 13:36 said to Him, "Lord, where are You going? And Jesus answered, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later.'" And He's referring to going back to heaven, that's in the future for you. Peter said to Him, this is in the upper room, hours earlier, "Lord, why cannot I follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."

Wow! "And Jesus said, 'Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.'" He said that to Peter hours earlier, sitting at the table in the upper room. Now here we are in the Mount of Olives and Peter is still making the same insistent claim, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." In other words, Lord, You're wrong. Don't you think he had thought about those words of our Lord? If I had been sitting in the upper room, and Jesus looked into my eyes and said, "I'm telling you, you will deny Me three times before the cock crows." That would have been indelibly pressed upon my mind. Peter's response should have been, "Lord, how can I avoid doing that?" But he is so insistent about his imagined strength, that he comes off as proud. "I will never do that. Everybody else might, I will not."

"And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, this very night before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.'" And Jesus gives him the same warning, the second time.

Well, Peter didn't buy that. Verse 31, "He kept saying, insistently, vehemently...is another way to translate that. He is stubbornly rejecting our Lord's knowledge of his own weakness. Peter really reveals his pride here.

The conversation gets a little more extensive. Look at Luke 22, you'll remember this. It's not just what we have in Mark, we have to add what happened in Luke 22, and this is very familiar. Verse 31, "Simon, Simon," called him by his old name because he's acting like his old self. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Wow! "But I've prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when once you've turned again, strengthen your brothers. But he said to Him, 'Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death.'" And He said, "I'm telling you, Peter, this is the third time, the rooster will not crow again until you have denied Me three times, you will deny Me on three separate independent occasions, you will deny that you even know Me."

That's the third time he told Him he would deny Him on three occasions. And by the way, on those three occasions, there were multiple denials. And he says, "This is a severe trial, Peter, this is a satanic trial, Satan wants to sift you." This is the business that Satan is in, trying to disprove the character of the faith of Job unsuccessfully, trying to disprove the character of the saving faith granted to Peter unsuccessfully, even though there's a momentary failure, trying to disprove the saving faith of the Apostle Paul by pounding him with the satanic messenger ramming a spear through his flesh, as Paul refers to it in 2 Corinthians. Satan is in the business of attempting to shatter saving faith, and he can't do it. He needs permission and the Lord gives him permission so

that when Peter is recovered, he can help strengthen other brothers because he's been through the most dire of temptations coming from Satan himself.

But when He says, "Satan has desired to sift you like wheat," He uses a plural "you" in Luke 22, meaning not only Peter, He uses the plural, *humos*, but all of you. Peter thought he was strong. He even thought he was a match for his enemies and he would rise above their threats. Peter even thought he was a match for Satan, more than a match. That's pretty treacherous ground. He was near to Judas in serious danger, proud, he sought prominence, willing to stand alone. He put himself in a very vulnerable place, on very dangerous ground.

And by the way, Satan had messed with him before. Remember in Matthew chapter 16 where he said, "No, no, Jesus, You're not going to die, You're not going to die." And Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan." And you also remember that Satan entered into Judas, John 13:27, right there in the upper room and Judas left to carry out his betrayal. Now Satan is after Peter and he's after the rest of them.

How could they be so bold and so proud when they were sinners who are weak and they were going to go through a satanic attack? Peter and the rest who joined in this, and they all joined in it, all of them were saying the same thing, verse 31 says. They all lived with an illusion about their spiritual strength. Three really serious, proud sins, they contradicted the Lord who said they would do this, they denied it. Peter sinned secondly by claiming to be stronger than the rest and by, thirdly, trusting in his own strength. "I will die before I will deny You."

He is not just proud, he is emphatically proud...emphatically. And Jesus is just as emphatic in verse 30, "Truly I say to you, this very night before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times this very night." Peter will disown Christ. He will with an oath and a curse deny Christ in a matter of hours and he'll do it with the same vehemence and the same emphatic attitude that he displays here. Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride will bring him low." When pride comes, Proverbs 11:2 says, "Shame follows."

Now what's this about a rooster crow? The Jews divided nighttime into four segments. Remember this? From six in the evening till six in the morning was the night. The first was called evening, six to nine. Nine to twelve was called midnight. Twelve to three was called the rooster crow. And three to six was morning. Peter, before three in the morning, you will have denied Me three times. Before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied Me three times.

And he did. We know the rest of the history and we'll get to that. And when he heard that rooster crow, what did he do? Matthew tells us, Luke tells us that he went out and wept bitterly. They all had the same illusion. Peter says, "Even if I have to die with You, I'll not deny You," they're all saying the same thing. They are proud to a very, very ugly degree. So proud they contradict the Lord. So proud they overestimate their own spiritual strength. So proud they are unprepared for what is to come. And against that ugly pride is this amazing humility of Christ who humbly faces the cross. Forsaken by them, hated by His own nation, rejected, He is magnificent in humility against the contrast of the ugly, boastful pride of the Apostles.

So, I say, in this experience here, while we see the ugly side of it, we see the ignorance and the pride of the Apostles, we also see a majesty of Christ in wonderful and beautiful contrast.

I need to tell you that what I said at the beginning is very important. This was not a terminal defection. This was not an apostasy they were restored. They were actually restored after the resurrection on that very night. With Thomas missing, they were collected together again the following Sunday, the first day of the week, when they were all there with Thomas. They were collected together finally in Galilee, they were all there when Jesus ascended and they were all there on the Day of Pentecost. They were restored.

