

Peter's Denial

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[0 : 0 0] If you'll please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew. We're continuing our study there. We're in the 26th chapter of Matthew, chapter 26.

If you looked at the bulletin, you may have already seen this, but we're going to skip a little bit in our study here. We're going to start in Matthew 26, really looking at verse 31. We'll probably start reading verse 30.

And then read through verse 35, where Jesus foretells Peter's denial. And then I'd like for us to skip ahead to verses 69 through 75, where we actually look at Peter's denial.

So we're focusing on that one idea. We're skipping over the content in between, and we'll come back to that, Lord willing, in the weeks ahead. So if you'll look with me at Matthew 26, again, we'll start reading in verse 30.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, You will all fall away because of me this night. Peter answered him, Jesus said to him, Now we're going to skip to verse 69.

[1 : 5 5] Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, You also were with Jesus the Galilean.

But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him. And she said to the bystanders, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied it with an oath. I do not know the man. After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.

Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man. And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we again ask for your Spirit's help.

[2 : 5 7] That you would open to us your word. That you would make it clear. And Lord, we pray that it would have its effect on every heart here. Lord, for some that may mean salvation.

For others it may mean conviction of sin. For others yet, encouragement. Lord, we pray for all of us that it would be a response of worship of our Savior.

And if you are Father, we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. So we see in this passage, Jesus again foretells his death and resurrection.

There in verses 31 and 32. And here he specifically quotes Zechariah 13, verse 7. He says, You will fall away because of me this night, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

And he's quoting Zechariah saying, this is what was told beforehand. The shepherd will be, the shepherd will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

- [4 : 05] The flock will be scattered. So he tells them, this is what's going to happen. This is what God has determined would happen and told beforehand in his word. And this time he focuses less on his death and resurrection and more on the response of the disciples.
- Specifically how they're going to fall away. And in particular, we see some focus on Peter. So what I'd like for us to do is to look at what Jesus says about all the disciples.
- Then for us to look at specifically Peter and his interaction and ultimately his fall. And then finally, in application, I really want us to consider, what does this teach us about ourselves?
- And what does it teach us about our Savior? So again, we're going to look at the disciples, then Peter. And then in application, what does it teach us about ourselves? And what does it teach us about our Savior?
- So first you see in verses 31 and 32, that even though we primarily focus upon Peter in this, that what Jesus actually says is that all the disciples will fall away.
- [5 : 08] I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. Let me go further back, verse 31. Then Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. And so we see here that Jesus is telling the disciples.
- And remember at this point, Judas has probably already left. This is 11 remaining disciples. And he tells them that every one of them are going to fall away that same night because of him. Now when we say this, I don't think Jesus is speaking of an eternal falling away.
- He's not speaking of the idea of losing salvation, which we hold is not possible. But what he is saying is that they're going to disown him, even as we see Peter do.
- They're not going to stand with him. Even as I say, it's not an eternal falling away. The very fact that Jesus says to them in verse 32, I will go before you to Galilee. Speaks of restoration. They're going to be restored.
- He's going to meet with them again. This will not be a long lasting falling away. But they need to understand that this night, that they are going to turn away from him. They're not going to stand with him as he's arrested.
- [6 : 13] But again, he promises to meet up with them after his resurrection. Rather, the reality is that they're going to shrink back in fear. They're going to be unwilling to face death with Jesus.
- Of course, this is exactly what happens. If we look in the chapter we're in, but a passage I didn't read earlier, but verse 56. It says, then all the disciples left him and fled.
- So exactly what Jesus says is going to happen is exactly what does happen. They all flee. They run away out of fear. They shrink back.
- So Judas has already been exposed as a traitor. And again, he's already left the group. But now we see that really all the disciples become deserters of Jesus. None of them stand with him in the end.
- I think what we see here really is the temptation of the disciples, which they fell in. They fell in this. Will they stand with Jesus?
- [7 : 17] I think Satan uses the opportunity to stir up in them doubt and fear. We've talked about all along that their messianic expectation was that Jesus was going to conquer Rome and sit in Jerusalem and reign as king.
- And we've talked about how they keep denying this idea of the resurrection. They won't, excuse me, of Jesus's death. They won't even accept it because if Jesus dies, how can he defeat Rome?

