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Mark 14:27-31

"Knowing Our Weaknesses"

April 9, 2017

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Mark 14:27 as we continue our verse-by-verse study through Mark's gospel.

We are currently with Jesus and the boys at the last supper. It took place on Thursday night (or Friday morning on the Jewish calendar). We think it took place at the home of John Mark's family, which really did host the early church according to Acts 12. Mark had started this chapter by telling us about a dinner that was had the week before (six days earlier) where they were at Simon the leper's house, and the Lord had cleansed - Mary had come out, remember, with a very expensive bottle of perfume and poured it upon Jesus. Judas acted indignant as if somehow they could have taken that money and given it to the poor. But that was really his final motivation. He went out that night, possessed by the devil the Scriptures tell us, and made a deal with the priests on how he might betray Jesus; and from that day, he looked forward to an opportunity to betray Him (according to verses 10 and 11). That Thursday evening, as the Lord had the Passover with the disciples, we've mentioned to you a couple of times that there's very little coverage of the last supper in the synoptic gospels (in Matthew, Mark and Luke). There's a lot of it in John, so there are five full chapters if you want to study them there. But they're at dinner, and Mark covers the things that are important to him - Jesus is our Servant. That's his interest. We should be servants like He is, and so he puts a lot in his gospel - the actions of Jesus, not the preaching as much as the doing. We can all talk about what we're going to do, but until we get to doing it, it isn't much help or much good. And so Mark picks out those things that are important to communicate that we should be servants and, as the other gospel writers write, that the Lord was in charge of this whole time. If you just read it and stand away, you think, "Gosh, things got out of hand." They didn't. The Lord was in charge at every place, and we've been shown that by Mark. Jesus gave some directions for the boys on how to prepare the Passover in such a way that Judas wouldn't know where they were going to have dinner, and He hid it from him until that evening. He sent Judas out when He determined it was time for him to go do what he did quickly. But there at dinner, in the midst of the supper, Mark points out (in particular) that the Lord said to them, "One of you is going to be betraying Me. One of you is going to be a betrayer." And that all of the disciples were very soft-hearted and aware of their sin and said to the Lord, "Is it me? I hope it's not

me. Is it me?" Which is an interesting picture because in light of what Luke says, they were walking in the door arguing about greatness, and yet they were aware of the fact that they might have been talking about greatness, but they knew better about themselves. And so that discussion (notice down in verse 18, verse 19, verses 20 and 21), it was Judas, obviously, who was going to be the betrayer. Peter and John had tried to figure out from the Lord, even asked Him who it was, and Jesus said, "Well, it's one of those who's eating dinner with Me," which was pretty much everyone. And so when Judas went out the door, nobody really thought it was him; they just thought he was going to go run an errand or give some donation to the poor, which was something that you did maybe more at Passover.

Well, the Lord's in charge, and so Judas goes out into the night - possessed by the devil to do his wickedness. Meanwhile, Jesus takes the portion of the Passover, and He takes the cup and all the bread, and He institutes communion (which we looked at last week). The Passover lamb is none other than the Lamb of God, none other than Jesus Christ. And our relationship with God is dependent upon a covenant He made through His Son, not upon your goodness, not upon your performance, but upon His work. In fact, Jesus says (there in the gospels), "Next time you and I sit down to eat together, we're going to be eating at the marriage supper of the Lamb," which Matthew 26 tells us will take place on the earth during the millennial kingdom.

Well verse 26 is where we ended last week where it says "they had sung a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives." They headed out about a mile and a half walk. They sang Psalm 118, which was (and to this day is) the traditional Hallel psalm, the ascent psalm, after the Passover. And so off they go to Gethsemane.