And then, as I told you, in Acts 5:41, they were subsequent to this, willing to suffer for Christ and to be killed, if need be. They were unashamed, Acts 5:41.

What made the difference? I'll tell you what made the difference. What made the difference was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you." You remember that Jesus promised them in the upper room in John's gospel, the Holy Spirit has been with you, that's an Old Testament concept, but He shall be in you. It is not a matter of whether the Holy Spirit was with the people in the Old Testament. Yes, He was with the people in the Old Testament. But in the New, there is a dimension that is unknown in the past because our Lord says He has been with you, He will be in you. And the power will be accelerated, and they were never ashamed after the Holy Spirit came upon them in Acts chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost. They never were ashamed again. They went out and boldly preached Christ. Peter, by tradition, was crucified upside down, all the others were martyred until John, the last of them was exiled to Patmos and died in exile there for the cause of Christ. And throughout history, this is what believers have done. They have been faithful to the end. The history of martyrdom starts with these men, the Apostles, goes through human history, some of us are familiar with the history of those who gave their lives for the gospel. We all know about Foxe's Book of Martyrs and what happened in England and other places. We know that history even comes down to our time today.

When Christians are confronted with Christ, as so objectionable and so hated that if they do not deny Him, they will lose their lives, the history is that believers will lose their lives rather than deny Christ. They will be truthful.

I was reading this week about Islam and there are some very interesting things about their theology. One of them is that if your life is threatened, you can lie about being a Muslim. You can lie about anything. You can lie for two reasons. Reason number one, to protect your life. And number two, to advance the cause of Islam. This is in their writings. Consequently you can't really believe anything they say because they can lie to protect themselves and advance their cause. Allah will forgive those lies on the basis that it protects a Muslim and advances Islam. That is quite different from Christian testimony. Believers tell the truth even if it means death.

How are we empowered to such strength? How are we empowered to such resolve, such courage? It is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You say, "Well I don't know if I could do that? I don't know if I could stand up to that."

You know, I believe we all should have that kind of distrust, that wholesome kind of distrust and not over estimate what would be our commitment in that kind of hour. But having said that, at the same time, do you remember the words of our Lord? And this is a good place to end tonight, let's look at

John 15. "If the world hates you," verse 18, "we know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world would love its own, but because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word I said to you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted you, they will also persecute Me. If they kept My Word, they'll keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My namesake because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned. But now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sinned. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the Word that is written in their law, they hated Me without a cause." Taken from the Psalms. When the helper, the Holy Spirit comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me and you will testify also because you've been with Me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I have spoken to you so that when the hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I didn't say to you at the beginning because I was with you. But now I'm going to Him who sent Me."

In other words, Jesus says it's appropriate to tell you now that this is going to come. He goes on to talk about this and it all wraps up, I love this, in verse 32, "Behold, an hour is coming and has already come for you to be scattered, each to his own home and to leave me alone and yet I'm not alone because the Father is with Me. These things I've spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace in the world, you will have tribulation but take courage, I have overcome the world."

It's going to come. Be ready. You have the Holy Spirit and you have the promise of triumph.

And then He did something that sealed us. He prayed the prayer of John 17. Verse 15, "I do not ask, Father, that You take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one."

"I do not ask," verse 20, on behalf of these alone, but for these also who believe in Me through their word, all who follow the Apostles in faith, that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You that they also may be in us that the world may believe that You sent Me." Verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

We are protected from an ultimate defection by the will of our Savior who in this intercessory prayer prays according to the Father's will that nothing...nothing will separate us from Him...nothing.

If you ever were to face the kind of thing that these men faced, the kind of persecution and martyrdom that believers through the years have faced and some face today, I can promise you confident in the prayers of our Savior, that in that hour the grace that you need and perhaps even the words that you need to speak would be granted to you. And as a true believer, your faith would not fail.

In the meantime, let us rise above ever being ashamed of Christ, right? Let's pray.

We never want to be a disappointment to You, our Lord, we know You love us perfectly, You love us consummately, completely. We never ever want to be ashamed of You. In some acts of self-protection, self-preservation, not for the sake of our lives, but for the sake of eliminating conflict, for the sake of being accepted, we are ashamed to speak the truth. May we, like the Apostle Paul, be able to say I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because I know it's the power of God to salvation. May we never be ashamed of You. May we rise above our own weakness in Your strength. May we overcome our tendency toward failure and self-protection by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who enables us and empowers us to be all that we can be. May we stand in the long line of those who have lived and even faced death faithful to You. You are worthy of that faithfulness and that kind of integrity and we want to give that to You. Enable us, Lord, we would say very unlike Peter and the rest, we are not in our own strength able, but in Your strength we can be unashamed even to the point of death and all points short of that as well.

Give us then that boldness that we should have to speak Your glorious gospel. And we thank You again for a picture of the majesty of our Savior in His knowledge, in His humility, in His power, that even shines through this huge disappointment at the crucial hour of His life. Help us to always give Him honor and never be a disappointment. That's our prayer and that's our desire because that's His will for us. We thank You, Lord, for the promise of enablement and power available to us if we willingly are obedient. We thank You in Your Son's name, Lord. Amen.

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