

# First Serve

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Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 14:26-31

Topic

Jesus tells Peter that before the rooster crows twice,  
He will deny Him three times

Title

*"The Third Time's the Harm"*

Introduction

"I before E, except after C."

Armed with that foundational rule of English grammar, you're ready to tackle the most difficult spelling tests.

Of course, there are exceptions. The rule doesn't apply when the two letters makes a long 'A' sound, as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

There are other exceptions to the rule. Lots of them. Of the 14,189 IE and EI words in the English dictionary, 3,994 of them are exceptions to the rule. That's over 28%.

It's even worse than that. Of the 5,000 most frequently used IE and EI words, *47% are exceptions to the rule*.

Maybe things are more stable in the realm of mathematics. "All prime numbers are odd" - except for the exception, the number 2.

I'm highlighting "exceptions to the rule" because of something I see in the Bible this morning.

Jesus tells His eleven disciples what is about to happen to them, even quoting Scripture to enhance His own words. Jesus says, "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'" (v27).

Peter immediately, vehemently, disagrees. He puts himself in a different category than the other ten, saying, "Even if **all** are made to stumble, yet **I** will not be" (v29).

Peter heard Jesus say "**All** of you will be made to stumble," but he thought himself to be the *exception* in the group.

Let me put it this way: **Peter thought himself the exception to God's rule over his life.**

God's rule over *our* lives is our point of contact with this episode. Do we expect His rule over our lives? Do we think there are exceptions?

I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Are You Expectant Of God's Rule Over Your Life?, #2 Are There Exceptions To God's Rule Over Your Life?

## #1 Are You Expectant Of God's Rule Over Your Life?

(v26-28)

It was once common, or at least not all that unusual, for pastors to release a record album.

Or maybe it was just Jimmy Swaggart. I knew he had an album, because someone gave it to me as a gift. I didn't know that his discography includes at least 50 albums, spanning 1978 to 2015.

They are produced by Jim Records.

Our own Pastor Chuck Smith released three albums.

"This is pertinent how?," you ask. Because our text begins with Jesus singing.

**Mar 14:26** And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus and His disciples met in an upper room in Jerusalem, to share what would be their last Passover meal together. We talked, at length, about how Jesus was the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world; about how He was the final sacrifice for sin that every previous lamb anticipated.

At one point, Judas left the table, going off into the night to betray Jesus to the religious authorities. After Judas was gone, Jesus spoke of His impending death on the Cross, and He gave His followers a memorial to observe until He returns for us.

We call it the Lord's Supper, or Communion... And we talked at length about it, too.

All that being done, Jesus led the eleven in singing.

If we are going to be like Jesus, we need to sing; and we need to sing with others, lifting praises to God.

Whenever the subject of worship comes up, someone is quick to point out that singing is not the only way we worship the Lord. It might not even be the primary way. We should have a lifestyle of worship - praising the Lord by our conduct at home, at work, in school, at church.

While I say "Amen!" to that, it does not follow that I don't need to sing to worship God. I *do* need to sing, because Jesus did.

Doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune. Even Pavorotti falls short of the perfection in Heaven. God doesn't care what you sound like.

I'd like to address you who don't sing very much in church. You say you don't like to sing, especially in a group? I bet you join in the National Anthem at a ball game, and probably even *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* during the seventh inning stretch.

Ever sing along to the radio? In the shower? It's starting to seem as though it's only in church you won't sing.

We're talking about expectancy, so let me put it this way: You should expect to sing when you're in a meeting of the church; and Jesus expects you to sing.

We are to be "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

Mark says "they sung a hymn." During Passover, the feasts of Tabernacles and Weeks, and on Hanukkah, a certain set of hymns was customarily sung. They were Psalms 113 through 118, and were called by the Jews, the Hallel (praise) psalms.

I picked-out a few verses from them. Think of Jesus singing them, knowing that He was on His way to betrayal and death.

- Psa 116:3-4 The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"
- Psa 116:8-9 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
- Psa 116:13-15 I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.
- Psa 118:13-14 You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.
- Psa 118:17-19 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the LORD.
- Psa 118:22-23 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

This singing was the original musical starring Jesus; call it *Jesus Christ, Super Savior*.

It must have greatly encouraged the Lord to sing these hymns to His Father, with His followers. As He sang, He knew that God's Word could not fail, and that God's work through these men would be established.

Mar 14:27 Then Jesus said to them, "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.'

Earlier that evening, at dinner, the Lord had dropped the betrayal bombshell, telling them that one of them would hand Him over to the authorities to be murdered. Now He uttered another seemingly dark statement.

"Made to stumble" conveys the idea of being caught in a trap. They would be caught and overwhelmed by what would happen to Jesus that very night. It would stagger their faith and shake their confidence in Him as the Messiah. It would challenge their loyalty to Him.

But note that Jesus was telling them in advance so that they could overcome it by faith. They could expect it.

We're told to expect traps to be set for us as we walk with the Lord. We're told to expect the trying of our faith:

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

Joh 16:33 "... In the world you will have tribulation..."