And so now as Jesus is arrested, you can imagine plans aren't going the way they had hoped it would be. Is this really the Messiah? And if it is the Messiah, why is he being arrested?

And why does he keep talking about his death? And I think Satan uses that to stir up in them doubts and fear. 1 Corinthians 1.23, Paul says, But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.

So even after Jesus' resurrection, the idea of Jesus dying on a cross was a stumbling block for Jews. Why is it a stumbling block for Jews? Because it's not how they had understood the messianic revelation of the Old Testament.

[8 : 28] The idea of a crucified Messiah seemed contrary to what they expected. But also it's folly to the Gentiles. Even I think the idea of salvation through the God-man who came and lived a perfect life and died for our sins, even today we understand it's foolishness to those who have not been spiritually enlightened.

I think even if you look at every other religion in the world, it's all based on what we do. If you do these seven things, these seven pillars, then you have salvation. And here we have a different reality in Christ.

It's by faith in a crucified Savior through which we have salvation. But you understand how this is a difficulty even today, but how much more so for those who are living at that time who are seeing these events unfold.

I mentioned the messianic expectations. I think we've talked about a great deal of the disciples' expectations were centered really on earthly realities.

Jesus reigning, overthrowing Rome, sitting on the Davidic throne as the Davidic king who's going to reign forever there in Jerusalem. But what we have to understand is that Jesus was building something far greater.

[9 : 38] He's building a spiritual kingdom. We've talked about this some already with, as we talked about, eschatological realities or the end times realities. We talked about how the idea of Jesus coming and sitting in Jerusalem on earth would be a regression.

It would be going backwards. Jesus has accomplished something far greater. He's established a spiritual kingdom that encompasses people throughout all time. And so we're not looking for that physical reality until the new earth and new heavens are established.

But Jesus is building something far greater. He's building a spiritual kingdom. And so we understand that Jesus even now is spiritually reigning over his kingdom.

And again, it won't be a physical reign or a physical kingdom until we see this world consumed and there being a new earth and new heavens established. But you can imagine the disciples' disappointment to see Jesus, who they're looking to as the Messiah, who they expect as the Savior, to be arrested at that moment.

And ultimately, even to be put to death. If he's arrested and put to death, how will he overcome Rome and become our king? But first, I want you to see that it's not just Peter.

[10 : 57] It's all the disciples. And we see in verse 56 that they actually do. Every one of them, they run away. They flee from Jesus. But then I want to look specifically at Peter's denial.

We see it really in verses 33 through 35. Before I read that, let me just focus in for a second. At the end of verse 35, now we're going to look at Peter and what he says, but I want you to see that at the end of verse 35 it says, and all the disciples said the same.

So we've talked about this a great deal already, but Peter's kind of the spokesperson for the disciples. I call him the spokesperson. Maybe we could say he's got the biggest mouth of the disciples. He's the one who speaks out the loudest.

And then the other guys are like, yeah, what Peter said. But notice that all of them affirm the same thing. And so we give a great deal of focus and attention to Peter's denial.

But all the disciples are saying the same thing. There's not one of them that doesn't really go through the same experience that Peter goes through. But let's look at what Peter says. Again, verses 33 through 35.

[12 : 01] So Jesus has just said that they're all going to be scattered. And Peter answered him, Though they all fall away, because of you I will never fall away.

So let me just start there. It's so remarkable. Just imagine being one of the other disciples hanging out with Peter right now. And it's almost as though Peter looks around and he's like, look, you know those guys?

Yeah. I understand why you think they'd fall away. But you know I won't. Right? I mean, there's... I cannot read this without getting a little bit of arrogance or pride or cockiness from Peter here.

Those other guys, yeah, they might fall away. But you know I'm not going to. And so we see Peter really with this boldness that he's not going to fall away. And then Jesus said to him, Truly I tell you.

So truly is some form of almost an oath. There's verity to this. Truly I tell you this. Very night. Before the rooster crows, you, Peter, will deny me three times.

[13 : 06] And so now Jesus has settled the whole issue. And we know Peter. He's just going to calm down. Right? And then in verse 35, Peter said to him, Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And then again, all the disciples said the same thing. And so we see the boldness and the arrogance of Peter once again in his interaction with Jesus.

