

The next two days of study will be centered around the same text of Scripture. We will divide our study into two primary topics: (1) The weakness of humanity and (2) the willingness of Christ.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders the words of Jesus in verse 31 in part as, "Tonight all of you will run away because of Me." Look back at the preceding verses to check the context and then write the wording from your translation below. If you have access to a King James Version of the Bible or can look it up online then check out this verse in that translation.

Run away in the original language is an interesting word. I want you to see it to see if it is familiar to you in any way: *skandalizo*. The origin of this word is from another Greek word, *skandalon*, which is the origin of our English word *scandal*. The meaning of *skandalon* is "trap, stumbling block, offense." (m-w.com) The definition of *skandalizo* is "to commit that which leads to the fall or ruin of someone. Without reference to the element of deceit, it means to throw someone unawares into ruin; to give occasion for ungodly conduct resulting in the mischief incurred thereby."¹

I want you to think about the above information for just a minute. Take in the meaning from the original language. Of course, it seems right that Peter was the one who spoke up. Doesn't it seem like he is always the one speaking up? His response was, "No, not me. Even if everyone else runs away, falls away, gets caught up in ungodly conduct, I will never do that."

Can you relate in any way? Maybe you have said, "Lord, I will never _____."

How would you fill in that blank? I think Peter meant it from the bottom of his heart. Maybe you do, too. Except for the grace of God and His power working in our lives we could so easily fall into that situation that we never thought we would give in to. That is why following closely after Jesus is so necessary to your life. I am desperate for you to follow hard after Jesus. Johnny and I would not have spent all these weeks preparing this study if we were not serious about your spiritual life.

Yet, Jesus – the omniscient Jesus – told Peter what I am sure he did not want to hear. How do you think Peter felt to hear Jesus tell him that he would not only run away, he would deny Christ three times?

I am a people-pleaser. I do not ever want to let anyone down. Those words would have stung me. Maybe they would have made you all the more determined that you would not do the very thing

¹Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Lexical Aids to the New Testament*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 936.

predicted. Again, Peter protested and Scripture tells us that the other disciples agreed with Peter and gave their own emphatic pledge.

Of course, you probably know what happens to Peter and the rest of the disciples over the next hours of their lives. Their words and hearts cried out that they would never do what Jesus said they would do. Yet, their weak human nature gave way to temptation.

The second illustration of human weakness is found in the disciples as Jesus left them to pray in the garden. What was the request of Jesus and what did the disciples do?

Life can be tiring at times. (Can I get an amen?) Sometimes even following Jesus can be tiring when we are trying to do it in our own strength. Sometimes, maybe, we are trying to do too much. My mom recently told me I was “guilty of burning the candle at both ends.” I’m not sure exactly what that means but I have been known to utter the words, “I’m busy.” Like our pastor said in his sermon recently, “busy, busy, busy.”

Sometimes the stress of life added to the busyness of it also wears us out. Maybe that was the kind of week the disciples were having. There was a lot of activity going on. Then there was the intense teaching of Jesus as He prepared them for what was ahead. They were worn out. It was dark and quiet in the garden and they simply could not keep their eyes open.

“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” Jesus said. How do you strengthen the spirit so that it spills over to strengthen the flesh?

Prayer Primer: Ask God to give you the physical, mental, and spiritual strength to face certain trials you will face.

Week 6, Day 27

Matthew 26:31-46

Today we will continue with the same Scripture we studied yesterday but we will consider the second proposed topic from this passage, *the willingness of Christ*. If you have not already done so, please re-read Matthew 26:31-46, paying particular attention to verses 36-44.

The scene moves from Jesus and the disciples in the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. Johnny and I visited the garden on a trip to the Holy Land. It sits directly across the Kidron Valley from the Eastern Gate and the temple mount in Jerusalem. Even today visitors can see Olive Trees that are hundreds of years old in the garden. There is a church near the garden that encloses a rock that is a monument to the place where Jesus prayed the very words you just read. Who knows, really, if that rock is truly the place where Jesus poured out those words from the depth of His soul. It does not really matter the particular location where Jesus prayed. Visiting that site is extremely moving. Imagine you are there, hearing Him pray with such intensity. His face is bowed down to the ground. His words are passionate.

