

# The Suffering Shepherd and the Scattered Sheep

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[ 0 : 00 ]     Open up your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark again, and again to chapter 14. We are right in the middle of chapter 14, and we're going to begin reading in verse 26 this week, and read all the way down to verse 52.

Our passage this morning really divides up into three neat parts that are easy to recognize. In verses 26 through 31, Jesus predicts the falling away of all of his disciples, with a focus on Peter in particular.

And then in verses 32 all the way down through verse 42, Jesus prays to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. And then in verses 43 through 52, we see the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction in the opening of the passage, as his disciples abandon him and run away from him in the moment of his arrest.

So, let's read the passage. Keep those divisions in mind. It will help you to keep everything put together and to remember everything that Mark says here. So, verse 26. Verse 26. And when they had sung him, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said to them, You will all fall away. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

[ 1 : 19 ]     Peter said to him, Even though they all fall away, I will not. And Jesus said to him, Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

But he said, In fact, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same. And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, Sit here while I pray.

And he took with them Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.

And going a little further, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, 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 him sleeping and said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep?

[ 2 : 24 ]     Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And 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 taking your rest?

It is enough. The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

And immediately, while he was speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I will kiss is the man.

Seize him and lead him away under guard. And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, Rabbi. And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

[ 3 : 31 ] And Jesus said to them, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

But let the scriptures be fulfilled. And they all left him and fled. And the young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body.

And they seized him. But he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. Father, help us to understand your word rightly. And help us to see the very, very important implications that this text has for us and our walk with Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. There is a dangerous tendency among Bible teachers and preachers when we undertake to preach from or to preach through one of the Gospels.

Really, it's a danger that confronts us every time we preach through a story, particularly from the Old Testament or from the Gospels or from the first couple of pages of the book of Acts.

[ 4 : 42 ] And that is that we will assume that the conditions under which the disciples were under, or which Abraham or David or some other Old Testament saint, that the conditions that they were under are the same as ours, and that we can immediately transfer the things that are said about them and done to them or done by them to us.

And so what often happens is that we will take a story from the Bible, and it becomes kind of a sort of moral tale to help us to know how to make decisions when we're in the same kinds of situations.

I say that that's dangerous because we're not in the same condition as these disciples. We're not in the exact same kinds of situations that they find themselves in.

One of the most important distinctions between you and I and the disciples as we find them in the Gospels is that everything that we read in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, everything that we read there happened before the day of Pentecost, which means that these disciples at this point in their lives were not filled with God's Spirit.

They didn't have the Holy Spirit living within them to correct them, to rebuke them, to lead them back to Christ, to convict them of their sin. They did not have the Spirit within them to do all the things that we have become accustomed to, that He does regularly for us if we are genuine followers of Christ.

[ 6 : 05 ] And so there is a danger that we will look at something like, for instance, Peter's denial of Jesus, and we will begin to treat that story as a lesson for us on what to do when we deny Christ.

As if we who are filled with the Spirit would react in the same way that Peter, who does not yet have the Holy Spirit, reacts as we move forward in the Gospel of Mark. So I want us to be careful, and I have tried to be careful as we have walked through this Gospel, not to make the easy mistake of saying, well, this is what happened here, so the same things are going to happen to us, and so all we need to do is learn how to either react like they reacted, or the opposite of the way that they reacted, and everything will be fine.

This is not a book, and this Gospel is not a Gospel, that is simply filled with moral tales so that we can learn lessons. This reveals Christ to us. And so this morning, I want us to dig into this passage, and I do want us to ask the question of what does this have to do with us?

But I don't want us to ask that question in relation to the actions of the disciples. I want us to ask that question in relation to what Jesus does on behalf of His disciples in this passage.

Because you see, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And what Jesus does on behalf of His disciples, He does on behalf of us. So while we may not run parallel exactly with the actions of the disciples here, we can relate to what they experience ultimately, because we have the same Savior and the same Christ.

[ 7 : 39 ] So I want that warning to be resonating in your mind, and I want you to watch, because I'm going to be very careful not to say that we are just like the disciples following their pattern, but we're going to skirt close to that as we look at what Jesus does for them.