Now, this morning we're just going to look down through verse 31. But the Lord gives us, and Mark does, a final look at some discussion with Jesus that began at dinner with His words, "One of you is going to betray Me." Like I said, they walked in cocky, they'd heard some bad news, they weren't sure that they could get themselves off the hook. They were aware of their sinfulness, which made them ripe for salvation in a couple of days, but that had kind of been set aside now, and the Lord revisits that issue again here as they head out to Gethsemane (as both Mark and Matthew point out). We are told in John's gospel that this discussion (that begins in verse 27) between Jesus and the boys, and specifically with Peter, followed on the heels of Him saying to them, "I'm not going to be with you much longer" and that He was going to go somewhere where they, at that point, could not

go. "I will not be with you much longer," (John 13:33), "and I won't see you until I drink with you again this cup in My Father's kingdom." And Peter, hearing that, said, "Lord, where are You going? Why are You saying that You're going to go somewhere where I can't follow You now? Why can't I follow You now? I'll lay down my life for You. Wherever You go, I'm with You all the way." And it was then that Jesus began to speak these words to them (from John's account). The account in Matthew is almost exactly identical to what you read here in Mark. We will go to Luke 22 in a couple of minutes, so if you're slow at finding stuff, go ahead and find it now. We don't want to pick on Peter, although Peter is certainly the mouthpiece in this story. Verse 31, at the end of this little portion this morning, says, "And they all said likewise." So lest you think it's only Peter (we can all point our fingers at Peter), you can point your finger at yourself too because everyone was kind of the same. In the one sense, it was a reaction to the news of the betrayer. I don't think anybody wanted to be that guy, and so the boasting - which has been going on for a long time - seems to get more intensified because of what the Lord had said. There's that argument about greatness and wanting to be great, and it was Luke 22:24 that says they disputed at the dinner about greatness.

So, we have this interesting picture of Jesus, just hours from the cross, getting ready to be beaten and mocked and abused, and then His followers arguing about seats and jobs and titles and crowns and position and Jesus saying, "No, you're going to fall," and they're going, "Yeah, maybe they will, but I would never." And you have this interesting picture of the problem of pride. "I don't have pride." That's what they said. "I don't have it." That's a hard thing to deny, isn't it? So, one thing for sure - Jesus wanted them to know of their weaknesses so that they would see their need for Him, and their self-confidence would have to be replaced by faith. It is always the lesson. It's a hard lesson to teach. It's a hard lesson to learn. And it's not one that just comes readily to us - that we have no ability to rise above our own failures. No matter how many promises you make to God, you're going to fail them. The good news is Jesus' coming covers all of that stuff. Right? You're good. You're good. Not because you're good, because He's good; and because He's good, you're good. You're good. Your future is secure. But to learn that, man, it's so hard. And you find these godly men, the Apostles (capital "A" for apostle, I guess, and capital "P" for pride), lots of bravado, lots of empty promises, lots of self-confidence. And unfortunately that's sometimes where we try to find our strength as well.

Well, we read in verse 27, "Then Jesus said to them," (as they were heading out)

" 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." ' " Now, Jesus uses the word "stumble." It's the Greek word "*skandalon*." It literally is where we get our word "scandal" from. It means to be a stumbling block. Jesus said, "I'm going to be a stumbling block to your life today. Tonight you will be offended because of Me. You'll want to disassociate yourself from Me. You won't really want to be a part of the group any longer. You won't want to identify with Me. In fact, identifying with Me is going to cost you more than you're willing to pay." And so there is this crying out to set themselves apart. And the Lord said, "It's coming tonight." Now remember these guys are bragging about greatness, they've been told there's a betrayer, they're not sure it's them - they sure hope it's not them, and they want to prove if they can to the Lord that it isn't them. But the Lord says very clearly, "You're all going to be stumbled because of Me tonight." In fact we won't get there today, but in verse 50 of this chapter is the fulfillment. It says, "Then they all forsook Him and fled." It's literally twenty-three verses from now. That's a quick fulfillment, isn't it? "Pretty soon you're going to turn, and you're going to run."