Think about the last time you prayed with some amount of intensity. Your very soul cried out to God from a desperate place inside you. When was it and what was the circumstance? Don't worry, we will not ask you to share something so personal in class unless your testimony will bring glory to God and no embarrassment to you.

The words used to describe the emotion of Jesus in verse 37 are listed below. Complete one of these two activities: either write your own definition of these words as they pertain to Jesus or use one of our suggested online resources to look up the words and write what you discover.

Sorrowful –

Deeply distressed –

What request did Jesus make of His disciples in this passage?

As believers and followers of Jesus, we recognize and appreciate the power of prayer. We know that there is power in the combining of hearts together for a unified cause. Do you have people in your life that you can count on to pray for you and with you when you are in a time of need? If yes, who are they and what do they mean to you?

The willingness of Jesus is expressed in His intense prayer to the Father. See His words in verse 39. "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will." He asked, more than once, if there was any other way. Yet, I believe that He knew there was no other way. His destiny was set before the foundation of time.

Read Romans 5:6-11. What do these verses teach about Christ's destiny?

Luke's gospel gives us an interesting insight to what went on in the Garden of Gethsemane that night. Read Luke's account of Jesus praying in the garden in chapter 22, verses 39-46. What interesting information did Luke give in verse 43?

As we have seen in other places in our study of Matthew, in the garden we see how the humanity of Jesus collided with His deity. He was willing to go to the cross, it was His destiny to go to the cross, but, cloaked in humanity, He felt and experienced what we feel and experience. He knew what was ahead for Him. He knew it would be painful, grueling, and humiliating. Yet, He sought His Father's will and not His own. The Father provided the angel to strengthen His Son. What a beautiful picture of compassion even in the most dramatic circumstances.

The intensity is just starting to build. What lies ahead for Christ as we study the last hours before the crucifixion is excruciating. Yet, ultimately, there was no other way. Jesus was willing to endure it. Glory to His great Name!

Prayer Primer: Ask God to never let you take lightly that Jesus knew completely what was ahead, asked His Father if there might be another way, and yet went willingly to the cross.

Week 6, Day 28

Matthew 26:47-56

Today we look at that fateful moment in the garden when Judas actually betrays Jesus with a kiss. The most obvious question that has always haunted my mind is why a kiss. Why not just point to Jesus and proclaim, "That's Him"? Please read the following passages:

Romans 16:16

1 Corinthians 16:20

2 Corinthians 13:12

1 Thessalonians 5:26

What was the purpose of the "kiss" greeting as found in the context of these passages? In your opinion why did Judas use a kiss? (there is no right or wrong answer)

Turn to John 13 and read verses 21-30. What gesture did Jesus make toward Judas in verse 26?

Dipping the bread in the "sop" was the formal beginning of the Passover remembrance. Up until that point in the feast things had been lighthearted and casual. Have you ever had a business meal or interviewed with someone over a meal? At first small talk is made and pleasantries are exchanged. At some point however, in the meal the definitive shift in conversation occurs and the parties are down to discussing the matter at hand. The dipping of the bread in the "sop" was such a definitive move. As Jesus begins this Passover celebration He makes the offer of acceptance to Judas. According to verse 27, what does Judas do in response to Jesus offer? Does he receive the bread or not?

After he receives the bread what happens in the life of Judas according to verse 27?

What an amazing statement. There are many stories in church history about Judas. For example, there is an apocryphal writing entitled "The Story of Joseph of Arimathea," and it teaches that Judas was the son of the brother of Caiaphas, the high priest. And that Judas--by design--was sent

to infiltrate the disciples, become one of the followers as a spy and nothing more with the deliberate intent of finding a way to capture Jesus.

