



Take Heed, Lest You Fall

Mark 14:27-52

1. Take Heed (verses 27-31).
2. Watch and Pray (verses 32-42).
3. Lest You Fall (verses 43-52).

For some reason or another, just this past week, my five year-old son, David, has become interested in playing chess. Something like this has happened with all of my kids. At some point, I have taught them a thing or two about chess. And so, this past week, it was David's turn. I taught David the introductory basics of chess. I taught him the names of the pieces. I taught him how the pieces moved. I taught him how to set up the board. I taught him how the object of the game is to capture the enemy king.

Whenever my children have come to me about chess, I have been pretty excited about it, because I love playing chess. I'm not a great player. But, can do OK. I long for one of my kids to love playing chess with me.

Well, this hasn't happened with any of my other children. Which is OK, really. None of them have demonstrated any sustained interest. But, perhaps David will be the one to play with me. So, I have decided to try a strategy with David to help this along. We played two games him on Friday. And David won both of the games! Amazing!

I was on the treadmill yesterday morning and he came and asked if we could play chess. I said, "When I'm done we can play." Well, he came back 5 minutes later and asked if I was done yet. I said, not yet. "Give me about a half an hour," I said. Five minutes later he came and asked the same thing. He obviously has no sense of time. But, children have a way of tugging on your hearts. So, I finished my exercise early, took a quick shower. You know what? He won again! Amazing!

I think that I have stirred his interest in the game a bit. And we'll see how long this lasts. At some point, he's going to deal with the reality of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." If we continue to play the game, and if I continue my current strategy, then David is going to get to thinking about how good he is in chess. I mean, he's going to be able to beat me lots of times. He's going to begin thinking that he's a pretty good chess player. He may even begin bragging to others at how good he is at chess. His pride may well rise.

But, some day, he is going to be surprised at how good dad really is! In that day, my guess is that he will stumble.

Proverbs 16:18 is true of life in so many ways. God has a way of humbling the proud. He made King Nebuchadnezzar eat grass like a cow for 7 years. He took King Manasseh captive as a prisoner in a Babylonian prison to humble him. He refused to take away Paul's thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

In our text this morning, we are going to see some proud disciples. We are going to see some disciples who thought that they had it all figured out. And we are going to see some disciples stumble along the way. So, as I read our text this morning, I want for you to look and listen for two things. Listen for the pride of the disciples. Listen for how they stumbled.

Mark 14:27-52

And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away [literally, "stumble"], 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 all were saying the same thing also.

They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he who was betraying Him had given them a

signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. They laid hands on Him and seized Him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures." And they all left Him and fled.

A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

Did you see their pride? Did you see their stumbling? This is the lesson that we have this morning. It's the lesson of 1 Corinthians 10:12, "let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (ESV).

Though Jesus warned these disciples of the danger that was before them, they were sure that they could stand. And what happened? They fell -- each and every one of them.

Perhaps you are here this morning, thinking, "Well, surely that would never happen to me. I'm committed to Christ. There is no way that I would ever fall like they did." I have news for you. Your very thoughts betray you. That's the point! "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."

My first point this morning comes from verses 27-31.

1. Take Heed (verses 27-31).

In these verses, we encounter Jesus telling His disciples that they will fall away from following Him. Look at verse 27, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.'" Literally here, the word translated, "fall away" is the Greek word, *skandalizw* (*skandalizo*). This is the word from which we get our English, "scandal." Literally, it means, "to stumble." It means that they will trip and fall down.

It doesn't mean that they will lose their salvation. The righteous will get up again. Proverbs 24:16 tells us, "A righteous man falls seven times, and rises again. But the wicked stumble in time of calamity." These disciples will come back. Jesus will restore them to ministry again. But, Jesus says here that they will abandon Him.

Now, Jesus had told His disciples, on several occasions, of His upcoming death. Mark records that Jesus predicted His death on four separate occasions. [\[1\]](#) My guess is that Jesus even told them more times than this. So, they knew (at least in their minds), that Jesus would be killed in Jerusalem. But, it never quite sunk in, I suppose.

These disciples had also heard that one of them would betray Jesus. Jesus told them these things during the Lord's supper. Last week we looked at their response to these things. When they heard that one would betray Jesus, each of them said, "Surely, not I?" (verse 19). None of them could fathom the thought of betraying Jesus. They all thought that they could stand!