So we're going to walk through the passage first, and then at the end of the sermon I'm going to come with one main point of application. It's a very simple sermon this morning with one main point of application, but to get to it we've got to walk through the passage and see exactly what Mark is telling us.

Now the first verse here, verse 26, which I actually read last week at the end of last week's sermon, connects us to the events that have been happening so far in chapter 14 of Mark.

We read that it says, And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. That song that they sang was sort of a concluding song to the Passover meal that they had just enjoyed.

It was the conclusion to Jesus' institution of what we call the Lord's Supper or communion. It was the conclusion of that event. And if you'll remember that in the midst of all the things that went on in that upper room, in that house that evening, was that Jesus predicted that Judas would betray him.

[ 8 : 50 ] He didn't name Judas in front of the other disciples. In fact, the Gospel of John tells us that the disciples at that point in time, as they were in the room, had no idea that Judas was the betrayer.

In fact, according to the Gospel of John, in the middle of that celebration, Judas left to go begin the process of betraying Jesus. Judas left the room, and still the disciples didn't understand, didn't know what was happening.

That's really important for us as we understand the Lord's Supper we saw last week, because Judas was not present when they partook of that New Covenant meal, which is why we, for instance, limit the Lord's Supper to those who are genuine followers of Christ, and in good standing with the local church, and who have been baptized in accordance, and have entered the New Covenant community.

That's why we have limits and restrictions around the Lord's Supper, because the limits and restrictions were there from the very beginning. Judas left to go carry out this secret plot of the religious leaders.

It was a secret plot, if you'll remember, because the people in Jerusalem, the crowds that had swelled for the celebration of the Passover there to the city, the crowds in general were very supportive of Jesus and His ministry.

[ 10 : 03 ] In fact, they grew excited when Jesus criticized these very same religious leaders. So they knew that they could not publicly arrest Jesus, even though they had been seeking some way to silence Him from Mark chapter 2 onward.

So they concocted a plan to secretly arrest Jesus, and Judas volunteered his services. And so now we have Judas who will come to Jesus in the middle of the night, secretly to betray Him.

All of these events unfold immediately after that last Passover dinner. But before we get to Gethsemane, and before we get to the actual betrayal of Jesus, Jesus makes a prediction that starts in verse 27.

Take a look. Jesus said to them, You will all fall away. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

This is a stunning prediction by Jesus to His disciples. He's speaking now to the eleven who have hung with Him this fall. These eleven who have been with Him these past three to four years, traveling with Him, listening to Him, defending Him when necessary, holding the crowds at bay when necessary, doing everything that they can do to serve Him in whatever way that they can serve Him.

[ 11 : 22 ] And Jesus looks at them and says, All of you, every single one of you, will fall away. This word, fall away, is the same word that Jesus uses a few chapters later when He warns against those who would cause any of these little ones to stumble.

Some translations would warn anyone who causes one of these little ones to sin. And then Jesus goes on in the next few chapters and He says, If your right hand causes you to sin, the same word, stumble, fall away, it's the same word.

If your right hand causes you to fall away, cut it off. If your right eye causes you to fall away, to stumble, then pluck it out. Anything Jesus says in those verses that would lead you astray from Christ, lead you into sin, and cause you to fall away from Him, discard it, do away with it.

Jesus has given very, very strong warnings about this thing. And now He turns to disciples and says to them, Every single one of you is going to fall away, fall into sin, stumble.

All of you will. Not one of you will be left standing at the end of this. It's a shocking prediction. But there's a reason for it.

[ 12 : 33 ] There's a biblical reason for it. Jesus gives the reason. He says, For it is written, and then He quotes the book of Zechariah, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

Now in Zechariah, that's a very strange verse that scholars have had difficulty figuring out exactly what's going on there. Because there are parts of that verse, there are parts of that passage that look as if God is judging the shepherd.

And so that God is bringing His judgment upon the shepherd, and that's why the sheep are scattered. But then there are other elements in the passage that make it look as if the shepherd is God's anointed king, and even representative of David.

