

Struggling Faith

Mark 14:26-31, 66-72
SS Lesson for 03/20/2016

Devotional Scripture: Rom 7:14-25

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson admonishes us that all Christians can suffer from **Struggling Faith**. The **study's aim** is to learn how to follow the Lord Jesus no matter what the cost or risks may be. The **study's application** is to act in faith to identify ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ in any situation.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Mark 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

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The account of Jesus' prediction of His disciples' desertion (14:27-31) and its fulfillment at His arrest (vv. 43-52) is interrupted by the account of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (vv. 32-42). In this way Mark emphasized that Jesus faced His final hour of testing alone with His Father, without human sympathy or support.

JESUS' PREDICTION OF THE DISCIPLES' DESERTION AND PETER'S DENIAL (14:27-31)

Whether this episode took place in the Upper Room (as Luke and John indicate) or on the way to Gethsemane (as Matt. and Mark imply) is difficult to determine. Mark apparently used it thematically without an explicit chronological connection in anticipation of the subsequent events he wished to highlight (e.g., Mark 14:50-52, 66-72). Matthew, however, included a temporal connection (Matt. 26:31, *tote*, "then"). Perhaps Jesus gave this prediction in the Upper Room relating it only to Peter (as in Luke and John), and repeated it on the way to Gethsemane (as in Matt.) telling it to the Eleven and especially to Peter. The verb translated **fall away** (*skandalisthēsēthe*) means to take offense at someone or something and thereby turn away and fall into sin (cf. 4:17; 6:3; 9:42-47). **Jesus** predicted that **all 11** disciples would take offense at His sufferings and death. To avoid the same treatment they would "fall away," denying association with Him (cf. 14:30) and desert Him (cf. v. 50). Their loyalty would temporarily collapse. Jesus applied Zechariah 13:7 to this situation: **I** (God the Father) **will strike** (put to death) **the Shepherd** (Jesus), **and the sheep** (the disciples) **will be scattered** in all directions. The interpretive change from the command "Strike" (Zech. 13:7) to the assertion "I will strike" suggests that Jesus viewed Himself as God's suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53: esp. Isa. 53:4-6). Jesus immediately countered His desertion prediction with the promise of a post-Resurrection reunion (cf. 16:7; Matt. 28:16-17). As the **risen Shepherd** He would precede His flock **into Galilee**, where they had lived and worked and were called and commissioned by Jesus (Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13). They were to "follow" the risen Lord who would continue to lead His people in their future tasks (cf. 13:10; 14:9). As before (cf. 8:32) **Peter** focused on the first part of Jesus' prediction (14:27), ignoring the second part (v. 28). He insisted that he was an exception—**all** the rest might **fall away** as Jesus predicted (v. 27) but he would **not** (lit., "but not I," the word "I" is emphatic by position). Peter claimed greater allegiance to Jesus than all the others (cf. "more than these"; John 21:15).

Prefaced by solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. Mark 3:28) **Jesus** emphatically told Peter that his failure would be greater than the others despite his good intentions. That same night **before the rooster crows twice**, before dawn, Peter would not only desert Jesus but actually **disown** (*aparnēsē*, "deny"; cf. 8:34) Him **three times**. The "cockcrow" was a proverbial expression for early morning before sunrise (cf. 13:35). Only Mark mentioned the rooster crowing twice, a detail probably due to Peter's clear recollection of the incident. (The major Gr. ms. evidence is split over including the word "twice" but the more strongly attested words "the second time" in 14:72 provide confirmation that Mark wrote "twice" here.) Jesus' pointed reply caused **Peter** to protest even more **emphatically** (an adverb used only here in the NT) that he would **never** (*ou mē*, emphatic negation) **disown** Jesus **even if** he must (*deē*; cf. 8:31) **die**

with Jesus. The others echoed Peter's affirmation of loyalty. They implied Jesus' prediction was wrong, but a few hours later they showed He was right (14:50, 72).

PETER'S THREEFOLD DENIAL OF JESUS (14:66-72).