But, now, they hear for the first time that none of them would remain faithful to the Lord. One will betray Him. But eleven of them would fail to stand their ground. When the shepherd would be struck down, the sheep would be scattered. When Jesus would be crucified, each of His disciples would be nowhere in sight. In the hour of His greatest need, they would all fail. This was certainly difficult for all of them to believe.

Mark gives us a glimpse into Peter's response in verse 29. Peter said, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." Peter knew that there was no way that He would betray Jesus. Peter knew that there was no way that He would fail being faithful to Jesus. But Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Himself. He said, (in verse 30), "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." When Jesus said this, it was already evening. Jesus said that even within a few hours, Peter's pledge would fail.

Still clueless of what Jesus was saying, Peter boldly ventured out, saying, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (verse 31). Now, we all can admire his zeal. We can be encouraged with the boldness of Peter. He was ready and willing to be a martyr for the cause of Jesus. And yet, sadly, Peter did this very thing that he said that he wouldn't do. Rather than standing firm, Peter wilted in the day of trial, like a flower in the heat of the day. When we get to the end of chapter 14, we will see the very thing that Jesus predicted come to pass. (See verses 66-72).

But Peter wasn't the only one who protested to what Jesus said. Mark tells us at the end of verse 31 that "they all were saying the same thing also." We get the details with Peter, but each of them were affirming their commitment to be faithful to Jesus. Each of them were saying to Jesus, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (verse 31).

John and Matthew and Thaddaeus and Bartholomew were all saying this. Thomas and Andrew and James affirmed their willingness to follow Jesus to death. This was no band of half-hearted followers. These were men committed to the cause. These were men who were sold-out to following Jesus. They left everything to follow Jesus. Here, they expressed it with their mouths, "We will be faithful until the end!"

But, all of them fell away, just as Jesus had predicted. When we come to verse 50, we will see them all leaving Him and fleeing. Though their flight may have surprised the disciples, it didn't surprise Jesus at all. This was something that Jesus knew would take place. He didn't simply know it because of His foreknowledge (though He did know it by way of foreknowledge). But, He knew it because the Scripture foretold it. In verse 27, Jesus said, "It is written." Had he wanted to, He could have returned to the temple, picked up one of the many scrolls, scrolled over to Zechariah 13:7, and read these very words, "I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (verse 27).

Zechariah 13:7 is a prophecy in the Old Testament that describes how the True Shepherd of Israel is struck down. In so doing, all the sheep

will scatter. In the next few verses in Zechariah, the prophet tells how two-thirds of Israel will "be cut off and perish" (Zech. 13:8). But, one-third of Israel will be "refined as silver is refined, and tested as gold is tested" (Zech. 13:9). Though they all are scattered, Zechariah promises a return of some of them. During their trial, they will call upon the name of the Lord and will be saved from their affliction (Zech. 13:9). The same was true of the disciples. They fell down and were scattered. But, their scattering was a time of refining!

There came a point in each of their lives, when they repented of their desertion, called upon the name of Jesus, and were restored. Jesus alludes to their restoration in verse 28 when he said, "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Just as Jesus knew that the disciples would fall away, Jesus also knew that He would be raised from the dead to restore these disciples.

Jesus knew that the cross would not be defeat, but would be victory. After He had been raised from the dead, Jesus knew that He would spend some time with the disciples instructing them of "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). He told them of how the Holy Spirit would come upon them and restore them into leadership. You can see this in the 21st chapter of John, in which Jesus commissions Peter to shepherd and care for the sheep (John 21:15-17). You can see this in the first chapter of Acts, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, alive from the dead, teaching them of their role in the great commission. Once restored, these disciples went out proclaiming the gospel and changed the course of this world forever! Though these eleven disciples all would flee from Jesus, it would refine them and test them for greater good later.

This is the hope for all of you in your day of distress! Repent of your sin and return to the Lord.

How many times have you given your promise to the Lord that you would do something, only to regret it later when you lacked the strength or courage to carry it out? I think about my Christian life and can think of many things that I have pledged to do, but have failed to do so. I have pledged to be bolder in my evangelism. But, when the moment came to be bold, I have lacked the courage I needed to speak out boldly. I have preached many things that I, myself, have failed to do. My prayer life is not what I have pledged God that it would be. Prayer has easily been squeezed out of my schedule in the business of the day.