Now even before they do, Jesus confirms that word by quoting out of Zechariah 13:7 (which is quoted here in verse 27). But the Lord says this (verse 28), " 'But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' " Though they have no strength, they have no ability to stand, though they are going to run and give up - no matter what they've been promising - they shouldn't lose hope because Jesus says, "When I'm raised, I'll be here. I'll meet with you. We'll rendezvous together in Galilee. We'll be fine. You're going to fall, you're going to run, you're going to give up on Me, you're going to disassociate. But you'll be fine because I'm going to die and be risen. I'm going to raise from the dead. You're fine because I've risen." That's a great analogy, isn't it, even for our looking forward to next Sunday morning (Easter morning); that because of the bad news of forsaking Him, a betrayer, that "you're all going to give up on Me and stumble because of Me," here're some pretty hopeful words for you - somber news but hopeful words. "You're going to be all right." In fact, in chapter 16 of this book, when the resurrection takes place, it's the angel at the tomb that will remind these guys of these very words. "Remember when He was with you, He said He would rise and meet you in Galilee? Well, go there. That's exactly where He's going to meet with you."

Now verse 29, which is kind of the purpose for the whole discussion, Peter says to Jesus, in the midst of this, " 'Even if all are made to '*skandalon*,' stumble, yet I will not be.' " Peter's reaction to Jesus' words (that should have given it some credibility at this point) - Peter's response to a quote from an Old Testament prophet, which everyone knew to be God's Word, was that he apparently believed this didn't apply to him. "It applies to maybe these guys, but I'm a different sort. I'm a different breed, and it really doesn't apply to me." I mean, what he says in verse 29 is amazingly disappointing, I would think. And maybe it's because we've done it ourselves. You know, we are such arrogant kind of prideful, self-confident folks that we would rather belittle our brethren than admit our understanding about ourselves. "They might, I won't." "Come here Peter. I'm gonna pop you one." Can you imagine a guy that just throws the whole lot under the bus because he isn't willing to admit that Jesus is right about him, that his talk is loud? Now, look. I'm sure that Peter's heart was sincere in saying this. He was just sincerely wrong! And he's intent on proving his superiority, which has been an issue for a long time. "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). "You hear that? I'm Peter!" He has been at this for a long time. "Guess who got to go to the Mount of Transfiguration? Well I was one of the three." He had what he thought to be an inside track, and so he's going to prove his superiority, his spiritual insights. Maybe he was trying to make up for his foot-washing misread when he said to the Lord, "I'll never let You wash my feet" (John 13:8), and Jesus said, "Well then you're out of the club," and then he wanted a bath. You remember. He could see others bailing out on Jesus. He could see some of them quivering and maybe running. He couldn't see himself doing that. Like I said, Peter's the talker. Verse 31 says they all thought it, and eventually they all said it. "No, that's not true. Peter'll run. I won't run." They were all very confident in themselves. And, to Peter, pride said, "The Bible is wrong, the Prophets are wrong, and Jesus, You're wrong." That's an ugly thing, isn't it? This is not a quality you want.

Well it is at this point that Luke gives us a couple of verses, and I want you to, if you can, just flip over to Luke 22 for a minute because Mark doesn't give us this, but it's important, I think, to the topic that we're covering from this, this morning. It's beginning in verse 31. Now all of the gospels cover Peter's denial of Christ, and we will cover it when we get to the end of chapter 14. There're a lot of things happening even beforehand. Had I not been out sick for eight weeks, we would have been able to get to Easter at the same time, but here we are. So I'm hoping the Lord wants us to look at it more than a couple of weeks. But needless to say, as far as Mark is concerned, he wants us to know that God's in charge, that He