Even if all the others deny him, Peter will never deny Jesus. And it's remarkable, and I tried to highlight this, but even after Jesus says to him, Peter, understand, truly I'm telling you, tonight you will deny me three times before the rooster crows.

Which, just understand, the rooster crows is basically saying, before the morning comes. Right? The rooster crows, first thing in the morning, let you know, the mornings come.

And so before the morning comes, this night, before it's over, you're going to deny me three times. And even though Jesus tells him that, and even though Jesus says, truly this will take place, Peter, in typical Peter fashion, corrects Jesus.

[14 : 14] No, no, no, no, no, you're mistaken. Even if I've got to die tonight, I'm dying with you. And of course, as I've said already, all the disciples joined Peter in saying that they will die like Peter before they'll deny Jesus.

So, in a little bit, we're going to look at what this teaches us about ourselves, but I just want you to take note of the fact that you have 11 men who have walked with Jesus for three years, who believe in to be the Messiah, who are absolutely sure there's not a chance they're going to fall away, even if it means they die.

And before it ever gets anywhere close to that, Jesus is arrested and they flee. They run away. And it seems as though even Peter's the only one that kind of hangs around in the outskirts of things, but they all run away.

And deny Jesus. And then in verses 69 through 75, we see the fulfillment of what Jesus foretold specifically concerning Peter, his denial of Jesus three times before the rooster crows.

So, he denies him three times. The second time, it says he does so with an oath. The third time, he swears that he does not know Jesus, and he even invokes a curse upon himself.

[15 : 30] The swearing, I think sometimes people interpret that as what we would call cussing. I don't think what it's saying is that Peter is intentionally using foul language to try to prove he's not really one of Jesus' disciples.

I think this is probably another way of saying that he took an oath. But he has vowed before them, I'm not one of Jesus' disciples. And the third time, he ups his game a little bit.

Because he swears or he vows again, I don't know Jesus. And this time, he actually invokes a curse upon himself. If I'm lying, if I really do know Jesus, may this happen to me. And we don't know what the curse is.

But he invokes a curse upon himself, knowing he's lying. That there would be consequences. And you guys understand that this is actually invoking it to God. May God judge me if I'm lying in this.

It's like we would swear in a court of law, we'd put our hand on the Bible, and we're swearing to the hell of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me God. And essentially what we're saying is, may God strike me down.

[16 : 28] If I'm lying about this. And Peter does something along that line in front of these people. And so each time we see an intensification of Peter's denial.

First he just says, I don't know him. Second he says, I give an oath. The third time, I think he's giving another oath, and this time saying, if I'm lying about this, may God judge me. And so he continues to up the ante about what he's saying to try to prove that he doesn't really know Jesus.

And so you get from this the sense of, it's not just that he kind of casually denies Jesus. He's swearing on his very life that he doesn't know Jesus, even though he does.

And there may even be some level of this pointed to by the fact that the first two times he's questioned, it's by servant girls. And at the very least, I think what's being implied is this isn't the most intimidating of circumstances.

He hasn't been brought before the Sanhedrin. His life isn't on the line. It's some servant girl saying, you're one of them, aren't you? Now, you understand that there's a crowd around. We can see that from the contacts, that there is a crowd.

[17 : 43] The servant girl says to the crowd, he's one of them, and he denies it before the crowd. So maybe there's some level of fear that the crowd may report him.

But the first two times, it's just a servant girl. And I think that's intentionally pointing out to us that it's not that threatening of a situation, and yet Peter is ready to deny Jesus even to the point of taking a curse.

The third time, his Galilean accent gives him away. Now, I know that's hard for us to conceive, especially for me, that you guys can tell where someone's from by their accent. Why are you laughing?

I'll have you guys know, I went, this is just a quick trip down, but I went down Thursday night to see my brother graduate college on Friday, and we went to a restaurant, we went out to dinner with them, and I said something to the waitress, and she said, what did they say?

And my mom had to interpret for the waitress, and then she said, and where are you from? And I said, I'm from Griffin, which is the town I grew up in, which is like 10 miles away from where she was.