And so interpreters are stuck between trying to choose, is this God's judgment upon the shepherd, or is this simply God purifying His people through the shepherd king? Which is it? And scholars are divided, and as we're going to see as we walk through here, it's both of those things.

It's both of those things. But Jesus says, if this is going to happen, you are all going to fall away because it's written in the Old Testament. He's going to strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

[ 13 : 40 ] But then He gives them a promise. But, after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee. We'll come to that in a little bit. Peter, of course, argues against Jesus.

You know the story well. Peter says, if everybody else falls away, if I even have to die, I'll die for you, whatever it takes. I won't leave you. And Jesus predicts that Peter is going to deny Him three times this very night.

This night's not even going to end. The rooster's not even going to crow a second time before you've already denied Me three times. So, it's a very specific prediction on Jesus' part about the failure of His disciples to remain faithful to Him.

And it's going to come true in detail. Then, Jesus moves to another scene in verse 32. They come to a place called Gethsemane, which essentially means the place of the winepress.

There's a press there to press out the grapes. And so, that's where they are. And He comes with His disciples and He tells His disciples in verse 32, sit here while I pray. And then He takes Peter, James, and John, who are in the inner circle.

[ 14 : 44 ] He takes them with Him and it says that He began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And He said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.

Jesus Himself is greatly troubled. He says that His soul is sorrowful. He is in great, high anxiety.

He is in anguish. And then you begin to understand why as you read His prayer. Verse 35, going on a little further, He fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. remove this cup from Me. Now the two key words in these verses, the words hour and cup, because both of those words are used frequently in the prophets of the Old Testament to describe the judgment of God.

Over and over, the prophets speak of God pouring out His wrath from a cup, or God forcing either Israel or some foreign nation to drink the cup of His wrath.

[ 15 : 59 ] And over and over, the prophets warn about the hour, the hour when God will come in judgment upon the nation, the hour when God will bring judgment upon Israel's enemies. So these two words, hour and cup, are signaling to us that Jesus is praying that God would deliver Him from judgment.

judgment. What judgment would Jesus ever have to undergo? Why would Jesus ever have to pray to the Father that He would not undergo judgment?

He is the sinless, perfect, spotless Lamb. Why would He pray that prayer? Because Jesus is facing the wrath of God against the sin of all of His people.

Understand this, that when the Bible speaks of the cup of God's wrath, we are talking about a boiling, teeming, flaming ocean of wrath that God has stored up for sinners.

This is not a small matter. It's not a small thing. Over and over, the Scriptures warn us, warn us about the wrath of God. It's not an Old Testament issue, it's a Bible issue.

[ 17 : 18 ] Romans chapter 1, verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

All those who reject the truth. The wrath of God is building. It is swelling. And now, Jesus comes praying to His Father, the hour of judgment is coming upon me.

Take away this cup of your wrath. I do not want to drink it. I don't want to undergo your wrath. Jesus is praying that God would deliver him from bearing the penalty for the sins of you and me.

The wrath that you deserve, the wrath that I deserve, is an infinite wrath. It is a wrath so great that you cannot, you cannot even begin to imagine its fierceness.

There is nothing in this world, and there are terrible things in this world. There are genocides. There are the murders of millions of people. There are brutal things happening right now in other parts of the world that you and I would have a hard time wrapping our minds around.

[ 18 : 35 ] that when we see it on television, we change the channel because it makes us sick in our stomach and it's easier for us to go about our day if we don't have to think about the awful things that happen in the world. There are terrible things that happen in the world, but there is nothing to parallel the wrath of God.

There is nothing that compares to the wrath of God. Stored up for sinners like you and sinners like me. And Jesus about to drink the cup of his Father's wrath prays.

Take it away. How immense does it have to be? How terrible does it have to be to cause Jesus anguish? He fully understands what lies in front of him.

The cross. The cross is not so terrible because it was so painful. Most of you have probably seen the passion movie that Mel Gibson made that gives it a fairly accurate, very brutal depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus.

It's pretty accurate. It was that bloody. It was that terrible. But Jesus is not here praying, God deliver me from the pain of a crucifixion. He is not praying that God would deliver him from the pain of the soldiers beating him and putting a crown of thorns.