Perhaps you can relate to this as well. You have made some kind of promise to God to do something or say something to somebody. But, when the hour of testing came, you lacked the courage to carry through with your commitments.

Who knows, perhaps today finds you in a place of desertion. Perhaps today finds you in rebellion against the Lord in some way or another. I say to you, "Come back." Jesus is willing to embrace you with open arms. Please come back!

Let's look at my second point.
2. Watch and Pray (verses 32-42).

Verse 32 takes us to the garden of Gethsemane, which means "oil press." It's a great name that describes what happened to Jesus in the garden. He was squeezed to the uttermost.

Gethsemane was a shady spot on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. The only thing that separated it from the city of Jerusalem was the Kidron valley. Jesus would often retire there with His disciples (John 18:2), which helps to explain how Judas was able to lead a mob of people to that very location in the night to arrest Jesus.

As Jesus arrived at Gethsemane, He was accompanied by eleven of His disciples. To eight of them, He said, "Sit here until I have prayed" (verse 32). To the other three (Peter, James and John, who were His inner circle of disciples), Jesus took them "with Him" (verse 33). To these three, Jesus revealed the state of His soul, saying (in verse 34), "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

At this point, the reality of the crucifixion was sinking deep into the thoughts of Jesus. Jesus was destined to die upon a cross. For years, Jesus knew clearly what the future held for Him. Before He came into the flesh, He knew what would take place. In fact, Jesus knew from eternity past what would take place. But now, as the hours draw close, His soul was grieved. It's one thing for a dreaded event to be taking place several years from now. But, when the dreaded event will take place in a few hours, our anxiety level naturally arises.

In my life (as I'm sure is true of yours as well), there have been difficult things that I have needed to do. There have been difficult decisions to make. There have been difficult conversations that have needed to take place. And my experience is that if it is a week (or a month, or a year off), it doesn't cause too much anxiety in my soul. But, when the day arrives to take action, my stomach has often been filled with butterflies in anticipation of what will take place during that day.

This was what Jesus was experiencing. He knew full well that Judas would come and betray Him in the garden, shortly after He finished praying. Judas didn't surprise Jesus and His followers. In verses 41-42, Jesus told His disciple that Judas was about to arrive. Jesus knew that His hour had come. Jesus knew that His life would soon be over. Jesus knew that He was about to experience some great suffering. And as Jesus looked forward to what He would face, he was "deeply grieved" (verse 34). Luke tells us that the stress upon Jesus was so great that "His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44).

Jesus knew that He needed to pray. In verse 35, we see Jesus going "a little beyond them" to be by Himself during this hour of great trial. He "fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by" (verse 35). In verse 36 we catch a glimpse of what He was praying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

The cup is clearly symbolic of the suffering of the wrath of God that would come upon Him. Many references in the Old Testament use this metaphor. Consider the following. Psalm 75:8 says, "A cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; It is well mixed, and He pours out of this; Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs." Jeremiah 25:15 refers to the "cup of wine of wrath." There are many more such references found in the Old Testament.

At this moment, you need to realize what Jesus was facing. Upon the cross, Jesus wasn't simply facing His own death. He was facing a billion deaths.

From time to time there are stories that come across the news wire of a mass murderer who finally gets his day in court. Through the testimony of the court, it becomes plain, beyond a reasonable doubt, that this man murdered four people in cold blood on a night of rage. Due to the particular state in which the crime was committed, the death sentence is not allowed. And so, the murderer is punished to four life-sentences. I've always been confused at how exactly that works itself out. Each of us have only one life. How can you serve four life-sentences? But, such a sentence, it does do well to communicate the punishment that is deserved: one life sentence for each murder committed.

But when Jesus suffered upon the cross, He suffered death for all of those who would believe in Jesus. We certainly don't know how many people this is. There are currently in this world some 2 billion professing Christians. In previous centuries, there have been billions others who have professed their allegiance to Christ. Accounting for the many false professors of faith as Christ told us that there would be, I'm throwing out a number like a billion to give you some sense of the magnitude of the suffering that Jesus would face. Perhaps the number is in the hundreds of millions. There is no way of really knowing. But, we do know that upon the cross, Jesus would face the fierce wrath of God, for every person who would believe in Him.