All four Gospels record this episode with variations, but without contradicting each other. Mark's vivid account probably came from Peter. It resumes Mark 14:54, showing that Peter's ordeal coincided with Jesus' interrogation before the Sanhedrin. After this denial account Mark resumed his report of the Sanhedrin's action (cf. 15:1a).

One of the high priest's servant girls, presumably the inner courtyard's doorkeeper (cf. John 18:16) approached **Peter** while he warmed himself by the fire **in the courtyard** (cf. Mark 14:54; 15:16) which apparently **was below** the upstairs room where Jesus' trial was taking place. After **she looked closely** (from *emlepeō*; cf. 10:21) **at him**, she blurted out contemptuously, **You** (emphatic sing. pronoun) **also** (John was there too; cf. John 18:15) **were with** (cf. Mark 3:14) **that Nazarene** (cf. 1:24; 10:47), **Jesus**. Her charge correctly identified Peter as a disciple **but he denied** (*ērēsato*; cf. 8:34; 14:30) **it**, refusing to acknowledge his relationship to Jesus out of fear for his safety. His denial was a common Jewish legal expression, literally, **"I neither know nor understand what you** (emphatic) **are saying."** To avoid further exposure he **went out into the entryway**, the covered passageway leading to the street. Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts and early versions include the words "and the rooster crowed" (NIV marg.; KJV) at the end of verse 68. This evidence plus the strongly attested words "the second time" in verse 72 favor inclusion of these words. Since only one rooster-crowing is mentioned in the parallel passages (cf. Matt. 26:74; Luke 22:60; John 18:27) these words were probably omitted from Mark very early by some scribes to conform to the parallels. But Mark was simply more specific than the other Gospels, probably because of Peter's vivid recollection. Apparently this first rooster-crowing held no significance for Peter since it happened every morning (cf. Mark 13:35b; 14:72). **The same servant girl** along with others (cf. Matt. 26:71; Luke 22:58) **saw** Peter in the entryway and **again** identified him **to the bystanders** as **one of Jesus' disciples**. **Again he denied** (lit., "kept denying," imperf.) **it**. About an hour later (cf. Luke 22:59) the bystanders (again, in Gr.) confronted **Peter** with the charge, **Surely** (lit., "truly," despite his denials) **you are one of them** (the disciples), **for** ("because") **you are** ("also," in Gr.) **a Galilean**. Galileans spoke an Aramaic dialect with noticeable differences in pronunciation (cf. Matt. 26:73). So they concluded he was a follower of that heretic Galilean, Jesus. The fact that Peter **began to call down curses on himself and that he swore to them** does not mean he used profanity. Rather he placed himself under God's curse if he were lying to them and put himself under oath, as in a courtroom, to confirm the veracity of his denial. Carefully avoiding the use of Jesus' name Peter emphatically denied any knowledge of **this Man** they were **talking about**. Peter's third denial in less than two hours was **immediately** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) punctuated by the rooster's **second** crowing (cf. 14:68, NIV marg.). This time he suddenly **remembered** Jesus' prediction of his denial made earlier that night (vv. 29-31). Peter also saw **Jesus** looking down at him (Luke 22:61). Overwhelmed, **he broke down and wept**. In contrast with Judas (Matt. 27:3-5) Peter's remorse opened the way for true repentance and a reaffirmation of his loyalty to Jesus as the risen Lord (cf. Mark 16:7; John 21:15-19). Peter had a faith in Jesus that could be renewed, but Judas did not.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

After Jerusalem fell in 586 BC, the people of the southern kingdom of Judah found themselves in dire straits. Even after their return from Babylonian exile, the Jews were subjected to the whims of evil rulers and foreign powers who sought to impose conformity to their own pagan outlook. Numerous biblical and non-biblical accounts reveal how the people of God reacted to such trying circumstances. One biblical account is that of Daniel, who survived in a lion's den when he refused to pray to Darius, the king of Persia (Daniel 6). One non-biblical example is that of eight devout Jews—seven brothers and their mother—choosing to undergo torture and death rather than capitulate to pagan demands (2 Maccabees 7). Persecutions for faith continued into the first century AD. In Mark's Gospel, two such trials of faith stand out—one official and the other