The eleven were given specifics. They would be made to stumble in just a few hours, as Jesus was betrayed, and killed.

The fact that our trials are generic until they manifest themselves doesn't mean God is any less aware of them.

And we, too, are promised the empowering we need to be overcomers through faith in Jesus Christ. The entire verse in John reads,

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

To enhance what He had predicted regarding the eleven, Jesus quoted Zechariah 13:7, applying it to Himself as the Shepherd, and the eleven as His sheep.

Kinda cool to realize they were in the Old Testament. When Zechariah wrote those words, he didn't know it, but the "sheep" he was talking about were Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thaddeus, Bartholomew, Thomas, James the less, Matthew, and Simon.

They didn't need to see their names there; they knew it was them.

We are likewise to be found in the New Testament; we don't need to see our names there. Every place the church is mentioned, the Lord is talking about us, His beloved.

Every now and then, when you're reading the Bible, insert your name. This is what Romans 8:31-32 sounds like in the GV - the Gene Version:

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for [Gene], who can be against [him]?

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for [Gene], how shall He not with Him also freely give [Gene] all things?

If the eleven were listening with ears to hear what the Spirit was saying, they'd have concentrated more on what Jesus said next:

Mar 14:28 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Jesus was resigned to His death. He expected death - death by crucifixion, just as the Scriptures predicted.

But Jesus expected He would be raised from the dead. "I shall not die, but live," they had sung; and, "You shall deliver My soul from death."

We do not serve a dead Savior. Our God has conquered death, and with it, Satan and Hell.

I've explained before that what we call Christianity is not a late-entry into the world's religions. What we believe didn't originate in the first century with the teachings of Jesus. It originated before the centuries, in eternity past, and was introduced in the beginning, at creation, in the Garden of Eden.

No religion or philosophy pre-dates the promise of God to visit the human race to solve the problem of sin and offer us eternal life.

Perhaps most precious in this saying of Jesus was the promise that they could see Him again in Galilee. They should expect to see Him.



Even though they'd stumble, they could be restored, and be with their risen Lord in the not-to-distant future.

Have you stumbled? Maybe you're face down right now. You should expect the Lord to speak a word to strengthen you, and to bring you back into fellowship with Him.

He's not here to condemn you, but to convict you, then convince you that you can be restored.

I like what my friend, Pastor Mike Morris, told the men at our final Meat on Monday. He said that if he told you to leave New York and come to California, you'd immediately understand what was meant, and what to do.

It is like that when you are told to repent. People act confused, like it's somehow hard to figure out; but it isn't. You must agree with God about your sin, then leave your sin, turning away from it, and return to walking with the Lord.

I think it is easily proven that Jesus submitted Himself to His Father, then expected His Father to rule over His life moment-by-moment. In the only incident we can be certain of from His childhood, when Jesus was twelve and got left behind at the Temple, when He was found He said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49).

His life, by the way, was for three decades extremely plain and ordinary, as Jesus grew-up in tiny, rural Nazareth, then worked in His earthly father's carpenter shop.

I mention those early years of Jesus, those dull years, to emphasize that you and I need not be some kind of Christian superstars in order to expect God's rule over our lives. It is our Father's joy to lead us and to guide us along our way.

Your life may seem boring, spiritually, but God is into it. He is not a respecter of persons. He is just as excited about you as He is about everyone else.

We like to say that God has a plan for our lives; and I believe it to be true. That being the case, I should live with the expectancy that He will reveal it to me as I submit myself to His rule.

## #2 Are There Exceptions To God's Rule Over Your Life?

(v29-31)

Peter thought so:

Mar 14:29 Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

Not a very flattering assessment of the other ten. Peter could have spoken for all of them, and argued that none of them would stumble. His assessment was that the lot of them were capable of stumbling, while he was not.

Obviously there is a study here about taking heed when you think you're strong that you not fall. You're always better off admitting your weakness, and relying upon God's strength to get you through.

Jesus had spoken His word - what is now part of **the** Word, the Bible - and He enhanced it by quoting the Jewish Scriptures.

"All" of the Shepherd's sheep would be made to stumble, and to scatter. Not some; or a few. "All" of them; that was the clear, amplified Word of God.

Peter heard the word and immediately excepted himself from it. "Not me, Lord; You just said "all" of us would be made to stumble, but I'm the exception to your rule over my life."

Mar 14:30 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."

I'm going to recommend a book to you. The title is misleading, and not referring to what you might think. The book is *The Life of Christ in Stereo*.

It's what scholars call a harmony of the Gospels. You might have seen books like that. Typically they have four columns, one for each Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Usually categorized by subject, it shows what each of the writers had to say about the same events.

*The Life of Christ in Stereo* is quite different. It is a compilation of the actual words of all four Gospels arranged chronologically, with none left out or added.

On the book jacket it says, "This is the life-time work by Johnston Cheney, whose final moment on earth followed by just a few days the completion of this book."