knows everything before it takes place. But Luke wants to give us the insight that Satan was particularly involved in this prideful discourse that Peter engages in, the Lord is aware, and that the intercession of Jesus for the weak (us) is necessary. Peter is boasting. Jesus literally says, "Satan wants you. I've prayed for you. You'll be fine because I've prayed for you. But understand that the devil would like to destroy you." And Luke kind of gives us that information. There's certainly a battle at hand this morning for your soul. If you are a believer, if you've given Jesus your life, Paul tells us in the Corinthian letter that we are in good hands in the sense that the Lord is certainly going to care for us and watch over us, that it isn't something that we need to worry about or fear, but that the enemy is out to destroy us. "If our gospel is hidden," he writes, "it's hidden from those who are perishing, whose mind the god of this world has blinded lest they get the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, and they see - it shines on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3). He wants to destroy you. Now what happens when you get saved? You get saved. You're sealed. The Holy Spirit moves in. The Lord doesn't rent out rooms in your life. Satan can't live there. You're saved. So the best thing that the enemy can do after you're saved is to sideline you, to neutralize you, to make sure that you don't have any effect whatsoever on your world or your culture; that you're not effective, that you're not available, that you've got other things to do to preoccupy your time, that the spiritual activities of your life are "I've got other things in my life. I've got other things to do. I want to be sure I'm going to heaven, and I'd like to just live as if I lived without knowing God." That's his best hope.

Now Peter takes the high ground with Jesus, here; shows how ignorant he is of the battle, completely, and says to the Lord, "They might bail on You. I won't. Zechariah might have spoken about Matthew and Luke and others. He didn't speak about me." And so Jesus' response (here in verse 31 of Luke 22) is He says, " 'Simon, Simon!' " And I've always found that when the Lord repeats your name twice, you'd better pay attention. It's almost like he wasn't listening. "Simon. Simon!!!" "What?" " 'Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. Satan's asked for you. Take note of that. Take note. Pay special attention. Be careful, Simon, because the enemy wants to destroy you. That's the battle. He wants to wipe you out.' " And, verse 32, " 'But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me,' " (or been converted, if you will; the word means to come back) " 'strengthen your brethren.' " "When you're done out there on the ledge being really proud of yourself, inflating your chest, when everything is said, when you come back to Me, then be a vessel that I can use."

So, interesting picture. You have an enemy that will devour you. The only thing that's keeping you from being devoured is the intercession of Jesus on your behalf. Or you could be wiped out. And I think it's a good insight into the spiritual realm because Peter is absolutely not aware that there's a battle for his soul, and he's not aware that he has an enemy, and he's not aware that he needs Jesus to keep him from being wiped out. In fact, look at verse 33 here. Peter says this, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Yeah, maybe not so much. When Satan (in Job 1) came accusing God of playing favorites with Job and accused Job of being a guy that would follow the LORD only because of what he was getting out of it ("He's blessing you, who wouldn't love Him?"), Satan the mercenary who's cruising for souls (in chapter 1 of Job) asks God the permission to externally take away the blessings of Job and then says to Him, "If I can do that, he'll turn on You. He won't stay with you because the benefit will be gone." And the LORD, being totally in charge as always, said, "All right. You can touch the things that he has. Don't lay your hand on him at all." And without hesitation Satan, who is such a wicked being, immediately goes after his children, and the children die, and there's an attack. And you might read it and say, "Why does God allow this?" And besides the obvious Romans 8:28 answer that we take comfort in but won't find much explanation in is that "all things work together for good to those who love God." I mean, we know that to be so. Trying to explain what that good is can be hard or completely disappeared from our sight.

But here's another insight in verse 32 because the Lord says to Peter that the benefit of him going through this is he's going to learn the fact that he needs Jesus' help. He's got to be converted, he's got to return. And when he's in that position, he can help others. But until Peter's in the right place, he's going to be good for nothing. And so why does God allow us to suffer? Sometimes it's so that He can make us good for something. Because otherwise we might just be good for nothing, right? And God wants to use our life.

Well, in chapter 2 of Job, when Satan comes back and the LORD said, "Have you checked out My servant Job, upright in all of his ways, perfect? And even though you moved My hand against him, yet he doesn't curse Me. He loves Me. He's serving Me. He's following Me." And Satan, in his ever quest to accuse God and man, said to the LORD, "Well, it's because he's still feeling well. If You took away his health, then he will curse You to Your face. In fact, a man will give anything for his skin. If it hits home, he'll turn on You." And again, the LORD set limits upon what Satan was allowed to do and not do. He's the Ruler. He's the One in charge.