unofficial. The official one was that of the trials and crucifixion of Jesus. The unofficial one was that of the bystanders' confrontation of Peter while proceedings against Jesus were underway. Peter's failure is the subject of today's lesson.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Peter's world was shattered. In the cold, Judean night, his Saviour had been arrested. His friends—the other apostles—were in hiding. Peter himself was in danger because he was one of twelve men closest to this Rabbi from Nazareth. Dreams of a kingdom and overthrowing the Romans were far away. Life seemed dark and hopeless. Only hours before, he had celebrated Passover with his beloved Saviour and the other disciples. Still buoyed up by Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Peter had been full of confidence that this Rabbi, this Jesus of Nazareth, was the One who would reconcile the Jews to God. So when Jesus spoke again of death, Peter had immediately sworn that he would never forsake his Messiah. He had exclaimed, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise" (Mark 14:31). That is why, as he stood in the high priest's courtyard, the agony he felt was acute. Even though Jesus had warned that it would happen, Peter could not believe what he had done. He had denied his Saviour not just once but three different times. Just as Jesus had said, Peter had forsaken the One who was his beloved Lord, as if the three years he spent following Jesus meant nothing. Modern believers know the rest of the story. We know that Christ forgave Peter and restored him to his charge (John 21:15-19). We also know that this impulsive disciple, the one Jesus renamed "Rock" (Matt. 16:18), would become one of the early church's founding fathers and a mighty pillar of the faith. He would add two letters to the New Testament (1 and 2 Peter) and become one of the greatest spreaders of the gospel. He would even go to martyrdom for his Lord. Peter could not foresee any of this. He may have believed that he had wasted three years of his life. He had given up family, a lucrative profession—his entire existence. That life was falling apart, and he succumbed to the fear that was welling up inside. There are times when all of us struggle with our faith walk. God allows circumstances that, at times, make us wonder whether He really is who He says He is. Is He there, and does He care? Is He truly in control of things? When this happens, we can choose our response. Do we choose to fear the situation, or do we take it before God? Do we still believe that, despite what surrounds us, God is a loving God? Or do we turn away, thinking Him indifferent and cruel? Paul wrote in 2 Timothy, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (1:7). God tells us in Isaiah that we are His and that He will preserve us (43:1-2). We need to love God no matter what, for that love is what drives away our fear (1 John 4:18). We do not know what God has planned for us. We can be sure that we will struggle in our walk at some point. Someday life is going to throw us a curveball that will shake us to our core, it will cause us to question God's goodness. The great news is that even when we falter, fear does not have to paralyze us or break our faith. We have a loving Saviour who understands and is willing to forgive and restore—just as He did with Peter.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Struggling with Loyalty (Mark 14:26-27)

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

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.'

Loyalty strong when with others (26)

Strong when with others because not quickly broken (Eccl 4:9-12)

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down

together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Strong when with others because of courage (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Strong when with others because of not being alone and defenseless (Luke 15:4)

4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"

Loyalty weak when leaders are away (27)

Weak when leaders are away because of impatience (Exodus 32:1-4)

1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." 2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Weak when leaders are away because of being protected (John 17:12)

12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Weak when leaders are away because of not knowing when they are coming back (Matt 24:42-44)

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Weak when leaders are away because of scoffers (2 Peter 3:3-5)

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

Struggling with Pride (Mark 14:28-31)

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

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

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."

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

Pride of own abilities (28-29)

Pride in own abilities causes arrogance (Isa 2:11)

11 The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Pride in own abilities causes a false sense of power (Dan 4:28-34)

28 All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" 31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." 33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. 34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

Pride in own abilities causes false wisdom (Ezek 28:6-8)

6 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god, 7 I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor. 8 They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas.

Pride in own abilities, but can do nothing without abiding in Jesus (John 15:5)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Pride that does not accept truth (30-31)

Not accepting truth because pride never makes sense (Isa 10:15-16)

15 Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood! 16 Therefore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors; under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame.

