Matthew 26 • Betrayal and Arrest

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Matthew chapter 26, and we're going to, we're going to do our best to get this chapter taken care of tonight; all 75 verses. It's a long chapter but it is largely a narrative of the events that took place here.

We're in Passion Week at this time, and so you'll remember that the previous 2 chapters; chapter 24 and 25 are what we call the Olivette Discourse, when Jesus was on the Mount of Olives and He was speaking to His disciples, and now that is all finished.

And it in fact begins here in chapter 26 by saying, *"When Jesus had finished all these sayings,…" (ESV)* And again, that's everything He had to say to the disciples on the Mount of Olives.

And so we are now after that point, and He reminds His disciples one more time. It says that, *"he said to his disciples, [2] "You know that after two days the Passover is coming,…""* And so essentially that means that Jesus spoke these words, which would've been on Wednesday of passion week. And He goes on to say, *"…and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."*

And then we're told in verse 3, *"Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, [4] and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth* (the New King James says, *by trickery*) *and kill him. [5] But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.""* I'll have you pause there for a moment.

What they're concerned about is that during the feasts, and not the least of which was Passover, the city of Jerusalem would swell to something like 5 times its original or normal size, as pilgrims came in from all over to celebrate these various feasts.

And with the people coming together. Also what came, or what showed itself during that time, was an emotional passion that attended with all of these people who came to worship.

And the Jewish leaders essentially knew and understood that made Israel, or that made Jerusalem, a tinderbox. Meaning that the smallest spark could set

these people off and they had absolutely no desire to do that. And so they determined in their hearts, that it would be better to do whatever they're going to do to Jesus, after the Passover celebration. But the fact is, they did end up putting Jesus to death during Passover. It would— they didn't want to, but they did anyway. And the reason He was put to death during Passover, as we're going to see here in a bit, is that He is the fulfillment of the Passover observance, and we'll get into that here a little bit more in a minute.

But in verse 6, it says, *"Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,"* Obviously Simon was no longer a leper. We don't really know anything about this man, but we know that he was referred to as Simon the leper, which probably means he had been a leper. He had been healed most likely by Jesus.

And the reason we know he was no longer a leper was the lepers were not able to have people over to their house. And so the fact that he has this banquet going on in his home means that he's been cleared of his leprosy.

But it tells us that during that time, verse 7, *"a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table."*

And we know from John's Gospel account that this woman was none other than Mary, the sister of Lazarus. We know that the ointment that she anointed him with was not only expensive, it was very expensive. It cost an entire year's wages. If you can think about that in today's terms, think about how much that would be. The average person earns, how much, during a given year. Well, whatever the average is, that's what this ointment cost her.

And it says in verse 8 that, *"…when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? [9] For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.""* And it is John who also tells us that this objection was voiced by Judas.

But John also tells us that Judas cared nothing for the poor and that this was really just an excuse. He was in charge of the money bag and he often dipped in it for his own purposes. And so he didn't like anything that he was considered waste because he wanted to use it for himself. But either way, this money wasn't part of theirs anyway.

But it says here in verse 10 that, *"…Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. [11] For you*

always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. [12] In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. [13] Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.""

And we're fulfilling that piece of prophecy tonight as we talk about what she did. It is quite probable, I would say, that Mary did not have a full understanding of what she was doing in anointing Jesus' body and it being for, as He said His burial. But it doesn't really matter because her heart and her actions were spurred on by love, and that's the most important thing.

Now, as for Judas, this stinging rebuke that he received, and the comment that Jesus gave him may in fact have been what tipped him over to go to the religious authorities. Because in the very next verse we read, *"[14] Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests [15] and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. [16] And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him."*

This basically means that, when it says he would look for an opportunity, he was looking for a time when the crowds were thin. The Jews didn't really know where Jesus stayed at night.

And so when Judas came to them and said that he was willing to turn Jesus over to them, this was an inside track that they were looking for. Because even though they had said earlier, we don't really want to do this during the Passover celebration, this was too good to pass up because this is a man who knew where Jesus stayed for the night. And he would be willing to pass that information along so that they could come during the night, when the crowds were non-existent, and they could arrest Him away from the crowds. They could do all of this away from the crowds, at least hopefully.