[18 : 49] Oh, you don't sound like you're from Griffin. And my brother quickly pointed out that that's not where I currently abide. So, I know you guys still think you can tell where I'm from by my accent. People back home can't tell anymore.

So, now I'm somewhere in between Georgia and Pennsylvania with it very unclear where I'm from. But, I think you guys get the idea that someone's accent can give them away where they're from.

We can tell someone's from the South. We can tell someone's from New York, New York City. Even sometimes, those of you who grew up in New York City can tell me what neighborhood in New York City they grew up in.

Oh, they're from the Bronx, or they're from Manhattan, or whatever. I mean, they can tell that in ways I can't. But, we can pick up on those things just as they could. They could tell, oh, you speak as one who's from the area of Galilee, which is where Jesus was.

And so, his accent gives them away, and yet he continues to deny. And after the third denial, the rooster crows, and Jesus' words are proven perfectly true.

[19 : 52] And we're told that it's at that moment that he remembers what Jesus said. And he leaves the scene. He goes away from there, and he weeps bitterly. And I think what we see in Peter is there's no doubt that he's overwhelmed with guilt.

He feels guilty for what he's done. He regrets what he's done. He has sadness for Christ. I think even this could be, perhaps, an expression of repentance as his mind is drawn to the fact that Jesus is pointed out as he's just sworn a curse upon himself.

And then he is reminded of the fact that he's lied, and he's denied his Savior. That this weeping bitterly may be an expression of repentance in Peter. And it's a remembering of the words that Jesus has brought this change upon him.

When the rooster crows, he remembers what Jesus said. You'll deny me three times. And that has led him to this repentance or this weeping. And we could say, just as it's a remembrance of Jesus' words that brings him to repentance, it was likely the forgetfulness of those words and that warning that opened Peter to deny Jesus.

Had he kept in his mind the words of Jesus that this was going to happen, if the words of Christ would have been foremost on his mind, how might that have changed how he fought against this? How he gave in, even, to the temptation.

[21 : 20] And so, I think we have even an application here of, especially if you think of the words of Christ, and we're told that the Scriptures are the word of Christ. And how it's the word of Christ that brings repentance, and it's the forgetfulness of the word of Christ that opens us to temptation and sin.

And so, we're reminded, I think as well, how important God's word needs to be in our lives. Both in bringing us back to repentance when we've fallen into sin, but also for protection against falling away originally.

J.C. Ryle writes, let no man flatter himself that he may sin with impunity because David committed adultery or because Peter denied Christ.

No doubt these holy men sinned greatly, but they did not continue in their sins, and they repented greatly. They mourned over their falls. They mourned over their falls.

They loathed and abhorred their own wickedness. And so, J.C. Ryle just pointing out to us here, it's easy for us to look at the sins of great men in the Bible and say, well, it's okay for us to sin in great ways.

[22 : 27] I think we ought to count it a blessing that God doesn't withhold that. Have you guys ever read biographies, and you read some biographies, and you think, here's a man who never sinned in his whole life. Right?

Sometimes men are glorified in their biographies. He did everything perfectly. If only we could be like him. That's not what God's word is like. It shows us that godly men still fall and fail.

But if they're truly men of God, if they're truly Christians, then there's repentance. And we ought to be encouraged by that in our own lives. And so, that's really what we see in the passage.

I want to take some time, a good bit of time of application. And first, I want us to consider an application. What does this whole encounter teach us about ourselves? Well, first, I want to point out to you again the fact that they all fell away.

Every one of the disciples, and let's be clear again, Judas is gone. These 11 disciples become the apostles. We know that they're, if they're not Christians now, they definitely become Christians.

[23 : 33] These become very godly men. And they all fall away. The ones closest to Jesus, every single one of them fell away. There wasn't one who stood beside him to the very end.

And so, I think this ought to teach us about our nature as well. Remember, every one of them believed before this happened that they would die before they denied Jesus.

They all believed that if Jesus dies this night, I'm dying with him. Every one of them. And none of them do. At least not that night. None of them stand with him to death. They all deny him.

And so, what does this teach us about ourselves? Let's just say broadly and foremost, or first, that it teaches us about the tendency in all of us for over-self-confidence.