Not accepting truth because of thinking too highly of oneself (Rom 12:3)

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Not accepting truth because pride that keeps one from seeking God (Ps 10:4)

4 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Not accepting truth because pride makes one a fool (Prov 26:12)

12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Struggling with Denials (Mark 14:66-71)

66 Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.

67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."

68 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.

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

70 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."

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

Denial of knowledge (66-68)

Denying knowledge due to being darkened in understanding (Eph 4:18)

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Denying knowledge because of not having open spiritual eyes (Acts 26:17-18)

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Denying knowledge because of futile thinking (Rom 1:21-25)

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

Denying knowledge because of minds being veiled (2 Cor 4:2-4)

2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Denial because of fear (69-71)

Fear of what man will do or think (Ps 56:11)

11 in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Fear that keeps us from obeying God (Acts 5:29)

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Fear of people's rejection (1 Sam 15:24)

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them."

Fear because of following man's teaching and rules (Mark 7:7)

7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

Fear because of trying to please man (Gal 1:10)

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Struggling with Guilt (Mark 14:72)

72 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.

Guilt that is remembered (72)

Guilt remembered because evil causes war in the mind (Rom 7:23-25)

23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Guilt remembered because there is a longing to clear ourselves (2 Cor 7:10-11)

10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Guilt remembered because it bring remorse at the knowledge of our weakness (Matt 26:75)

75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Guilt remembered because it leaves us unworthy and seeking mercy from God (Luke 18:13)

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

Guilt remembered because of the accountability and responsibility (Matt 27:3-5)

3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. 4 "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." 5 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Guilt that leads to repentance (72)

Repent through godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10-11)

10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Repent to please God (Ezek 18:23)

23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

Repent to escape from the trap of Satan (2 Tim 2:25-26)

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Repent because the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Matt 4:17)

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Repent so that the times of refreshing can come (Acts 3:19)

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

4. (26-31) Jesus predicts the desertion of the disciples and Peter's denial.

a. **When they had sung a hymn:** We don't often think of Jesus singing, but He did. He lifted His voice in adoration and worship to God the Father. We can endlessly wonder what His voice sounded like, but we know for certain that He sang with more than His voice, and He lifted His whole heart up in praise. This reminds us that God *wants* to be praised with singing.

i. It is remarkable that Jesus could sing on this night before His crucifixion. Could you sing in such circumstances? Will you let Jesus be your worship leader? "What! A Christian silent when others are praising his Master? No; he must join in the song. Satan tries to make God's people dumb, but he cannot, for the Lord has not a tongue-tied child in all his family. They can all speak, and they can all cry, even if they cannot all sing, and *I* think there are times when they can all sing; yea, they must, for you know the promise, 'Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing.' Surely, when Jesus leads the tune, if there should be any silent ones in the Lord's family, they must begin to praise the name of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

ii. This means we should sing to God our Father - *just as Jesus did* - because this is something that pleases Him, and when we love someone we want to do the things that please *them*. It really doesn't matter if it does or doesn't please *us*.

iii. "What is singing but emotional expression? Oh! The value and the power of emotion. Evil emotion slays the Lord of life and glory! Pure emotion makes possible the saving of the slayers." (Morgan)

b. **Sung a hymn:** It is wonderful that Jesus sang, but *what* did He sing? A Passover meal always ended with singing three Psalms known as the *Hallel*, Psalms 116-118. Surely the words of these Psalms ministered to Jesus as He sang them on the night before His crucifixion.

i. "When Jesus arose to go to Gethsemane, Psalm 118 was upon his lips. It provided an appropriate description of how God would guide his Messiah through distress and suffering to glory." (Lane)

c. **They went to the Mount of Olives:** "Jesus tarried with them in the Upper Room for the wonderful discourse and prayer in John 14 to 17. They may have gone out to the street after John 14:31." (Robertson)

i. "Our Lord knew that his time was now come when he must be actually delivered into the hands of his enemies. That he might not therefore cause any disturbance either to the master of the family wherein he was, or to the city, though it was now midnight, he goeth out of the city." (Ironside)

d. **All of you will be made to stumble:** Jesus said this not to condemn His disciples, but to show them that He really was in command of the situation, and to demonstrate that the Scriptures regarding the suffering of the Messiah *must* be fulfilled.