Now it says in verse 17, *"Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?"* (and) *[18] He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" [19] And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover."* Now, I want you to stop there for just a moment.

It is especially important for all of us to understand the timing of this because this is the Lord's timing. It really had to take place during Passover, because

you'll remember that this was the feast that had been given to the nation of Israel, but it was a feast that foreshadowed the sacrifice of God's one and only Son.

But the first Passover, you'll remember took place while Israel was still in Egypt. In slavery, God had been showing the Egyptians through Moses that He was the one true God by visiting plagues upon that nation that spoke to all of their various pagan deities. And yet there was one final sign that God was going to give to the nation of Egypt, and after that, the Jews would be released from their bondage.

And the Lord gave specific instructions through Moses related to Passover and how it was to be celebrated. We're going to put these on the screen so we can see them together. First from Exodus, chapter 12, it says,

Exodus 12:1-13 (ESV)

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. …and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight."

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. (meaning this is the, He says, well, He actually goes on to say) *It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. …and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight."*

And then He goes on to say,

Exodus 12:1-13 (ESV)

"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."

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Now the beauty of what the Lord is giving to the people of Israel for the first Passover celebration or observance, I should say, not really a celebration, but an observance, is that it is a picture of what it means to shelter under the blood of the Lamb.

This is the picture of our salvation. We are doing exactly what the children of Israel did on that last night that they spent in Egypt, because the very next day, the Egyptians literally escorted them to the border of their nation. And they urged them to leave after this because of course, in every Egyptian home, there was someone dead. And yet the Jews survived the night without a scratch, without a death, because they were sheltering under the blood of the Lamb.

And that is exactly what we do. And this connection is so real that the Apostle Paul wrote about this in his letter to the Corinthians. Let me put this on the screen from 1 Corinthians five. It says,

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 (ESV)

Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Cleanse out the old leaven (or yeast if you will) *that you may be a new lump,* (Like he's saying, a batch of dough made without leaven, which of course is a picture of sin) *as you really are unleavened.* (now look what he goes on to say) *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven,* (meaning, this is again, a metaphoric picture of the old life of sin) *the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

But you can see right there that the Apostle Paul draws the dots between what we read there in Exodus to the New Testament work of Jesus Christ on the cross who is our Passover Lamb? All right, so we know this connection.

Because this connection is so real, it was necessary for Jesus to die on Passover so that He might be that perfect fulfillment of the Passover observance.

Verse 20. *"When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. [21] And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." [22] And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" [23] He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."*

And that is, oh, another way of saying, he who has been a close, intimate friend, is the one who's going to betray me. Because you see, they considered breaking bread back in those days to be an act of intimacy. And the reason is, is because they had a common bowl, and they would give people bread.

You'd take the bread, and you'd pass it around the table, and you'd pull off a hunk of bread. And then there would be a bowl in the middle of the table, and everybody would reach out, and dip their bread in the bowl, and they would eat. And there was no rules against double dipping so you could go ahead and double dip all you want.

And everybody's dipping into the same bowl and that was considered to be an act of intimacy. Because we're sharing, we're sharing this bowl together. And because, this is something that you do with a friend. This is not something you do with just anybody.

That's why Jesus said, *"He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."* And He's saying, it's going to be one of the closest men. He says in verse 24, *"The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"*

I get a lot of questions from time to time. People want to know what happened to Judas. Sometimes they'll even say, pastor Paul, do you think you're going to, we're going to see Judas in heaven. Do you think maybe he repented at the last minute? Do you think maybe he was remorseful to the point of repentance?

I want you to notice what Jesus said at here at the end of verse 24. We didn't read it yet. Here's how it goes, *"It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."* What do you think? Yeah, I don't think so.

If Jesus says about someone, it would've been better for him to have not been born, that doesn't sound like somebody who's going to be enjoying the blessing of heaven.

Verse 25 says that, *"Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so.""*

Now there are things that Matthew leaves out that took place during the last supper at some point. Jesus got up, took off his outer garment, wrapped it around His waist, and began to wash the feet of the disciples.