In another apocryphal writing called "The Acts of Pilate," there is teaching that Judas went home immediately after betraying Christ and he found his wife roasting a chicken. And he told his wife that he was planning to kill himself because he was so afraid that Jesus would rise from the dead and come after him. His wife at that time replied, that Jesus would no more rise from the dead than the chicken she was roasting would jump out of the fire and crow...at which very instant, the chicken did exactly that. And Judas instantly went out and hanged himself.

Sensational as they are, there is of course no way to verify the validity of such claims. I believe stories circulated about Judas because of the coldness of the betrayal. I asked you why you thought Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss and I will tell you what I think. It was the direct result of the words in verse 27; "Satan entered him". Those words tell us not to be surprised by anything we might see Judas do from that point forward. Have there ever been times you have stumbled that, in retrospect, you are amazed that did you those things?

The power of Satan is very real. The power of Satan is very powerful. However, we can overcome. One of the most amazing things, in my opinion, in this entire account of the arrest scene happens in Matthew 26:50. What is Jesus question to Judas?

I believe that Jesus is giving Judas a chance to run to Jesus and confess. Jesus knew why Judas was there. In Scripture when Jesus asks a person a question it is for the benefit of the person He is asking. Jesus does not need anyone's input in order to gain information. Jesus still asks those probing questions today. Here might be some Jesus would ask us today:

Is there someone you could minister to today in My name?

Can you speak a word of testimony today in My name?

Will your life reveal My glory today?

Jesus never asks questions for information sake He asks questions to bring understanding in the heart of the hearer.

Prayer Primer: Pray that you will be sensitive to the questions Jesus asks you today.

Week 6, Day 29

Matthew 26:57-68

As we begin our study today we focus on the trial of Jesus. I have been reading a book entitled "*The Illegal Trial of Christ*" by Steven W. Allen. Allen is an attorney from Arizona who has devoted 20 years to the study of the trial of Jesus. I will draw on the information in that book for today's study. The trial of Jesus took place in the early morning hours of Friday...the day our Lord would be crucified. Remember the mob has arrested Jesus late Thursday night. As Jesus is brought to trial Thursday evening has given way to Friday morning. This would have 1-3 in the morning on Friday. Before we examine today's Matthew passage we must first look at God's instruction on how to conduct the court system. Turn to Deuteronomy 16 and read verses 18-20. In the passage you see that God established that there were to be local judges over each town or village. In these verses the judges are given 4 specific instructions 2 are positive and 2 are negative. In other words God says the judges are to do these 2 things and not to do these 2 things. What are the 4 instructions given to the judges?

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Verse 20 states that when they do these 4 things they will both _____ and

_____ the land God gave them.

The first term “live in” means they would not be driven from the land by a power outside the nation. The “possess” promise is that they would have the blessing of God as they lived there. We know that the Jews were constantly fighting other powers and the blessing of God was not as pronounced as He had promised. What does that tell us about how they followed God’s commands?

No doubt you have heard and read the term Sanhedrin. Let me explain what that was in the Jewish culture and governance. Each community or village that had a male head of household population of 120 was required to have a Sanhedrin and a Synagogue. The term Sanhedrin literally means “sitting together”. This Sanhedrin would be made up of 23 leaders of the community and the Synagogue. This group of leaders “sitting together” would rule on all disputes and affairs of that community or village. In Jerusalem you had the “Great Sanhedrin”. They were in essence the Supreme Court of Israel. Once the Great Sanhedrin ruled there was no other recourse, the ruling of that group was final. This is the group that Jesus was brought before late Thursday night and into Friday morning. What does verse 59 tell us the Great Sanhedrin was “looking for” in regard to the allegations against Jesus?

Deuteronomy 16:18 says that the court was to “judge the people with

_____”

How does what the Great Sanhedrin was doing line up with the charge given them by God in the Deuteronomy passage?

In essence, the Great Sanhedrin was trying to make reality fit into their predetermined agenda. Can you recall a time that you tried to make a situation “work out” the way you had predetermined that it should work out?