This caused Him much anxiety. In His humanness, Jesus was looking for a way out. He knew that there was no other way, but the cross. But, so distressed He was at the incredible suffering that He would experience, that He pleaded with the Father for another way. Perhaps there was something else that He was missing. You need to catch what Jesus was doing. He was praying for something that was contrary to the will of God, hoping that it would allow Him not to suffer.

And yet, through it all, He entrusted Himself to the will of the Father with those famous words, "yet not what I will, but what You will" (verse 36). Jesus was hours away from being mocked (Luke 22:63), from being beaten (Luke 22:63), from being blindfolded and hit by soldiers, who ridiculed Him, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?" (Luke 22:64), and from being blasphemed (Luke 22:65). Worst of all, Jesus was hours away from being abandoned by God Himself (Mark 15:34). And through it all, Jesus gave Himself over to the will of the Father. "Yet not what I will, but what You will" (verse 36). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10)

His trial was far more difficult than the trial of Peter. Peter fell when only his own death was at stake. But Jesus stood firm with hundreds of millions of deaths upon His shoulders.

"Not what I will, but what You will" gives us great application. When difficulties come in your life, plead with God for a way out! Certainly, pray for a way out of the difficulties. Pray for a solution that you can't see. I encourage you even to pray for the impossible! Pray for miraculous healing! Pray for repentance! Pray for someone's change of heart. And yet, say at the end of your prayers, "Yet not as I will, but as You will." And when you pray that way, entrust yourself to His will. You may not be too thrilled with it. You may not be excited about it. It may even cause you much hurt and pain and distress. But, accept it! And realize that the end of God's will is worth any difficulties that you experience while going through trials.

This was true of Jesus. Why did Jesus willingly endure the cross? The writer to the Hebrews say that it was "for the joy set before Him [that He] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Jesus willingly suffered the shame of the cross, because He was convinced of the joy on the other end. The same is true of your life. You will be more joyful in suffering in the will of God that you will be when you are outside of the will of God, due to your own unfaithfulness. God's will is always better than the sufferings that you endure. Paul said it well in Romans 8:18, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." In another place, Paul wrote of how our "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17). Church family, be like Jesus and throw yourself upon the kind will of God and trust Him in the direst of circumstances.

For Jesus, this was the dark night of His soul. You may very well come to a similar crisis in your life. When you do, throw yourself upon God, who is able to sustain you.

This is what Martin Luther did in his greatest hour of need. Luther had been summoned to stand before Charles, the Holy Roman Emperor. He was accused of heresy, which would bring forth the sentence of death. On April 17, 1521, he was asked to recant of his writings. On this day, Luther failed to stand firm. Instead, claiming to be only a monk, he asked for one more day to think. Enclosed in his room, all alone, some have called this night "his Gethsemane." Luther wrote out his prayer of humble dependence upon the Lord. It may well be a model for you in the day of your distress. Luther wrote, ...

O God, Almighty God everlasting! how dreadful is the world! behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in Thee! . . . Oh! the weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength of this world-all is over. . . . The knell is struck. . . . Sentence is gone forth. . . . O God! O God! O thou, my God! help me against all the wisdom of this world. Do this, I beseech thee; thou shouldst do this . . . by thy own mighty power. . . . The work is not mine, but Thine. I have no business here. . . . I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is Thine. . . . And it is righteous and everlasting! O Lord! help me! O faithful and unchangeable God! I lean not upon man. It were vain! Whatever is of man is tottering, whatever proceeds from him must fail. My God! my God! does thou not hear? My God! art thou no longer living? Nay, thou canst not die. Thou dost but hide Thyself. Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it! . . . Therefore, O God, accomplish thine own will! Forsake me not, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, my defence, my buckler, and my stronghold.

Lord-where art thou? . . . My God, where art thou? . . . Come! I pray thee, I am ready . . . Behold me prepared to lay down my life for thy truth . . . suffering like a lamb. For the cause is holy. It is thine own! . . . I will not let thee go! no, nor yet for all

eternity! And though the world should be thronged with devils-and this body, which is the work of thine hands, should be cast forth, trodden under foot, cut in pieces, . . . consumed to ashes, my soul is thine. Yes, I have thine own word to assure me of it. My soul belongs to thee, and will abide with thee forever! Amen! O God send help! . . . Amen! [\[2\]](#)

The very next day, the Lord strengthened Martin Luther. Boldly declaring to those who had the power to kill him, he said, ...

