

## Grace Greater Than Our Sin

- Mark 14:26-31
- They sang a hymn and left the upper room. Most likely they sang Psalm 115-118 to conclude the Passover meal, which includes lines like this: “The Lord has remembered us; he will bless us...he will bless those who fear the Lord, both the small and the great.” They go out into the night, which will be darker than any they have ever experienced, until they get to Friday night and Saturday night, which will be unimaginable for the disciples. Jesus leads them to the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron valley. There Jesus will have one final conversation with the eleven. Judas has gone out, after Jesus had said that the one who betrayed him would dip his bread. John’s gospel tells us that Judas took the morsel of bread from Jesus, and when he did, Satan entered into him. Jesus said, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Then John wrote, “Judas immediately went out. And it was night.” Let’s look at this passage under three main points: the Prophecy, the Promise, and the Protest.
- **The Prophecy (verse 27)**
- Jesus sees what no one else could see. He knows what no one else could know. As we saw last week, he was in complete control as Sovereign Lord. And one last time he tells them what is about to happen. “You will all fall away,” he says to the eleven. All of you will betray me, he says in effect. The word for “fall” here is used in the passive sense. This will not be a willful defection, Jesus says in effect. But it will be a failure to do what Jesus told them, and all of us to do in chapter 13: “Be on guard, stay awake! Watch!” Then Jesus shows again his commitment to living his whole life here on earth according to the Word of God, as he quotes from Zechariah 13:7. “It is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” God gave an order in Zechariah 13 to, “Strike the shepherd.” When Jesus quotes God’s Word to Zechariah, he adds, “I will.” I will strike the shepherd. What is he saying? God will strike the good shepherd. That was the foreordained plan from eternity past, as Isaiah prophesied, “Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief.” (Isaiah 53:10)
- “You will all fall away,” Jesus says, because it is God’s plan to strike me and to scatter you. He does not tell them this to shame them or to tear them down. But he tells them to give them future courage, and future joy. “Let not your hearts be troubled,” he says in John’s gospel. “Believe in God; believe also in me...I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-2) That brings us to...
- **The Promise (verse 28)**
- Jesus has just told them that he will be killed, and they will all fall away. Then he says, “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” What a proclamation! What a promise! I will not stay dead, Jesus promises, and YOU will not stay fallen and scattered! I will go before you to Galilee, the place where I first called you, your home place, and there you will be with me again. What a promise of future joy in the resurrection of the Son of God, and what a promise of future grace for all of his children. John Piper wrote a book about future grace, and how important it is for all of us to understand and walk in. Here’s an excerpt:

- “A key verse for me in understanding this is 1 Corinthians 15:10, where Paul says, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” Now if you stop and think about it, that means that minute by minute we’re working. But are we working in our own strength? No, he says, “I’m working hard, but it is not I but the grace of God.” So, when is that grace of God coming? It’s coming every moment. It is arriving, as it were, out there in the future. So, as I think about a difficult phone call I have to make in five minutes, or about getting out of bed, or of enduring another day of sickness, or a hard marriage, I shouldn’t think that I’m going to be left alone for that. There’s going to be a grace sufficient for every good deed, as it says in 2 Corinthians 9:8. God gives us grace for every good deed. So future grace is God’s power, provision, mercy, and wisdom—everything we need—in order to do what he wants us to do five minutes, five weeks, five months, five years, and five thousand years from now.”
- That leads us to the last point...
- **The Protest (verses 29-31)**
- It’s OMIF time for Peter again. Open Mouth Insert Foot. He is not a bit happy that Jesus has said that ALL of them will fall away. And it is interesting how he frames his protest, isn’t it? He basically throws the other ten right under the Backslide Bus that’s about to barrel down the highway, but claims HE, Peter, will not be on it! He doesn’t defend the other disciples, only himself. It’s like the old ditty that went something like this: “There ain’t no flies on me; might be flies on some those guys, but there ain’t no flies on me!” Peter has little doubt that *they* will fall away, and ZERO doubt that HE will not fall away. We need to be careful, saints, of thinking of ourselves as the exception to the rule, and especially to point fingers at others we see who don’t live up to the rule. No matter what that rule is. James Edwards writes, “It is of no use to protest that we have not committed the sins we self-righteously condemn in others. The question is not what sins we have committed as much as what sins *would* we commit were we faced with serious pressure, temptation, opportunity, and threat.”
- Jesus interrupts Peter’s boastful claims with a strong dose of reality: Truth? “This very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” The word for ‘betray’ literally means to disown. To remove from oneself. To reject. Not just once, Peter, which could be excused by a momentary lapse, a moment of weakness. Three times. And you will know it has happened when you hear the rooster crow the second time. Perhaps the first time Peter heard it, there was a warning to stop in his tracks and turn back to the Lord? But he did not. But the good news is that there is future grace for the people of God! Jesus will give that to Peter on the beach in John 21, when he asks him three times, once for every time Peter disowned him, “Do you love me, Peter?” And Peter will be able to say, “Lord, you know I do, even with all of my failures, you know I do love you.” And oh, how much the Lord loved Peter, and how much the Lord loves you and me. Even when we deny him. His grace is greater than all our sin.
- Back on the Mount of Olives, though, Peter is not done. Once more he boasts of a courage that he simply does not have, and will not have, until the Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost. “I will die with you before I deny you!” And all the others do the same.

Just as we would have if we had been there. And we would have also been in this number, with the others, when Mark tells us that “All drank” of the cup in the upper room. All confessed allegiance to the Lord, even to the death. And then “all left him and fled,” as we will see when we go to the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus in a couple of weeks.

- What are some practical applications for us today? What should we do in response to this message about fallen people and a grace-giving Savior?
- **First, let us submit our whole lives, as Jesus did, to the Word of God.** Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” -Matthew 4:4 The Word of God is the rock upon which we build our house, our lives, so that when the storms come we are not swept away.
- **Second, let us recognize God is in control of every circumstance, and that future grace is there for us every moment.** Without fail. God leads us beside still waters. God also leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. When we fall, his grace is there to pick us up and give us strength to keep going.
- **Third, let us grow in trust and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.** I would imagine it was very difficult for the ten to know how to deal with the one, even though it was Peter, when they found out he had denied the Lord three times. Just like it may be hard for you sometimes to love someone in the church who hurts you, or to trust the pastor or the elders when they don’t do or say what you think we should do or say. But remember, saints. We all fail. Each one of us. Good news! Christ never fails. We all fall. Good news! Christ still loves us when we do.
- Cindy and I recently finished reading Megan Hill’s book, “The Place to Belong,” a book about the local church. Before we take communion together, let me close with this final quote from her book:
- “Dear member of Christ’s church, soon you will hear the voice of Christ calling you, “Come up.” (Rev. 4:11). Come up to the heavenly Jerusalem. Come up to the city with foundations. Come up to the very throne of God and the near presence of Christ. Come up to the assembly of the redeemed. Come, join the multitude. This vision of the church’s sure and certain future ought to encourage our hearts. Soon, the ordinary congregation to which we belong (yes, Antioch!) will be glorified, and it is right for us to eagerly anticipate that day. But, in that day, your church will be no more precious to Christ than it is today. The church in eternity will appear more lovely, but it will not be more loved. And as we commit ourselves even now to the local church, we testify to this reality. Because Christ delights in his church, we delight in it. Because Christ calls it his own, we call it our own. Because Christ loves the church, we love it too. Week after week, we give ourselves for the good of the people whom God loves. And in eternity we will not be disappointed. Come. This is where you belong.”
- Prayer
- Communion
- Greet one another!