[ 19 : 49 ] That does not cause Jesus anguish here. That's not it. That's not the problem. The problem is that when Jesus hangs upon the cross, he will cry out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Because in that moment, the eternal love relationship that he has shared with his Father fades into the background as he receives the wrath and hatred of God toward us and our sin poured out upon him.

It's not the cross in and of itself that causes him anguish. It's knowing what God the Father is going to do as he hangs upon the cross that causes him to approach his Father as Abba in a very personal and intimate way and say, Can we not do this?

Is there any way that you can remove this cup and deliver me from this hour of judgment? judgment? And yet, he follows it by saying, Yet not what I will, but what you will.

Jesus understands fully what the will of his Father is. Multiple times in the Gospel of Mark, he has predicted his own death and resurrection. He knows the will of the Father.

[ 21 : 05 ] He was there in eternity past when the members of the Trinity, when the Father, Son, and the Spirit ordained the plan by which they could redeem a people out of the world for the Father.

And Jesus was there when that covenant of redemption was made between him and the Father. He has known throughout all eternity past what the will of the Father is. He knows that his death is imminent.

He knows that he must receive the wrath of God. He knows the will of the Father. So when he says, Yet not what I will, but what you will, he knows specifically what he's saying. He's saying, Even though I'm begging you to remove this from me, even though as a man I stand before you in fear and anguish and deeply troubled in my spirit, I know what lies ahead and I'll take it.

I'll drink the cup that I so badly do not want to drink. I will drink it all. Now in the middle of this prayer, Jesus repeats this prayer three times.

We know from the other Gospels. And in the middle of this prayer, in the middle of praying, checking on his disciples, returning to pray again, beseech his Father. In the middle of all these things, something else is happening. And Mark tells us what that something else is.

[ 22 : 18 ] It says in verse 37, Jesus came and found these disciples, Peter, James, and John, sleeping. And then he says to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Who understands that better now than Jesus? Not what I will, but what you will, Father.

Peter, you may say that you're willing to go with me. You may want to stay awake right now, but your flesh is weak. You can't even stay awake, much less remain faithful to me.

Your flesh is weak. Even Jesus understands the weakness of the flesh. He comes to the Father as a man and says, take the cup, yet not what I will. Jesus understands that the flesh is weak and fickle.

Despite what the Spirit desires, the flesh often overcomes the Spirit. So there's a contrast here between the work of Christ, Christ overcoming the weakness of His flesh by submitting to the Father's will, and Peter and James and John unable even to overcome their sleepiness.

[ 23 : 29 ] These are not men who are prepared to remain faithful to Christ in troubled times. Jesus overcomes the weakness of the flesh in His greatest hour of trial. These men cannot stay awake.

They are so weak-willed in the face of the will of their flesh. Happens again, you find you're sleeping again, verse 40, and they don't even know what to say at that point in time.

The third time He comes to them in verse 41. He says, are you still sleeping, taking your rest? It's enough. The hour, He says, the hour has come.

Judgment has come. Son of men is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. My betrayer is right at that hand. So far in the text we've seen Jesus say to His disciples, you're all going to fall away.

None of you is going to go to the cross with me. None of you is going to face the trial with me. None of you is going to bear the wrath of God with me. None of you is going to all the way.

[ 24 : 28 ] Even though John remains somewhat faithful. Where is John when Jesus is on trial? Where is John when Jesus is being questioned?

No one testifies on behalf of Jesus and yet the scribes and the chief priests have brought in multiple witnesses to testify on their behalf against Jesus. Nobody stands up for Christ.

In fact, the closest you get to anyone standing up for Christ is a Roman pagan ruler named Pilate who simply asks, what has he done wrong? None of the disciples are present for all this. They have all fallen away.

And we read about their falling away in verses 43 to 52. It's interesting how it proceeds because initially they present themselves with boldness.

It says that while he was still speaking, verse 43, Judas came, one of the twelve, and there was a crowd with swords and clubs who had been sent by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Judas kisses Jesus as the sign.