I mention it because Cheney shows, by compiling all the accounts, that Jesus warned Peter *twice* about his coming denials, and that Peter actually denied Christ three times on two separate occasions that night and morning.

It's not our purpose this morning to prove that there were two warnings and two sets of denials. I mention it to stress that Peter most definitely heard the words of Jesus, and had time to mull over them, but still chose to except himself from them.

We live in a time in which the authority of the Bible is being challenged, by both the world and those who profess faith in Jesus. It reminds me of that discussion about the Pirate's Code in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Captain Barbosa explains, "the code is more what you'd call *guidelines* than actual rules."

The Bible is rapidly deteriorating into a set of guidelines.

The challengers may not put it in this language, but they are saying, "We hear what God said in the Bible, but we are the exceptions to His rule over our lives."

Maybe an example would help. Some of the most controversial and divisive issues of our day have to do with what is abbreviated LGBTQ. The initials in LGBTQ refer to the global community of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. The Q stands for Questioning.

By the way, if the reports in the news are true, officials in California have decided that second graders ought to be 'Questioning' their sex and gender. The article I read, at [breitbart.com](http://breitbart.com), said, "California is the first state to adopt the LGBTQ rights agenda formally into its public schools, as part of a new history and social studies curriculum that will reach children as young as the second grade."

Let's discuss transgender for a moment. I want to give you a fair, unbiased definition:

Transgender is a term used to describe people who may act, feel, think, or look different from their biological (or birth) sex. The word *transgender* is used to include many groups of people who... feel that their sex assigned at birth does not accurately describe them as a person.

In the LGBTQ community, they differentiate between sex and gender this way:

- A person's sex refers to his or her biological status as either male or female.
- Gender, they emphasize, is the state of being male or female used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.

Thus a person might be a man, biologically, but identify with society as a woman. You hear transgender's say things like, "I'm a woman trapped in a man's body."

It's no longer even as simple as a man identifying as a woman, or a woman identifying as a man. Your friendly internet giant, FaceBook, has added more than 50 custom gender options for users who don't identify simply as "male" or "female."

I'm not going to list any of them; that's not the point.

What is the point? God has plainly said, in His Word,

Gen 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gen 5:2 He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.

Jesus further validated these words when He said,

Mar 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation, God 'MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.'

Male and female. It encompasses sex and gender. Those are the only two categories.

God does not create generic persons, who are free to decide their own sex and/or gender, but “male and female,” in His own image.”

God's Word speaks with authority. God created us male and female, to enjoy intimacy in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship, between consenting adults, to last as long as we live on this earth.

**We cannot claim to be the exception to His rule.** People with what I'd call 'genuine' gender issues are not exceptions to God's rule over their life.

But that is just the starting point. If, for example, someone tells you that he has felt all of his growing-up life like a woman trapped in a man's body, *he is probably telling you the truth.*

What will you tell him?

I'd like to think we are prepared to minister to folks in the LGBTQ community. That if, say, you're a visitor today, and identify with that community, you see that we are speaking the truth in love.

You need both truth and love in a harmony that can only be produced by being filled with God the Holy Spirit.

- It was Jesus Who validated His Father's male and female categories; that's truth, and it cannot be altered.
- It was Jesus Who went to the Cross, to die for everyone, so that you could be saved from sin; that's love, and should not be diminished.

We don't make-up the truth in God's Word, and neither can we alter it, or treat it as mere guidelines. It is up to us to apply it in love.

Mar 14:31 But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.

In verse thirty, Jesus got pretty specific with Peter, talking about the crowing of the rooster. He gave Peter a time table, to indicate how serious He was that this was going to happen.

It should have shook Peter to his core. His response ought to have been, "Lord, what can I do?," or "Lord, please strengthen me."

Instead, he further excepted himself. He was ready, he said, to die, rather than deny.

Peter exerted a bad influence on the other ten to also consider themselves exceptions. He tipped the scales, as it were, for those who might have humbled themselves had it not been for Peter's boasting.

Our peers, even in the church, aren't always the best influence. It's best to not compare yourself to others. Look further, to Jesus, and walk with Him.

To make the point about excepting one's self from God's rule, we used a big example. Truth is, it is in the smaller things that the greater danger lies.

Anytime we are lax in our walk, we are acting as though we are the exception to God's rule over our lives.

We talk a lot about the End Times. One thing we are told will be a characteristic of the End Times is that believers would become lax in fellowshiping with one another in meetings of the church.

Heb 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

I can't tell anyone how often they must attend church; I don't want to, either. But I will say that far too many professing believers take their church attendance lightly. Some almost never attend.

The word in Hebrews is clear; therefore these who draw back are excepting themselves from God's rule over their lives.

I've used transgender and church attendance as examples. I'm guessing not too many here today have transgender issues; and you are here today, so church attendance is not an issue, either.

Until we are with the Lord, all of us will have some issue or issues where we are excepting ourselves from God's rule.

Talk to the Lord about **your** issues, and then leave New York for California.