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason--I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other--my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." [\[3\]](#)

In your greatest hour of need, be like Jesus and Martin Luther and cry out to the Lord for help. He will strengthen you to accomplish His will, despite the difficulties that lie in the way. What Jesus did, and what Martin Luther did, was exactly what the disciples should have done. But they failed to do it.

Instead, we read (in verse 37), that Jesus "came and found them sleeping." Earlier, Jesus had told them to "keep watch" (verse 34). But, they failed in their task.

And so, Jesus comes and speaks with Peter. In Matthew's account, this same rebuke went to all of the disciples. What Jesus says is truly amazing. Here, Jesus rebukes Peter. Jesus warns Peter. Jesus even gives him an excuse to offer as to why he was sleeping.

He said, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? [That's the rebuke]. Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; [That's the warning]. the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak [That's the excuse]" (verses 37-38).

Jesus said, "I've been praying for an hour. It's really not very long! You should have been able to stay awake for an hour. I know of your frailty. I know that you are weak. I am mindful that you are but dust. But, here, this will help you. Pray that you might be vigilant and stay awake in this most crucial hour."

Why is it that they were sleeping? They were clueless. They didn't realize the urgency of the situation. Jesus did! They didn't.

I can relate. Yesterday evening, Yvonne and I had a date in DeKalb. We went to hear the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra. They played three pieces. Haydn's 44th Symphony (in E minor), Brahms' Violin Concerto, and A Requiem by Gabriel Fauré. The quality of the music was great. The violin concerto was amazing!

And yet, there were times, I must confess, that during the performance that I found myself a bit sleepy. Not too bad. But a few yawns. A little closing of the eyes. Now, I've had far worse. Yvonne and I have a code name for it. We say that we are "hurting."

Now, let me ask you, did any one of the performers get sleepy? No. Why? Because, they knew the intensity of the moment. They had to concentrate, lest they mess up.

Have you ever experienced this? Have you ever been sleepy during some sort of event? Some of you experience this on Sunday morning as I preach. I watch. I can see when your eyelids get heavy. I know. And so, I start to tell an illustration about something. I say something like, "Just this week I had strangest thing happen to me." All of a sudden, those of you who were sleepy suddenly come awake. Like you are right now.

But, let me ask you -- have I ever been sleepy as I have preached? Have you ever seen me yawn? Why not? Because I know the intensity of the moment. There is no way that I'm going to yawn when I need to concentrate so hard on what I'm going to say.

I believe that this was the difference between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus was into it. He knew what awaited Him. His death. His bearing of the wrath of God. There was no way that He was going to sleep.

I don't know the statistics, but I would guess that rare, if ever, is the death-row inmate who sleeps the night before his execution. But, His disciples were clueless. They had no idea as to what awaited them. Jesus had told them that He was soon to die (Mark 10:33-34; 14:27). Jesus had told them that He would be betrayed (verse 18). Jesus had told them that they would be scattered (verse 27). Jesus had told Peter that things would be so bad that he would deny Jesus three times (verse 30). And yet, they failed to "Take Heed." They failed to "keep watch" with Jesus (verse 34).

And Jesus comes with grace. He says (in verse 38), "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation." And yet, when Jesus "went away and prayed, saying the same words, ... again He came and found them sleeping" (verse 40). They had no idea of the intensity of the moment. Instead, "their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him" (verse 40). There may be a situation in your life where Jesus is warning you of the danger ahead. And you have no clue of the intensity of the moment. You are continuing on as if all is well. And there is a train-wreck in front of you.

I say to you, "Take heed!" "Watch and Pray!" The disciples failed miserably. They didn't "take heed." They failed to "watch and pray."

This even happened a third time (verse 41). Jesus goes away. He prays, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what You will." He returns and finds them sleeping. Their time is up. They are going to face the crisis!

Look at verse 41, ...