I don't know if I should say over-confidence or self-confidence. Let's just combine them for over-self-confidence. That there's a tendency in all of us to be too confident in our own ability. I think, what if their response would have been, I know in my heart there's a tendency to fall away.

[24 : 46] Lord, keep me from that. Preserve me. Even for them to have prayed that God would not allow that to happen for them.

I'm going to, we'll talk more about that prayer in a minute. But first, let's just point out the fact that there is in all of us, I believe, pride. There's a tendency to think we can handle it.

I think even as I examine my own prayer life, I know my own heart where I tend to pray about things that I think I can't do on my own strength. Often, if I feel like I can do it, I don't pray the same way or at all.

It's when I realize, oops, things have messed up and now I need God's help. Then I pray. But what we have to understand, all of us, is that there's nothing we can do on our own.

We're always dependent upon the strength that the Lord supplies. Even our health is contingent upon the Lord. Each day, what we have is given to us by God so that there's not one thing that we're not dependent upon God about.

[25 : 50] So therefore, we ought to pray continually or pray without ceasing because we need God's help for everything that we face. I'll just confess and acknowledge that I've often been amazed at how there have been times where I have felt sick in one way or another.

One time that stands out particularly well for me was there was a time when I was in Georgia preaching and I realized the night before that I had appendicitis. Now, maybe I'm not the brightest.

You can pray for me there as well. But I realized that it was appendicitis but I had to preach in this morning. So I go to church and I preached and then went to the hospital. But, I felt like there's no way I can actually pull this off.

And I felt like I prayed in a way I had not prayed for my preaching maybe in years. And it was a time that even the church was aware of the fact that God uniquely blessed it.

But why was I not praying like that all the time? Because I felt like in some way I could do this on my own. At least 90%. I need the Spirit's 10% help to take this as an encouragement from me to you.

[27 : 05] Pray for your pastor. Pray that the Spirit would be the one who's giving you the Word and not the man. Because I'm forgetful.

Just as I imagine all of you are with your daily activities as you go about your job, your work, that we think we can do it in our own strength. And so we don't look to the Lord. And then there are times when God strikes us down that we're reminded of the fact that I never could have done this on my own.

And it's at those times I feel like God's really blessed those times and shown me that it's by His strength that I do anything. And I think we see in the disciples their confidence is in their selves.

they believe they can do it. They can face death for the Lord. And maybe even as we think about that same idea that persecution may one day come our way. And haven't you all asked that question?

If my life was on the line, if someone said to me deny Jesus or die, what would be your choice? maybe there's some difficulty beforehand.

[28 : 11] Maybe there's some ways it seems easy beforehand. Maybe we think, oh, without a question I'll stand. I think even now we ought to be praying for those kind of times. Unless the Lord enables us, there's not one of us who would shrink back and want to save our own life.

It takes God's enabling grace. It takes His Spirit working in us, I think, to stand in that moment in time. And so we need to be careful that we don't depend on our own strength and our own confidence.

And so really that moves to my second point under what it teaches of ourselves and that's that unless the Lord sustains us we will all fall away. Maybe we can imagine it this way that God withholds His sustaining power from the disciples for a moment and they are left to their own strength and what happens to them in their own strength?

They deny Christ. They fall away. And so we're taught that unless the Lord sustains us we too will all fall away. Matthew Henry writes, As we know not how near we may be to trouble so we know not how near we may be to sin.

If God leaves us to ourselves we are always in danger. We're always in danger if God leaves us to ourselves. If it's true of all the disciples if it's true of Peter who's really the foremost of the disciples do we imagine that's not going to happen to us?

[29 : 36] That we're somehow better Christians than the disciples or Peter? That we're somehow going to stand and we don't really need God's sustaining work?

I mentioned earlier the need for prayer and I'm speaking here of God sustaining us and we're not there yet but Lord willing we're going to be there next week. but remember Jesus is praying in Gethsemane and he encourages his disciples to stay up and pray and he comes back and he keeps finding them where?

Asleep. And part of me wonders what might things have looked like had they persevered through the night in prayer? Had they been praying throughout the night that God would preserve them and save them from falling away how might things have looked?

And so as we think about unless the Lord sustains us we'll all fall away we're also reminded that we need to pray that the Lord would sustain us. We need to depend upon God.