i. This was not the first time Jesus warned Peter and the other disciples that they would forsake Him. From a careful reconstruction of the Gospels, we find that Jesus first warned them about this in the upper room, now again in the Garden of Gethsemane.

e. **After I have been raised:** This shows that Jesus was already looking beyond the cross. He had His eyes fixed on *the joy set before Him* (Hebrews 12:2).

f. **Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be:** We wonder how Peter could ever say such a thing. Tragically, Peter was unaware of both the spiritual *reality* and the spiritual *battle* that Jesus clearly saw. Peter only looked to how he felt at the moment, and at the moment he felt pretty brave.

i. "It is sometimes easier to bear a great load for Christ than a small one. Some of us could be martyrs at the stake more easily than confessors among sneering neighbors." (Maclaren)

g. **Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times:** Peter, despite his bold proclamation that he would never be made to stumble, would fail in what he thought was his strong area - courage and boldness. Through this solemn warning Jesus gave Peter an opportunity to take heed and consider his own weakness.

i. Sadly, it was an opportunity that Peter did not take: **he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"** Jesus knew Peter far better than Peter did, and in overestimating himself, Peter was set up for a fall.

ii. **He spoke more vehemently:** "This strong compound adverb [is found] only in Mark and probably preserves Peter's own statement of the remark." (Robertson)

iii. The rest of the disciples also overestimated their strength and did not rely on the Lord in the critical hour: **And they all said likewise.** The Apostle Paul warned us against falling where we think we are strong: *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall* (1 Corinthians 10:12). When we think we are beyond the reach of some sins, we are ready for a fall.

4. (63-65) The Sanhedrin condemns Jesus to death.

a. **The high priest tore his clothes . . . You have heard the blasphemy!:** First they reacted with self-righteous, melodramatic horror, then with abuse and brutality (**some began to spit on Him . . . and to beat Him**).

b. **And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands:** As terrible as the judgment of the religious leaders against Jesus was, at least it had a *reason* - envy and fear of Jesus. These **officers**, taking a bizarre pleasure in torturing Jesus, didn't even have a *reason*. They did it only because of what others (the religious leaders) said about Jesus.

i. "Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid. His face is the light of the universe, his person is the glory of heaven, and they 'began to spit on him.' Alas, my God, that man should be so base!" (Spurgeon)

c. **Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him:** Understanding that Jesus endured such pain and humiliation should cause us to respond in three ways.

i. *We should bravely bear pain and humiliation for the sake of Jesus ourselves.* "How ready should we be to hear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff, and think it a strange thing that people should mock you. Who are you, dear sir? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall he have all the bitter, and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier you, to demand better fare than your Captain!" (Spurgeon)

ii. *We should be more diligent to praise Jesus.* "How earnestly, next, ought we to honor our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put him to shame, let us be ten times more earnest to bring him glory. Is there anything we can do today by which he may be honored? Let us set about it. Can we make any sacrifice? Can we perform any difficult task which would glorify him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with our might. Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying him, even as his adversaries were ingenious in the methods of his shame." (Spurgeon)

iii. *We should have more assurance and confidence in receiving the finished work of Jesus for our redemption.* "Surely I know that he who suffered this, since he was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us. Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions. Glory be to God, that spittle on his countenance means a clear, bright face for me. Those false accusations on his character mean no condemnation for me." (Spurgeon)

5. (66-75) Peter's denial.

a. **Now as Peter was below in the courtyard:** As Mark concludes the story of Peter's denial in Mark 14:66-72, he does it as a flashback. This didn't happen as Jesus was beaten, but as He was on trial.

i. Peter's first problem was that he *followed Him at a distance* (Mark 14:54). When we distance ourselves from Jesus, it is hard to make a proper stand for Him at the critical time.