And by the way, yes, He washed Judas feet. That was before He sent Judas out to do what he was going to do. And even when He did that, the disciples didn't know what that was all about. They thought maybe Jesus sent him out to go buy more supplies or something like that.

But it was then after Judas had left that Jesus served His men the bread and the cup. And that's what we read about next when it says, *"[26] Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." [27] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

And I've always liked that statement where Jesus said, *"…this is my blood of the covenant"* because as you know, covenants were sealed in blood. They were made in blood. It is important that blood was involved in the making of a covenant, and this one is no different. But this is a covenant that Jesus is inaugurating here during the Last Supper, which God foretold hundreds of years before it would happen.

In fact, it's during the life of Jeremiah; Jeremiah, the prophet. Boy, I'll tell you, Jeremiah had a rough prophetic life. You'll remember that Jeremiah was a man

who lived when Judah, the Southern kingdom, was conquered by the Babylonians. And he actually saw the Babylonians come and destroy the city, and carry people off in the final exile.

And it was Jeremiah, you'll remember who had been given a word from the Lord to tell the people of Judah, repent. And yet God told Jeremiah at the very beginning of his ministry, I'm going to give you a message for the Jews, but they're not going to listen to you. They're going to ignore you, and you're going to be heartbroken over what takes place.

So Jeremiah was given a very, very difficult, a very challenging ministry, and yet God spoke to through Jeremiah about a new covenant that was going to be made. He chose to reveal that to Jeremiah, the heartbroken prophet. It's in Jeremiah chapter 31. Let me put it on the screen. It says,

Jeremiah 31:31-33 (ESV)

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Here's this beautiful prophetic statement of this new covenant that God is going to make with Israel. And Jesus inaugurates that very covenant during the last supper.

And then Jesus said in verse 29, *"I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* And by this statement, Jesus is looking toward His second coming and the establishing of the kingdom of God on Earth, which we called the Millennial

kingdom or the Messianic kingdom. And He says during that time, He would once again drink of the fruit of the vine with the people of God, but not until.

Verse 30. *"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. [31] Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' [32] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." [33] Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." [34] Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." [35] Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same."*

You can see this is what we would expect Peter to say. Peter was a man who saw himself as more than he really was. And so when Jesus tells him just straight out, you're all going to fall away tonight. You're all going to run off when things begin to get dangerous. Peter's like, no, no, that's not going to happen. Not me. You're the one Lord who called me the rock. And so that's what I am. And even if I have to die, if I have to go to my death tonight, I'm ready and willing to do that.

And I believe in my heart that Peter meant what he was saying. I really do. I think Peter wanted to love the Lord the way his words came out. But as we're going to find out here later in the chapter, sometimes reality just doesn't measure up to our words, and we're going to see this.

It goes on and in verse 36 to say, *"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." [37] And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,* (that's James and John) *he began to be sorrowful and troubled."*

Verse 38 says, *"Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.""* I don't think Jesus was being overly dramatic. What's going on here in Gethsemane? This whole event is really full of mystery.

How much Jesus suffered in Gethsemane and why He was suffering in anticipation, it's largely unknown to us. We really don't know. We don't really know what's going on. We don't know what's happening. We don't know why.

There are all kinds of easy guesses that people have made about this and yet we just don't know. You'll notice that he said in verse 38, *"My soul is very sorrowful,…"* The New King James says, *"…exceedingly sorrowful,…"*

And by the way, this is a favorite phrase of Matthew. He uses it several times in his Gospel account, and it expresses a range of emotions that are all terrible. They're all horrific. But they all speak of just intense emotional response to a situation.

All we really know, all we really know, is what Jesus tells us when He says, I'm sorrowful unto death. In other words, this could kill me. He was about to stand in our place, into the place of guilty sinners, and He was about to take upon himself the punishment that we deserve. That's all we know. I wonder sometimes if someday we'll learn more about the difficulty of Gethsemane.