I think often times the battle is lost long before we ever face the enemy because we weren't praying beforehand. We weren't ready for that moment of temptation. Then thirdly let me say that the only reason that Christians persevere until the end is because of the Spirit sustaining them.

[30 : 54] You know we speak of the perseverance of the saints. That's not because Christians are so strong that they're never going to deny Jesus Christ. It's because the strength is in our Lord and not in ourselves.

Let me just show you this. John 10 the Gospel of John chapter 10 28-29 Jesus says I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch him out of my Father's hand. So we have this double picture of Christians belonging to the Lord and being in Jesus' hand and in the hand of the Father.

And so for a Christian to fall it only takes somebody to overpower Jesus and God the Father. That's all. Just as somebody can come along who's stronger than Jesus and God the Father and can...

I saw this meme the other day of how hard it is. you know the infant who grabs the food on the table that they're not supposed to get into and they grab it back and they were talking about you never know how strong your baby is until you try to get that food out of their hand.

[32 : 02] You try to clench those fingers. You know how tough that can be. Even for a grown up you're like how strong is this kid? They won't let go of this food. Just imagine for a Christian to lose their salvation it only takes somebody to do that to Jesus and to God the Father who's omnipotent.

If you're only more powerful than omnipotent then okay. Right? It's an impossibility but not because we're so strong but because God the Father and God the Son hold us in their hands so that we can never lose that salvation.

No one can snatch us from them. Fourthly I want you to see that this all ought to teach us humility. humility. It ought to show us our need for humility.

Let me just quote a few passages that show this. Proverbs 27 1 Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring. Is this not exactly what the disciples are doing?

No matter what happens I'm not going to fall away. And Jesus actually says to Peter yes you will. And Peter says no I won't. You're wrong Jesus. And so we're taught that we ought not boast about tomorrow.

[33 : 19] We don't know what tomorrow will bring. In humility I think we pray about these things. Again James 4 13 through 15 says a very similar message. Come now you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit.

Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say if the Lord wills we will live and do this or that.

And so even we imagine we're going to have a job. We're going to go do this. We're going to visit this town. We don't know what the Lord has in store for us. We ought to say instead if the Lord wills we will live and do this or that.

And so I think we're pointing to the fact even we don't know when our time will come, when we will die. And yet we boast about our plans years from now. But we're reminded in humility that it's all dependent upon the grace of God sustaining us.

One more 1 Corinthians 10, 12 through 13. Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overcome you that is not common to man.

[34 : 33] And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it. And so we're encouraged to have confidence that when we're tempted there's a way out, that God provides a way out that we can stand under.

But notice what it said at the beginning. Therefore let anyone who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall. The problem I think for the disciples here, for Peter in particular, is they think they stand.

There's an arrogance, there's a pride that we can do this. Look how strong we are spiritually. And we all are warned not to be in that position.

Not to think so highly of ourselves that we think we're incapable of falling. And I think we have to send that in the context of 1 Corinthians 10, is in terms of sin and temptation. That God is graciously providing a way out for us when we're tempted.

So there's never a time in which someone is obligated to sin. None of us have to sin. And yet, because we think we stand, we often do fall into sin.

[35 : 43] Because we're not looking for that way out, we're not trusting in God's provision of escape we think we're capable of handling the temptation. And we're not. And so we're reminded of a need for humility and trust in the Lord.

Fifthly, as Christians, we are able to take up our cross and follow Him. Matthew 16, 24-26, then Jesus told His disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

So as Christians, we're called to take up our cross and follow Jesus. And again, we sometimes put this in terms of there's going to be persecution. There's going to be hardships.

But you guys understand the context of this, a cross in that culture, what would that have meant? If I told you to take up your electric chair and follow Jesus, you wouldn't think that means just persecution.

[36 : 51] Broadly, okay, but narrowly we have to understand that Jesus is saying that as Christians we have to be prepared to die. I think the idea of taking up our cross and following Jesus is a challenge for some Christians.

And I think it's even a stumbling block for some people in their willingness to follow Jesus. I had a college professor who was open about the fact that he's not a Christian. Even though he was a student of the Word of God, he understood Scripture really well.

But I remember him telling me, he said, I'm not a Christian because of this passage. If you're going to be a Christian, you have to take up your cross and follow me. I'm not willing to make that sacrifice.