Mark 14:41-42

And He came the third time, and said to them,
"Are you still sleeping and resting?
It is enough; the hour has come;
Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.
Get up, let us be going;
Behold, the one who betrays me is at hand!"

This leads us to our last point this morning, ...

3. Lest You Fall (verses 43-52).

Notice in verses 41 and 42 how Jesus anticipated Judas coming. These words were not said after Judas came on the scene. They were said before Judas showed up in the garden. Before Jesus was captured, He told His disciples that His time was up. Before Jesus was taken into custody, He said that they had to get up and go and meet the betrayer. Verse 43 makes this clear, "Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with sword and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders."

Jesus knew that they were coming. Jesus anticipated that they were coming. My guess is that Jesus was praying with one eye toward heaven, and one eye toward the horizon, when His betrayer would come.

I love the fact that Jesus had every chance in the world to run away from His arrest. He could have chosen a different place in which to pray. When He knew that they were coming, Jesus could have slipped out the back door and run away. Jesus could have disappeared and escaped through the crowd unnoticed as He had done many times before (Luke 4:30). There were many possibilities for Jesus. All of these things Jesus could have done, but, He chose to stay and to face His betrayer, head on. He had prayed and was ready for the big moment.

He didn't run! He didn't resist.

Mark 14:44-46

Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

Notice how there was no resisting of arrest from Jesus. He knew that Judas, His betrayer, had come to betray Him. He knew Judas was doing so right now (verse 42). And yet, He didn't resist it in any way.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had told His disciples, "Do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). At this moment in time, Jesus was applying this very teaching. Evil people came to arrest Him, and Jesus allowed Himself to be captured. There was no resisting. There was no attempting to refuse the chains. Jesus willingly put out his hands to be bound.

When you read the gospel of John, you get a few more details which help to see how it was Jesus who hastened on His capture. Consider the following verses:

John 18:3-8

Judas then, having received the cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am [He]." And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, "I am [He]," they drew back, and fell to the ground. Again therefore He asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am [He]; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way."

You get the sense that these soldiers didn't really want to arrest Jesus. Jesus had to be the one to initiate their arrest. He spoke first, by asking them, "Whom do you seek?" (verse 4). When He confessed that He was the one that they were looking for, they retreated, rather than advancing (verses 5-6). Again, a second time, Jesus had to ask them, "Whom do you seek?" (verse 7). It's almost as if Jesus said, "Well, then, take Me! Here I am! I'm not resisting you at all. Here are my hands. Bind me with your chains. I will come willingly with you. What are you waiting for?"

David spoke of how difficult such a thing was. He said in Psalm 55. ...

Psalm 55:12-14

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it.
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,
Then I could hide myself from him.
But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend.
We who had sweet fellowship together, walked in the house of God in the throng.

David said, "It's hard to bear when it is your friend. It's hard to bear when it is your companion. An enemy? No problem. But a friend? That hurts! That hurts really bad!"

This is exactly what Jesus called Judas. In Matthew's account of this text, Jesus said, "Friend, do what you have come for" (Matthew 26:50). What an amazing thing! Jesus called Judas, "Friend" even as Judas was in the act of betrayal! In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had told His disciples to "love their enemies" (Matt. 5:44). At this very moment, Jesus was applying His own teaching.

His betrayer was standing before Him, giving him a kiss. The Greek word here is katafilew (kataphileo), which has the sense of an affectionate kiss. This kiss wasn't a small peck on the cheek, as if there was any shame in what Judas was doing. No. When you think of this word, picture two long time Russian friends who haven't seen each other in years, finally reunited. They willingly embrace one another and kiss one another, affectionately calling each other by name, "Victor! Hugo!"

This is the word used in Acts 20:37, when the Ephesian elders repeatedly kissed Paul and embraced him and wept aloud, as they knew that they would never see him again. This is the word used in Luke 15, when the prodigal son returns and his father runs up to him and embraces him and kisses him (Luke 15:20). This is the word used to describe the outpouring of love and affection that the forgiven women expressed to Jesus. She was weeping, and wetting his feet with her tears and kissing his feet (Luke 7:38).

It was a clear act of hypocrisy on the part of Judas. He came up to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" And yet, Jesus was so reserved. He didn't run. He didn't resist. He didn't retaliate.