But it goes on to say in verse 39, *"And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible,* (notice that, *if it be possible*) *let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.""*

What does that tell you? By the way, the cup is a common biblical term used several times in the Old Testament to describe some kind of judgment. And Jesus says here, *"if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;* (but) *nevertheless,* (He said) *not as I will, but as you will."*

My question is, did the cup pass from Him? No, it didn't. He had to drink it all the way down. So what does that tell you? It tells you there was no other way for us to be saved. And that's such an important thing to remember.

There's no other way, there was no other way for this thing to happen. The only way for us to have our sins cleansed is to have them paid for by someone who didn't deserve to die in the first place. That was the only way.

Verse 40 says, *"And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? [41] Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.* (and then listen to this. If this isn't underlined or highlighted in your Bible, it probably should be) *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.""*

And the reason I encourage you to have that underlined and to really ponder what it means is because this statement of by Jesus gives us so much insight into why our Christian lives so often miss the mark.

This is something that Christians struggle with because, the Bible tells us that He has given us everything we need for life and godliness. You know that, right? Everything we need. The Bible says we've been given everything we need for godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

So here's the question that a lot of Christians struggle with. So why am I not walking in perpetual godliness? Why do I still struggle with sin? Why do I still fail? I mean that has to be the most popular question that I get from believers.

Why do I sin? God saved me. He's given me His spirit, and I just got done reading in the Bible that He's given me everything I need. Doesn't the Bible say that God works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose? (Philippians 2:13) Doesn't it say that in your Bible? It says it in mine. God gives us everything we need, both to will and to walk out. It's in Philippians, according to His good purpose.

So why am I not walking out his good purpose all the time? Why am I messing up? Well, Jesus gives you the answer right here in the end of verse 41. *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* Guys, we are the weak spot. We're the weak link.

It doesn't sit well with people when I tell them. They ask me, so why do I sin? And I come back to them, I say, because you choose to. And they're like, well, wait a minute, pastor. That's a little bit of a slap in the face, isn't it? Yeah. Well, yeah, I guess. How else do you want to say it?

Why do you sin? cause you choose to. Do you think you sinned because God somehow messed up, or that God really didn't give you everything you need for life and godliness? No, I, He's the one who's faithful. We sang about that tonight. He's the one who's perfectly faithful.

We mess up because the flesh is weak. And we don't always lay hold of what God's given us. He's given us everything we need, but we don't always lay hold of it. We don't always take hold of it. Sometimes I even push it away. Sometimes you do too.

God's given you everything you need to have a godly response to a particular temptation, and you push it away and you lay hold of the temptation anyway, and you choose to. And guess what? God honors your choice. Sometimes we wish He wouldn't, but He does. This statement here that Jesus is making is so insightful to help us understand why we miss the mark and we fall in to sin. The flesh gets in the way.

Verse 42 says, *"Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." [43] And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. [44] So, leaving them*

again, he went away and prayed for the third time, (and I want you to take note of this last phrase) *saying the same words again."*

If anybody ever tells you that praying the same thing shows a lack of faith, you take him to this chapter, and you show him that Jesus repeated Himself three times. And you can just tell him, well, I guess Jesus didn't have enough faith cause He had to pray it three times. But there are people that are telling Christians you pray at once and if you have real faith, you never ever have to pray it again. And that's just not biblical.

"[45] Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. [46] Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.""

Before we move on in this, there's a statement that is made in Luke's Gospel account before we leave the Gethsemane and the mysteries of Gethsemane. But it's recorded in Luke chapter 22. Let me put it on the screen.

Luke 22:44 (ESV)

And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat. It became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat. It became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

I've always, been really touched by this statement in Luke's account because it speaks of something that I personally want to attain to. And that is this model that Jesus gave. It says in *"being in agony, he prayed more earnestly."* In other words, because He was in agony, He prayed harder. That's what he's saying.

I'd have this tendency in my own life, the more I suffer with something. I'll cry out to God but if I don't get an answer, I tend to want to back away from prayer. In other words, I do the opposite of what Jesus is modeling here. And I know that that's wrong. I know that if I don't get an answer right away, I need to keep praying.