Now, in some ways, I had a lot of respect for that. That he's not foolishly just jumping in, thinking like it's going to be easy to follow Jesus Christ. On the other hand, I felt like you've completely misunderstood the gospel.

There's not one of us who's capable of taking up our cross. Apart from Jesus Christ working in us, that work. Apart from the Spirit enabling us. And so rather than humbly acknowledging I cannot do it and need Christ, that I might be able to, he really felt like if I can't do it on my own, then I can't do it.

[38 : 09] Which just turned the gospel on its head and made it a works-based salvation. Jesus isn't saying, if you'll take up your cross, then you're going to earn salvation. He's saying that those who love Jesus Christ will be willing to suffer.

They'll be enabled, empowered by the Spirit to be able to face that. And so again, our dependence in that moment cannot be in ourselves, but that God would enable us even to face death for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Sitsly, just an observation, maybe this is a little bit of an implication that I've taken myself, but I wonder how much better off might the disciples have been had they stuck together.

When Jesus is arrested, they all flee apparently different ways. They all run off on their own, they all hide. I think what might it have looked like if the eleven of them had stood together and encouraged one another?

And I see in this even a reminder of the fact that we need the church, we need each other. And I know there's some of us in this congregation that are introverts and are quite happy to spend much of our time at home by ourselves.

[39 : 25] But that can be a very dangerous place spiritually. We need the encouragement of the body, we need people holding us accountable, asking us about how we're doing in our spiritual life, how we're holding up in temptation.

We need that. Even let me observe Peter's denial comes while he's hanging out in the courtyard, amongst unbelievers that are looking to accuse him and make fun of him for following Jesus Christ.

So he denies Jesus while hanging out with worldly unbelievers who are making fun of the followers of Jesus and who want to see Jesus put to death and those who follow Jesus put to death.

It's not the crowd you want to hang with if you want to stand for Jesus Christ. We're called to be in the world but not of the world. And sometimes that's a hard balance to make. We want to have relationships.

We want to be able to share the gospel with people but our closest friendships those we're hanging out with I think they can't be unbelievers. And I still expect that we're going to stand for Jesus Christ. Christ. Maybe another way of saying this is how often do you imagine that you can befriend the world or maybe even fit in with this world and still follow Jesus Christ.

[40 : 43] And then finally I would ask the question of you all are there ways that you deny Jesus Christ today? Are there ways that we deny Jesus Christ today? Maybe it's not quite as directly as Peter did.

But do you want to be associated with Jesus Christ or identified as a Christian in certain groups of people? Are there times like Peter when we're in certain groups where we're happy that they don't know we're a Christian?

We don't want to maybe get into that conversation or fight that battle or be made fun of. And are these ways that we are maybe even non-verbally if you will, denying Jesus Christ?

We don't want people to know that we belong to him. And then I said as well in application I want us to consider what this teaches us about our Savior.

I want to be careful how I'll say this but I think there's a way in which Peter's denial had to be hurtful to Jesus. Had to bring sorrow to Jesus' heart. I didn't bring this up earlier but Luke 22, 60 through 61 we read this.

[41 : 55] This is Peter. He's just denied Jesus for the third time it says and immediately while he was still speaking the rooster crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. So we're not especially clear of what's happening at this point.

Peter's been in the courtyard. It may be possible that the trial's finished and Jesus is being walked through the courtyard. Maybe he's headed into the trial. We don't know exactly the circumstances but it's at the moment of Peter's third denial.

The rooster crows and Jesus actually makes eye contact with Peter. In that moment they see each other. And probably in some way that intensifies the sorrow that Peter feels.

But likewise Jesus isn't ignorant of this. He knows that Peter's denied him and I think it had to be hurtful. B.B. Warfield says our Savior as he stood giving account in his trial working for the saving of the world had time to turn a meaningful glance to his failing disciple and so save him in the saving of the world because the Lord Jesus was not going to let go of Peter though Peter had let go of him.

And so not only does it teach us some about Peter and even how it hurt Jesus but we see something else happening as well. Though his disciples forsake him Jesus does not forsake his disciples and that's what B.B.