[ 25 : 25 ] And then in verse 46 it says, they laid hands on him and seized him and one of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. We know that that was Peter.

Standing up for Christ, doing what he said to do, even if I have to die with you, standing against these who have come out against Jesus. And then Jesus has a word. He has a word to these arresting authorities.

And his word is simple. I've been teaching in the temple every day. Out in the open. Easy. I mean, that's where you guys are stationed. You're stationed at the temple. That's your job. You could have come any day and you could have arrested me and yet now you're coming in the middle of the night and you've got weapons.

When have I ever, when have I ever carried a weapon? When have I ever had a club myself? You come with clubs and swords now to arrest me when I've been in the temple day after day teaching? He understands their plot.

He understands their plans. And yet, between Peter's boldness of cutting off a soldier's ear and Jesus saying these things to the leaders, at some point in there, all the courage melts away from Peter and the other disciples.

[ 26 : 43 ] What was it? Was it that Jesus pointed out all the swords and clubs that they had? I don't know. Or maybe just the adrenaline faded away as Jesus was talking and suddenly they realized the immensity of what was happening here and what would happen to them if they actually opposed these soldiers?

I don't know what it was, but we are told very succinctly, very quickly in verse 50, they all left the way. Gone. All 11 disciples. Just gone.

We don't even know. Did they walk away slowly one by one? Did they run away as quickly as they could? We don't even know. We just know that in that moment, in the hour of judgment was about to come upon Christ, in that moment, the sheep were scattered.

There's this interesting thing in verses 51 and 52. It's only found in Mark's gospel. Only gospel where it's found, not in the other three. We're told that there was a young man that followed him with nothing but a linen cloth around his body.

And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. That's a strange little note to add. Who's this guy and why is he running away naked?

[ 27 : 58 ] I mean, this is really strange. Well, we don't know for sure who he is. A lot of scholars think that this is actually Mark because we know that Mark lived in Jerusalem from Acts chapter 12 where Peter is miraculously released from prison and he goes to a particular house in Jerusalem that belonged to Mark's mother.

So we know that Mark's mother was an early follower of Christ and that Mark was a young man about this time. He would have been the right age. He lived in Jerusalem. And since Mark's gospel is the only gospel that mentions this guy, a lot of people think this is Mark's way of saying and I was just like the disciples and I ran over it too.

We don't know who it is. It might be Mark, but I think the main point of this is to show us that everybody deserved Jesus in this hour. It wasn't just the disciples, it was everybody.

Nobody comes to Jesus' defense. An unnamed, unknown young man who had been following Jesus, even here in the way, what does he have to lose? He's hiding in the shadows already.

What does he have to lose? nothing. But they all fled. All the sheep were scattered away from the shepherd when he was streaking.

[ 29 : 18 ] All of them. Now, that's the story in a nutshell. Prediction that they'll fall away, prayer in the garden, and then they all fall away.

That's the story. What ties all this together though? In fact, when you look at the way that Mark has written this story, you see in verse 26, when they sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And then in verse 32, they go to a place called Gethsemane. So Mark sort of inserts this prediction of the scattering of the disciples right here before this very pivotal moment in the whole thing.

He puts it right here between the new covenant meal, which Jesus promises to spill his blood for them, and then Jesus' prayer where he says to the Father, not what you will, but what I will, saying that he will endure the wrath of the Father on behalf of them.

The falling away of the disciples is not the final story, and we all know that because we've read the rest of the gospel, we've read the book of Acts, we've read the rest of the New Testament.

[ 30 : 26 ] We know that this is not the end for them. But how were they supposed to know that? How were the disciples supposed to know when such a terrible word like fall away, fall into sin, when such a terrible strong word is used by Jesus to describe what will happen to them?

How are the disciples supposed to know that this is not the end for them? How are they supposed to know that they're not just another Judas? Maybe there's 12 Judases. Maybe we're all Judas because we're all going to abandon him, and they all abandon him.

What hope would they have had after these events took place? What hope could they have possibly had? When we ask that question today, when we say, how do you know that someone is a genuine follower of Christ?

