

TRIP AND FAIL

mark 14

Big chapter as we head into our final 3 weeks in Mark.

Mark 14.1-72 -After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.”

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, “Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply.

But Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?” And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’ ’ Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.”

So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.”

And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, “Is it I?” And another said, “Is it I?”

He answered and said to them, “It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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.’

“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.”

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.

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.”

He went a little farther, and 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. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.”

As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

Then they all forsook Him and fled.

Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' " But not even then did their testimony agree.

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?"

But He kept silent and answered nothing.

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"

You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it. "

Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"

A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept.

Obviously there's a lot going on in this chapter. But our purpose in these studies has been to look through this Gospel and see what God has called us to and how He has empowered us to participate in the work He's set before us. So, we've spent a lot of time focusing on the disciples because, after all, we are disciples, we're called by God to follow after Him. And as we've put ourselves in their place, we've seen how we are to navigate through life so that we don't miss the mark that God has given us.

Overall, this text is the story of the disciples stumbling in their discipleship. By verse 72 none of them stood with Jesus. He even said in verse 27, "All of you will be made to stumble this night because of Me."

Now, this not only fulfilled Bible prophecy, but we also understand that these situations are examples to us, warnings so that we can avoid what these men didn't avoid. Because we don't want to stumble, which means to fall or to sin or to trip or fail in our discipleship. And the New Testament reaches out to us to help us not fall down in our walk with the Lord. James points out in his epistle that, "We all stumble in many things" because we are imperfect. But then, in 2 Peter, we read this:

2 Peter 1.5-10 - But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.

So, we understand that stumbling is nothing something we *have* to do. In fact, the Lord is working hard to keep us from stumbling. Our Shepherd was struck once, but will never be struck again. We stand with Him in victory. And God's word shows us how we avoid these pitfalls.

In our text there are at least 6 different ways the disciples stumbled. The passage in 2 Peter we just read detail spiritual pursuits so that we may not stumble, but in Mark chapter 8 we can see practical things that we can grab hold of as we continue pursuing Jesus and His work in our lives.

First, the disciples were very critical of others. Mary comes and pours her expensive oil out on Jesus in an act of worship, but they weren't having it. Now, we know from the other Gospels that Judas wasn't happy about this because he stole from the treasury. And, had this oil been donated, he would've been able to pocket a bunch of money. But our text points out that a number of the disciples were upset. They criticized her and starting giving their analysis of what she *'should'* have done.

Jesus shut that down. He said, "Ok, listen, she's doing the right thing here. And if you desired to give to the poor, you could do that any time you wanted." Of course, these are the same disciples who had the bad habit of wanting to send the hungry away without being fed, wanted to refuse children access to Jesus, things like that. So they had gotten great at critiquing what

other people were doing, but that's not what we're called to. We're called to action, not criticism. Doesn't mean we have to agree with everyone and everything people do. But as Christians we spend too much time criticizing others when we could be worshiping the Lord ourselves or reaching out to the poor ourselves. We need to remember that if they're not against us, they're for us. "She should've given that to the poor." Ok, the real question is, what are *YOU* giving to the poor? That's what you want to ask the guys who were complaining about her.

Second, a stumbling stone for them was thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to. Jesus is predicting His betrayal and then Peter says, "Even if everyone forsakes You, I will not stumble, because I'm a *better* disciple than they are." And then the text says they all said the same thing. They ranked themselves above other people. They were quite confident in their discipleship. But they were confident in a discipleship that hadn't been fully tested. There had definitely been friction for them and there was tension between them and Herod and the Pharisees and Rome, but the real test of their faith was coming in the Garden. It hadn't happened yet.

This is why Paul encourages us to not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Instead, we should just rely on the Lord and His filling and His directing. Because, we've done nothing. Our awesomeness is non-existent. And no one is exempt from the potential to err and to fall down in our walk with the Lord.

Third, they stumbled by giving into temptation. Jesus goes to pray, brings Peter, James and John, and says, "Guys, you need to pray so that you don't enter into temptation. So your faith can be strengthened." But they gave into their bodily urge to quit and to sleep. 3 times! And when we start giving into temptation, whether it's the urge to sleep when we should be serving or the urge to sin, that's when we stumble. Because we're allowing ourselves to be governed by something other than the Spirit and His power. They stumbled because they chose sleep over prayer, natural over spiritual and the same can happen to us.

Fourth, Peter stumbled when he tried to do something ungodly in the name of Jesus. Judas and the mob come to the Garden, Peter runs out with a sword, takes an ear off a guy. That had nothing to do with Jesus. We learn in the other Gospels that Jesus had to pause everything that was happening so He could miraculously fix the guy's ear.

And we need to understand that stumbling isn't always about going out and committing a sin in the sense of lust or anger or something like that. Sometimes we stumble when we bolt out and think we're doing something for God that He never led us to do. We tack His name on our banner and think that no matter what we're doing, it must be good. But if God hasn't led us to minister in a specific way or go to that specific group of people or whatever it may be, it's not only going to fall flat, but it's going to do damage to people. Don't be the guy that carries the name of Jesus into a battle that you're not supposed to be in. It's not godly, it's a failure.

Fifth, the guys stumbled by being unprepared. I see this in the example of the young man, who we believe to be Mark himself, there in verses 51 and 52. He had thrown this linen cloth on, didn't have proper clothes, and when they tried to grab him the cloth came off and he ran away naked.

Devotionally, I think it's interesting to think about the way we sometimes go out into life without putting our spiritual clothing on. God prescribes *armor* for this life and we need to put it on. We need to be ready for the opposition and the task we're facing. I mean, seriously, what was Mark going to do with just a piece of linen on? He wasn't going to serve anybody. He wasn't ready to get his hands dirty doing work. He wasn't going to make a stand with Jesus. He was just unprepared for the task at hand.

Sixth, the guys stumbled because they were unwilling to pay the price of discipleship. They were all so quick to pledge their devotion at dinner, but when it was actually going to cost them something to be a disciple, when it was time to sacrifice, they were gone. Peter is the example. "I'll follow Jesus at a distance, but as soon as it costs me something, I'm out."

In this chapter, the guys talked a big game, but their discipleship was all theoretical. They did a lot of saying and not a lot of doing. And they stumbled. They were scattered. They had to regroup after the resurrection.

That doesn't have to happen to us. Our Shepherd is victorious. And we're equipped and established by God so *that* we don't have to stumble.

But the thing to remember as we live this life, especially in the time and place we live, is that our actions can further the work of the Gospel, as we see Jesus highlighting in verse 9 when He talked about Mary's act of worship.

Discipleship isn't being theoretically willing to follow the Lord, it's actually doing it. Not constantly criticizing. Not giving in. Not thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. Not being unprepared. Not being unwilling to sacrifice. But following. Doing.

That doesn't mean that all of us are going to have to die today for our faith. Looking at the examples in our text, maybe the Lord wants you to help the poor. Maybe the Lord wants you to keep a room ready in your house in case God has need of it in some way. Maybe the Lord just wants you to pray or to worship Him. Whatever it is, there are things to be done. Discipleship is taking what we believe about God and allowing those things to transform what we say and what we do and how we make decisions.

Our job today is to follow. And here's how we do it:

Hosea 10.12 - Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.