ii. Next, Peter *sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire* (Mark 14:54). Peter found fellowship and warmth in the company of the ungodly, having forsaken the fellowship of the fleeing disciples. Peter wanted to seem just one of this crowd, not a follower of Jesus.

iii. The *officers* of Mark 14:65 who struck Jesus are the same people as the *servants* of Mark 14:54, because the same ancient Greek word is used of both groups. Peter sat and associated himself with the same men who beat Jesus, and they beat Him just because someone else told them that Jesus was a wicked man.

b. **I neither know nor understand what you are saying:** A hostile man of authority interrogated Jesus. Peter did not face this kind of interrogation, only **one of the servant girls**. But she was enough to make Peter deny Jesus. "A silly wench daunteth and dispiriteth this stout champion." (Trapp)

i. **I neither know nor understand:** "Peter denied the charge, using the form common in rabbinical law for a formal, legal denial." (Lane)

ii. "Yet all this evil sprung from the *fear of man*. How many denials of Christ and his truth have sprung since, from the same cause!" (Clarke)

iii. Thinking it might help distance himself from association with Jesus, Peter **began to curse and swear**. When we hear that kind of language, we assume the person is not a follower of Jesus Christ.

c. **And when he thought about it, he wept:** Peter finally **called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him**, but he remembered it too late - it was *after* he had sinned. Then all Peter could do was to weep bitterly - but he will be restored.

- i. "It was not the crowing of the cock that convicted Peter; it was the remembering of Christ's words." (Wiersbe)
- ii. There is a significant contrast between Judas and Peter. Both of them denied Jesus in one way or another, but one was restored and the other was not. Restoring Peter was important to Jesus; after His resurrection, Jesus had a private meeting with Peter (Luke 24:34) and a public restoration with Peter (John 21). Judas ended up as an apostate, and Peter was a backslider who suffered spiritual decline from an experience he once enjoyed.

(Adapted from URL:<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?book=mr&chapter=014>)

Concluding Thought from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Today's text is one of four Gospel accounts that witness to Jesus' accurate prediction of Peter's denial. This has led numerous commentators to question why these four accounts are not identical in their reporting. As we read these parallel texts, we must keep in mind that the truth of the testimony of multiple witnesses is gauged not by how their stories match word for word but rather by the agreement of the meaning of their testimonies. The latter is what we see in the Gospel accounts of Peter's denial: (1) Jesus accurately predicted the denial (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38); (2) Peter's denial happened while Jesus' own trial was underway (Matthew 26:69; Mark 14:66; Luke 22:55; John 18:15); (3) Peter did not use a single chance to affirm his allegiance to Jesus, regardless of who did the accusing; and (4) Peter's failure was marked by the predicted crowing of a rooster (Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:60, 61; John 18:27). The Gospels offer slightly divergent testimonies in these areas, depending on what the individual writer wished to emphasize. But all four affirm the same truth: Jesus correctly predicted Peter's denial. Eager to prove his faithfulness, Peter made bold claims. How often do we similarly overestimate our own spiritual fortitude? The human tendency in this regard may be why Paul advocates fleeing from certain sins (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14) rather than hanging around to try to fight them. Spiritual arrogance can lead to ruin. Truly, we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13), but "pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Yet we must not forget that Peter's failure was not the end of the story. After his reinstatement per John 21:15-19, his track record as a primary witness to the resurrection of Jesus was nearly flawless after he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (We say "nearly" because of Peter's error noted in Galatians 2:11-21.) Today's lesson of failure must always be tempered with hope. Yes, there are serious repercussions for denying Christ, but such failure does not create an impossible situation.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. We imagine we will be the shining exception to others' weaknesses, but Jesus knows better (Mark 14:26-31)
2. If we try to share in the world's comforts, we risk its dangers (vss. 66-67)
3. It is foolish to try to deny what we are (vss. 68-69)
4. Our words are too easily betrayed by our manner and our actions (vs. 70)
5. When we rely on our own strength, we often end up doing the thing we most abhor (vs. 71)
6. Discovering the limits of our own strength and faithfulness can bring about a bitter lesson (vs. 72)