And Satan went out, and he did exactly and as much as he was allowed to do in bringing sickness and suffering and pain and separation to Job's life. But Job went through it, came out good in the end. The lesson, early on, of Job though is that God's in charge. God's in charge.

There's an interesting discussion that is found in the book of Zechariah in chapter 3, where it says that "the high priest Joshua was standing before the Angel of the LORD and that Satan was standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?' Now Joshua" (it says) "stood there with filthy clothes," and the enemy pointed out the filthy garments upon Joshua. " 'Look at him. How can he be a vessel that You can use? Look at the way he's dressed. Look what he's wearing.' And the LORD then gave the order to take away his filthy garments, and the LORD said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes. Let them put a clean turban on your head.' " And as the Angel of the LORD stood by, God made Joshua - in the eyes of the enemy who was accusing him - worthy; made him worthy, made him useful, cleansed him.

Peter is much the same example. "I'm not leavin'. These guys'll bail on you. I never did trust any of those guys. But You can count on me!" And Jesus said, "No. Satan wants to wipe you out, and if it wasn't for My help, My intercession on your behalf, you wouldn't make it. You will not make it without Me." So, "He's asked for you." The word is to desire, to request, to demand. But notice, like everywhere else, the Lord sets limits and allows only what He sees that will benefit you in your walk with Him. He doesn't allow any more than it will be beneficial.

Now I should point out to you, and you won't see it in English, but I want you to see it anyway or mark it down. Verse 31, "Satan has asked for you," the "you" there is plural so that the application goes beyond Peter to man in general. Satan wants to do the same thing he wanted to do to Peter to you. But the word, "But I have prayed for you," verse 32, the word "you" there is singular. We're all going to face Satan's desire to destroy us, but we all can depend upon Jesus' power to keep us. So we fall, but God keeps us. In a couple of weeks, we'll look at Peter denying the Lord in the Garden and Jesus looking back over the balcony, catching his eye; and Peter learned that He was right. But the principle is here. The look from Jesus that night, I'm sure, was one of not traitor because He knew, He understood. I think it was probably a look of, "You expect so much from yourself. I know your

weakness. I love you anyway, and I'll get you through it. But don't count on yourself. Count on Me because the enemy is stronger than you." So it's a beautiful picture of Jesus' keeping power.

Notice that He said, "Satan wants to sift you like wheat." You know the threshing floor was usually a big flat hard stone where the wheat stalks were violently kind of beaten over and over, even stomped upon, so that the chaff could be taken out. Chaff. You know the orange thing that gets stuck in your mouth when you're eating popcorn, the stuff you can't eat. "Satan wants to stomp you, Peter, to beat you, to shake you. But I've interceded for you." Good. There's the battle. But pride falls on the side of Satan wanting to do what he wants to do.

Now, if you read verse 32, doesn't that make you feel good? If you know that Jesus is interceding for you, I hope that would make you feel secure. John, the old apostle (in 1 John 3:20), said there are times when our own hearts will condemn us but that God is in control and that God knows all things and that He is greater than our hearts. And if we get to the part where our own hearts don't condemn us, then we can have confidence towards God. Sometimes we'll condemn ourselves. Sometimes we will listen to others condemn us, and that happens a lot. Satan ever lives to bring condemnation to you. Jesus looks to set you free. What did John 3:17 say? Jesus said, "I've come into the world not to condemn the world but to save it." That's His desire, that He might save us and deliver us. Satan wants to stomp us; Jesus wants to intercede for us. And there're really only two things that you need to do in the battle, and they're found in James 4. And it says this, "Draw near to God and resist the devil, and he'll flee. Draw near to God, resist the devil." Now, you can't just go to "resist the devil." "Draw near to God, resist the devil, and he will flee." And then notice we read here, "I have prayed for you." Did Peter fall? Yep. He fell in a big way. We read it and go, "Oh, I'd never do that." Don't say that. You might very well have done that. Jesus' prayer for Peter was answered. He would be converted. He would turn around. He would come to strengthen his brethren. He will write in 1 Peter that very thing about having suffered, that God will, by His grace, bring you in and make you His own. So Peter turns out better than he started, you know? But he would deny that for a while.