What was the result?

To make the “trial” work out the way they wanted the Great Sanhedrin had to twist the truth. Read verse 59 and 60 again what do you think they were “looking for” that they could not find?

We do not know exactly what charge they were “looking for”, however, they could not find the exact one they wanted. Finally, in verse 61 they found someone who had heard Jesus say the words recorded in John 2. Turn to John 2 and read verses 18-22. Now let’s gain some perspective on when Jesus said this. What miracle immediately precedes these words of Jesus in John 2?

What does verse 11 of John 2 tell us about this miracle?

This happened at the very start of Jesus’ earthly ministry and so for three plus years these people have been hanging on to that statement. A seemingly vague statement, made three years earlier would be the words that the Great Sanhedrin would use to push the issue of Jesus execution. When people make up their minds to try and make things work out a certain way, there is no limit to how far we will stretch people, situations, or words to make them fit our purpose.

Prayer Primer: Pray that you will bring your plans and purposes in line with God, instead of trying to bring God in line with yours

Week6,

Day 30

Matthew 26:69-74

There are three people most commonly associated with the arrest and trial of Jesus. They are: Jesus (of course), Judas (the betrayer), and Peter (the denier.... ok spell check did not like the word denier but I made it up so I can spell it however I choose). Jesus went to the cross as the blameless Lamb of God. Judas has gone down in historical infamy as a traitor. All over the world, his name is synonymous with backstabbing and betrayal. Peter, however, is different. He certainly was not blameless. His denial was as vehement and repugnant as any in Scripture. What does verse 74 tell us Peter did as he was challenged a third time as being a follower of Jesus?

If you stopped reading the New Testament at the end of Matthew you would never know that Peter was the unquestioned leader of the New Testament church until Paul came on the scene. Judas (as we will see next week) hung himself and Peter wept bitterly. So what makes the difference? Why is one notorious and one revered? In order to fully understand we have to take a deeper look at this man Peter.

Look back to Matthew 26:56. What does that verse tell us all the disciples did after Jesus was arrested ?

Let's read the events of this denial in Luke's Gospel. Turn to Luke and read 22:54-62. What does verse 54 tell us that Peter was doing as Jesus is being led into the residence of the High Priest?

Once the Sanhedrin has begun to question Jesus, what does verse 55 tell us Peter did?

The next verse we read would be the most devastatingly sad thing for any follower to experience. What does verse 61 tell us happened after Peter denied Jesus?

Do you realize that each time you and I miss the mark and fall short of Jesus' desire for our life He sees us? What if our eyes could physically meet with His eyes? Would our patterns of behavior and the words we speak and the thoughts we have change?

Judas betrayed Jesus and Peter denied Jesus. Yet in these passages we start to see something different about Peter... he is following Jesus. Yes he fails, but he is following. I know that statement is true of me....I fail, but I am following. Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of God's perfect plan. Greek verbs can do things that mere English verbs cannot. In English you can only communicate in one tense at a time. To cover more than one tense you need more than one sentence. The boy hit the ball. The boy is hitting the ball. The boy will hit the ball. Past, present, and future cannot simultaneously exist in the English language, however, they can in the Greek language. What Romans 3:23 is saying is that we have sinned, we are sinning today, and we will sin tomorrow. That would be a lot of times that our eyes would meet with Jesus' eyes.

I believe that as Jesus reinstates Peter in John 21 it is the result of Peter's deep heart-wrenching confession of His sin. Peter and Jesus' eyes met and Peter knew what he had done. There is a private meeting that takes place between Jesus and Peter after the resurrection mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:5. I have often wondered what took place in that private meeting. We know that Jesus publically restored Peter in John 21, but I wonder what the private meeting was like. In my mind's eye, Peter wept as he confessed and remembered when his eyes met Jesus eyes as he denied his Lord.

Prayer Primer: What were the times this week that would have led to your confession if Jesus' eyes and your eyes had met. Spend some time in confession.