Mark 14:46-47

They laid hands on Him and seized Him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Although Mark is silent regarding the identity of this disciple who drew His sword and who exactly was the man who lost his ear, John tells us who these people are. It was Peter, who took out his sword. The slave's name was Malchus (John 18:10).

When Peter pulled out his sword, he was probably thinking, "This is it! These guys have come to arrest Jesus with swords and clubs (verse 43). There is going to be a tremendous fight. I promised my Lord that I wouldn't deny Him, even if it meant dying (verse 31). Now's my chance to prove myself. I'm going to go down fighting!" Peter took out His sword and went for the head of Malchus. Fortunately, (for Malchus), he was able to duck and only lost an ear (which Jesus healed).

At this moment, Jesus changed the entire situation. Rather than fighting with sword and clubs (verse 43), Jesus confronts the religious leaders.

In Matthew's account, we read that He told Peter to put his sword "back into its place." Now wasn't the time to fight. If now were the time to fight, Jesus said that He could win easily. Jesus said (in Matthew 26:53), "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" A legion was 6,000, so twelve legions of angels puts this at 72,000 angels. The power of such an army is unbelievable.

This is the power that Jesus had at His disposal. But, He chose not to use it. In so doing, He set a precedent for all who would follow Jesus in the future. Christianity is a religion of peace. It conquers not through the sword, but through the power of love and perseverance.

The early church conquered through love. For three hundred years, the early Christians faced a tremendous amount of persecution. Many of the early Christians died for their faith. Philip Schaff once described how it was that Christianity eventually triumphed over the Romans, who had attempted to destroy it. He said, ...

No merely human religion could have stood such an ordeal of fire for three hundred years. The final victory of Christianity over Judaism and heathenism, and the mightiest empire of the ancient world, a victory gained without physical force, but by the moral power of patience and perseverance, of faith and love, is one of the sublimest spectacles in history, and one of the strongest evidences of the divinity and indestructible life of our religion. [\[4\]](#)

He didn't run. He didn't resist. He didn't retaliate. He didn't rant and rave. He simply said, ...

Mark 14:48-49

Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures.

Jesus puts the record straight. Things were not out of control. Things were taking place just as God had foreordained in the Scriptures.

When Jesus refers to "the Scriptures," many Scriptures may have been in His mind. He may have been thinking of Psalm 22 and the events of the crucifixion. He may have been thinking of Psalm 69 and the numerous enemies that would come upon the Messiah without a cause (especially, verse 4). Perhaps in His mind was Psalm 88, which speaks of the desertion of His friends (especially, verse 8). He could even be alluding to Genesis 3:15 in which the seed of the serpent must bruise the heel of the seed of the woman.

At any rate, Jesus knew that His time was up and that He was soon to go to the cross. He was ready. He had "taken heed." He had "watched

and prayed."

His disciples, on the other hand, were not so ready. So, they fell. We read in verse 50, "And they all left Him and fled." Just as Jesus had prophesied (verse 27). Just as they had denied (verse 31).

And then, a very interesting account comes in verses 51-52, ...

Mark 14:51-52

A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

Though this young man is unnamed, most interpreters believe this to be Mark, himself. How else would Mark have known of these details? This young man displayed some courage in seeking to follow Jesus, even after the disciples had fled. Yet, he was more willing to run into the night naked than to follow Jesus.

So, off Jesus went to an unjust trial and an unjust death, so that God could forgive us.

I want to close by mentioning Peter. In John 21, we see Peter discouraged with life. He told the other disciples, "I am going fishing" (John 21:3). It may well have been an attempt by Peter to escape from what was going on in his life and in the life of the disciples. Yet, Jesus returns to him and restores him with these gentle words.

Consider well the conversation:

John 21:15-17

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep."

This is a clear indication that Jesus was calling Peter back to the task to which He called him in the first place. He called him to be a shepherd of the church. Despite his failings. Despite how he deserted Jesus, he was still called to the ministry. Oh, may this be an encouragement to us in our failures. God is ready to take failures and use them for His glory.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 24, 2012 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Mark 8:31; 9:9; 9:31; 10:33-34

[2] Quoted by R. C. Sproul in his book, *The Holiness of God*, pp. 110-111.

[3] Quoted by Roland Bainton in his book, *Here I Stand*, p. 144.

[4] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 8.