How do you know that if someone has, let's be more specific, if someone has fallen into sin, if someone is a follower of Christ, or at least they claim to be, they profess faith in Christ, and they walk faithfully with him, and then they fall into some sin, they commit some sin, how do you know whether or not they are a genuine follower of Christ?

Well, we would answer that question most likely, most of us would say, well, if they repent of their sin, and then return to follow Christ more, then we can be more certain that they were a genuine follower of Christ who just happened to give in to sin.

[ 31 : 53 ] But if they remain in their sin, if they stay in their sin, then they're not a follower of Christ. Or if you're dealing with someone who hasn't fallen into sin, you just ask a simple question, how do you know if this guy over here, or this lady over here, how do you know if they're a genuine follower of Christ?

Most of the time we'd say, well, look at their lives, see if there's any fruit, because the Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives. So you would either look for the repentance that the Spirit is going to bring into the life of a genuine follower of Christ if they fall into sin, or you would look for the fruit that the Spirit is going to produce in the life of a believer to confirm whether or not they are a believer.

But is that all? It's not all. In fact, I think one of the things that Mark is teaching us here is that there is something deeper than that.

There's a firm foundation that sits beneath all of that that stands as the ultimate cause of our assurance.

How can we know that we're going to be saved? How can we know that Christ is going to fully redeem us? How can we know that? And while it is very helpful to look for ongoing repentance because it's necessary, and it's helpful to look for fruit because the Spirit will produce fruit in your lives, there is something else beneath that, under that, underneath that, that even stands for these Spirit-less disciples of Jesus.

[ 33 : 18 ] So that even in this moment there is something to give people who cannot look for fruit, fruit, there is something to undergo assurance. And that something is the prayer of Jesus.

Jesus prays and says, not what I will, but what you will. I will drink the cup. So that we know that if Christ, if Christ has taken the cup of God's wrath that was due to us, and He has taken it down for us, and He has taken it upon Himself for us, we know that in the day of judgment there is no more wrath left for us.

There is no more anger stored up for us. He has endured it all. There is no more judgment to fall upon us. He has taken all the judgment that we deserve upon Himself.

In fact, when you read this story in the Gospel of Luke, Luke gives us a little detail that Mark doesn't give us, when Luke recounts Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, Jesus gets specific with one of His disciples.

Jesus tells Peter, but, so you're going to deny me three times, but Peter, I have prayed for you.

[ 34 : 39 ] I prayed for you that the Lord would not let you finally and ultimately fall away from me. I prayed for you. And then, even in the Gospel of Mark, in fact, you can look, just turn over a page or two.

Even in the Gospel of Mark, verse 7, when the angel appears to the women who run to Jesus' tomb, listen to this. The angel says, go, Mark chapter 16, verse 7, but go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

Does that sound familiar? Jesus says, you're going to deny me three times. He says to his disciples, you'll all be scattered, but I'm going before you into Galilee.

And now the angel says to these women, tell his disciples, and especially make sure you tell Peter, he's gone ahead of the Galilee. Jesus prayed for Peter.

Jesus prayed in the place of his disciples and said, I will take the Bible. I don't want to take it. I don't want to drink it because I know, I see, I understand what this entails.

[ 35 : 49 ] I get it and I don't want to do it, but I will do it. It is the intercession of Jesus and the laying down of his life in our place and his absorbing of the wrath of God that is the ultimate final foundation for our assurance.

How ultimately do you know that you will stand on Judgment Day? Because Jesus stood on this Judgment Day. How ultimately do you know that you will not be left to plead your own case before God?

Because Jesus has already pledged the case before the Father and taken the punishment that you deserve. Not what I will, but if you will. He drank the cup for us.

So there's nothing left for us to drink on the last day. God's sake. So on those moments when your assurance wavers, and when you begin to think that this may not be yours, that you don't know if you're going to be saved, you just don't know, you just sense the swelling, overwhelming doubt rising up within you, where do you go?

You go to the cross of Christ, and you remember that He cried out on your behalf, and He was forsaken on your behalf, and He bore the penalty of your sins in your place for you.

[ 37 : 11 ] And that, ultimately, is the ground of our assurance. Let's pray.