All right. Let's go back to Mark and finish up this morning. Verse 30, Jesus says this (finally in this conversation with Peter, and it's written in Luke as well), "Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I

have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise." They all said the same thing. Really? Hearing Jesus' words didn't stop Peter's boasting in his tracks, didn't quell his temper, didn't steal away his self-confidence. Jesus turns up the heat. "Well, I'll tell you what, Peter. Since you're bragging still, by morning, before the rooster crows twice, by morning you'll have denied Me three times." And like I said, if you go all the way to the end of the chapter (verse 66 to the end of the chapter), here is the fulfillment of what Peter would do, which he didn't think he would ever do.

Here's the lesson that you want to leave, at least from these portions, with; and that is just listen to what the Lord says. And listen to what He says about you and about me. It'll save you a lot of disappointment because self-expectations are easily disappointed. Don't think for a minute that Jesus was disappointed with Peter. He knew Peter. He was aware of his weakness. He loved Peter. He was aware of Peter's love. He warned Peter for Peter's benefit. It would be a great assurance, later on, when Jesus was dead - that I think Peter made it through the three days and Judas didn't because Judas didn't know the love of God. He was a wicked man. Peter did.

So you can make God a lot of promises. And we'll hear sometimes people will come in for counseling, and they want something from the Lord, and they start to bargain with God. I'm sure it's sincere; it's just foolish. It is better that you step back and you know yourself well, and you recognize that you stand because of God's grace every time. You stand because of God's grace. Notice in verse 31 that everyone sang the same song. They did it with conviction. They did it with sincerity. They did it with honesty of heart. They couldn't get by the fact that Jesus said they were going to fail Him. They didn't want to be those people. I don't want to be that guy either. But you know, we read in Jeremiah 17:9 that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Desperately wicked. We can't know ourselves, really, until we listen to what God has to say about us. And what He says about us is we're pretty weak folks. We can't really stand on our own. And you've got to put stock in Jesus' words. I think Peter would have said to Jesus, at this point, "You don't need to pray for me. I'm there. You'd better pray for these guys. You don't need to intercede for me." He thought he knew himself much better than Jesus did. That's a big mistake. Big mistake. And unfortunately, it isn't just Peter, like I said. Verse 31 - it's all of them, and it is all of us. Be careful when you begin to apply Scriptures to others, but you won't apply them to yourself. When Paul finally wrote to the Romans (in

chapter 7:18), "I know in me dwells no good thing," could you write that? Because I think most of the time we don't buy that. Later on (in John 17) Jesus will - at the base of the Kidron Valley, as He heads up to the Garden of Gethsemane - stop and pray for the disciples, the apostles. He will even pray for us, those who would believe in time to come in Him because of His Word. And He prays that they'll win out, that He'll be their strength, and that we'll find our strength in Him.

But I thank the Lord for Peter. You know, Peter's kind of one of us, isn't he? He's willing to do anything for the Lord. He's impulsive, he's fearless, he's stupid, he runs off at the mouth. We find him grabbing a sword to fight a thousand guys, and he's a fisherman - not even good with a sword. "Give it back, Peter." Could have gotten himself killed had Jesus not stepped in.

The enemy wants to stomp you. Know that. You better run to Jesus for cover and especially in the area of pride. That's the place that will destroy us the most - what we think about ourselves. There should be no self-confidence walking into church. There should be lots of God-confidence. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling," that's what Jude wrote, "and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." That's what God can do. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless" - that's where you want to hang out, right? That's where you want to listen because God requires that we empty ourselves, and we find our strength in Him. He can use us. He can help us. He can save us. But don't make any arguments for yourself. It's been done. It never works. But isn't it good to know that God knows your worst secrets and He loves you still? He sees your weakness and still wants to use you. He knows all about you and hasn't given up on you. We'd give up on you, but He won't. And He didn't with Peter. But, boy, sometimes these lessons are awfully hard to learn.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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