And that's what Jesus showed us here. And *"being in agony, he prayed* (even) *more earnestly."* He didn't back off from the place of prayer. He turned it up. He pressed in even more in prayer. I love that.

Verse 47 says, *"While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him."* And of course, it's dark, so you know they want to be sure they got the right man.

"49 And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus (and we know elsewhere, this was Peter) *stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?""*

And of course, we know elsewhere from the Gospels that Jesus healed the high priest servant by touching his ear as well.

"55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. 56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled." Seeing that Jesus had been bound, they all took off.

Now, it's probably the early hours after midnight about this time. *"57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. 58 And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. 59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, 60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward 61 and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62 And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" 63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65 Then the high priest tore his robes* (which by the way, was illegal. The high priest was never to rend his garment) *and* (he) *said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your judgment?" They*

answered, "He deserves death." [67] Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, [68] saying, "Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

[69] Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." [70] But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." [71] And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." [72] And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." [73] After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." [74] Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. [75] And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly."

How difficult it is to finally see yourself, as you truly are. Peter was always the man who was ready to say the wrong thing. He was the one who was, I guess in, he had a view of himself that was unrealistic. And he desperately needed to see himself as he truly was, if he was ever going to be used of the Lord. This is really the most important thing.

This is a challenging thing to read because we feel so badly for Peter. To be confronted and then to, and to deny these three times that he even knew the Lord. And then to realize this is exactly what Jesus said would happen. And then to go out and weep bitterly over this revelation of who he really was. Peter needed to know. Peter needed to know that he was a weak man.

We all have to go through this at one time or another. We have to find out who we are. We have to learn that God doesn't want your strength, He wants your weakness.

Paul had to learn it. Paul had to go through a similar sort of a situation, not to the point of denying the Lord. But to get to the point where some issue in his life, which he calls a thorn in the flesh, was so troublesome that he cried out to the Lord on three different occasions asking the Lord to take it from him. And the Lord finally said, no, I'm not going to do that, because He said, my power is actually made perfect in your weakness Paul. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

And so Paul, as he's writing to the Corinthians in his second letter, he says, so I finally learned, I learned the lesson. I finally learned that His grace is sufficient

and that He's not looking for my strength, He's looking for my weakness, so that I might become strong.

And I think in Peter's case, this is really what brought him to the place of really being able to be finally used by the Lord. I think before this time, had he not learned this important and very hurtful lesson from the Lord, he wouldn't have been the Peter that we needed him to be. He wouldn't have been the Peter that God wanted him to be, because he was always the man shooting off his mouth, saying that he was something that he really wasn't. But now he knows.

Now he knows what kind of a man he really is. He knows that he needs the Lord. He knows that he's a weak man; a small man. A man who needs to rely on the power of God, not the power of self.

The apostle Paul writes these same things in the Book of Philippians. He said, you know what? Whatever I ever once thought was to my benefit as a man, as a Jew, and he said, I, and I had a lot going for me. Hebrew of Hebrews. Zeal that was unmatched by my brothers of the tribe of Benjamin. I had it all going for me. A Pharisee of Pharisees.

But he says, I learned finally that was whatever on the plus side of my life, I consider it nothing. Now I consider it rubbish, just compared to simply knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Because God's not impressed with your strength, and He's looking for you and me to admit our weakness, so that He can finally make us strong. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, I do thank You so much for this chapter and the important reminders that we get from it. I thank You Lord for reminding us here that it's not about our own personal strength and what we can bring to the table. Because Lord, You've reminded us in no uncertain terms that even though the spirit is willing, the flesh is indeed weak.

And so we bring the weakness of our flesh to you tonight that we might be made strong. And in whatever area of our lives that You've been revealing this weakness, that we don't want to admit to, we pray in Jesus' name, that You would help us to truly embrace it. To truly be able to say, yeah, that's me. I accept it, and to come to You for the strength that only You can give.

I thank You, my Father, God, for blessing us and filling us with your Holy Spirit. Now, Lord God, help us to walk it out day by day. We look to You in all of these things, and we ask You to guide and direct us through Jesus our Savior, amen. Amen.