[43 : 17] Warfield's really pointing to here. Jesus looks at Peter not to accuse him but to bring Peter to repentance to bring back to his mind what had been said before. And Jesus is standing on that trial headed for his death to save Peter and all his disciples who have denied him.

And I think does that not teach us something about our Savior? They all forsake him while he's in the midst of not forsaking them. While he's in the midst of saving them. Dying for that sin that they're committing while he's being tried and ultimately even put to death.

He's going to die for those who denied him and those who abandoned him. And so I think we're taught that we have a loving Savior. And I think it encourages us as well that when I asked earlier there are ways in which we non-verbally deny Jesus.

I think there are absolutely ways we do this. But though we forsake our Savior he doesn't forsake us. He's died for that sin with all your other sins.

If you put your faith in Jesus Christ you have salvation that no one can take away even our own foolishness our fears our denial God has graciously died for those sins as well.

[44 : 36] And so though his disciples forsake him and abandon him he doesn't abandon them. How gracious the Savior we have. And though the time will be hard for the disciples this very thing that's happening in this moment is God's very plan to save them.

This is the means the way by which God will save them. Remember what it said back in verse 31 that quote of Zechariah the shepherd will be struck and the disciples will flee.

And so God's plan originally was this to strike the shepherd. And so though it's difficult for them and though it may be hard for us this is God's plan that he's working out.

And then finally we see again something that we've talked about already in Matthew's gospel but we see that Jesus is a man who's despised and rejected in this time even by those who are closest to him.

And so he goes to the cross with no one standing with him. He goes to the cross alone despised and rejected. And I'm reminded of Isaiah 53 I think we read a part of this last week but I want to read again.

[45 : 51] This is verses 3 through 11 this is most of the chapter Isaiah 53 says this he was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and is one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed him stricken smitten by God and afflicted but he was wounded for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his stripes we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him he has put him to grief when his soul makes an offering for guilt he shall see his offspring he shall prolong his days the will of the

Lord shall prosper in his hand out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied but his knowledge shall the righteous one my servant make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities and so what we see here and what we're about to see unfolding in Matthew is the shepherd is going to be struck but in the process well first all we like sheep have gone astray and so I hope there's not one of you who looks at the disciples and said what's wrong with those jokers every one of us is like the disciples all of us have turned away from the Lord and what we see here is that the shepherd is struck so that he might save us that we might have salvation that many might be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities that we might have our sins forgiven and so as we look at this I want to focus not just on Peter's denial or even the falling away of the disciples but don't miss the character of our savior who again is willingly going to the cross to die for those who would deny him to die for those who would fall away to die for all of us who like sheep have turned away from him let's pray together dear heavenly father we do thank you for this great savior that we have

Jesus Christ and for his willingness to go to the cross and to die for our sins Lord we thank you for the mercy and for that grace Lord we pray that you would help us to be humble and that we would depend upon your spirit work in us and not upon our own strength our flesh and Lord we want to pray as well for any of this room who don't know Jesus Christ that they put their trust and faith in him today Lord we thank you for the savior though he was afflicted and forsaken by men yet he willingly went to the cross that we might have forgiveness of sins thank you for Christ may he be exalted today we pray in Christ's name amen our closing hymn is number 186 it's a hymn of John Newton it reminds us that Jesus is the friend of sinners he has love that is costly free and knows no end number 186 lights don't or hear that love and love

The greatest of love of all the others That Jesus loved him through Is his councils on the young brothers Constantly free and shall show him Praise to you and his kindness true by the everlasting love.

With our hope, our friends, to save us, for the world that shed is gone, but our Jesus died to have us spread inside, he gave to God.

[50 : 28] This was our love, this our redeeming, Jesus is our friend in me.

And he lived on earth, our laced friend of sinners was his name.

Now our love of glory raised, he rejoices in the same, till he calls the brethren friends, and to all there was a chance.

Good he gave from one another, what he gave his love was, yet his glorious strength and brother, love's a stone between him lost.

Oh, for good we've been here held, he announced us brethren still.

[51 : 52] Oh, for grace our hearts to soften, teach us, Lord, that way to love, we'll be a man's for men to honor, but a friend we have above.

But when all our souls are brought, we will love thee as we are.

Now may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Amen.