

## **Pride and Promise**

Matthew 26:30-35

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Throughout the Scriptures, there are warnings concerning the sin of pride. If you examine the failures of many of the people in Scripture, you will find the sin of pride had a foothold in their hearts. Because pride is so pervasive in us, you will find that there are texts that explicitly warn us about pride and its consequences. Proverbs 16:18 is probably the most well-known text. It reads:

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Along the same lines, Proverbs 11:2 reads:

*When pride comes, then comes disgrace.*

The Apostle James warns us about pride in James 4:15-16. Apparently, there were people in churches bragging about traveling and their business ventures. He told them that they needed to rethink how they thought about all they would do. Instead of saying you'll do this or that they ought to say:

*"If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

The bottom line is that we often believe we can put in the effort and, therefore, control the outcome of events. The truth is – we can't.

Sometimes, even in our relationship with Jesus, we confuse trusting in Jesus with trusting in ourselves. Here's what I mean: Often, we rock along in our relationship with God and subtly begin to live in our strength. We may not say it out loud, but we will adopt the mindset of our culture, which says, "I got this!" When we are going through a struggle, people will often say, "You got this!" The problem is, you don't. You never did.

Listen, I'm not saying you shouldn't try your hardest and give your best effort at work and on the job. If you're an athlete, don't "just let go and let God;" you must train and give your best. Likewise, college students must study, work hard, and do their best. I had a professor in seminary who would pray for us before our exams, and he would pray,

*"Lord, bless these students according to how hard they have studied."*

Here's the problem: I always studied very hard and knew the material backward and forward; however, I would get the worst cases of test anxiety before exams, and my mind would go blank. Needless to say, I didn't always do as well as I had prepared. It was frustrating.

Now, that's a funny story, but the fact is that there are moments in life when our faith is severely tested. Life is full of moments that test our faith and expose our weaknesses.

In Matthew 26:30-35, we see a pivotal moment in the life of Jesus and His disciples—a moment of prophecy, pride, and eventual failure. This passage teaches us about our frailty and our inability to keep commitments. However, Jesus "promises" that He came to give us hope in our struggles and restore us even in our failures.

Let's walk through the text verse-by-verse and make our application at the end. Look at v. 30. We touched on it last Sunday. Look at what Matthew writes:

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

Let me set the scene. Jesus and His disciples (minus Judas) were walking back to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus had been teaching. Jesus knew He was about to be arrested, put on trial, and crucified. Yet, His faith in God sustained Him, so He was able to sing a hymn of faith in God, go into the Garden, and await His betrayal. He trusted God in the trial and suffering He knew was coming.

Friends, Jesus was not merely the example and model of what it means to suffer well, but through His suffering, He earned our righteousness and the ability for us to suffer well. We shouldn't look at Jesus suffering and say,

*Because Jesus did it, I can do it.*

That's the wrong conclusion. We must look at Jesus' suffering and realize what He was doing. He was earning the righteousness we need, the faith we need, the humility we need, and the Holy Spirit's power to trust in Him in our weakness. Scripture says that in our weakness, He is strong.

What does it mean that in our weakness, He is strong? It means Jesus is doing a work inside of our hearts. He's not telling us to manufacture the strength on our own. He is not simply saying follow my example. He is doing the work. The One who set the example is doing the work in us so that in our suffering, we can worship Him and then walk into our trials and tribulations.

The disciples had not understood that – had they? Jesus was trying to prepare them for the trial that was coming. Look at what Jesus said in v. 31:

*"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.'"*

Jesus knew the suffering that was coming. He wanted them to be ready. The question is – would they be ready?

In v. 31, Jesus quoted the Old Testament prophet Zechariah to prepare His disciples for what was about to happen. In Zechariah 13:7, God says:

*"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones."*

This is an extraordinary statement! God called for the slaying of His own Shepherd, the One He had appointed to rule on His behalf, who enjoyed an especially close relationship with Him. Listen . . . don't miss this . . . God Himself will deliver the decisive blow to His Son. They needed to understand that. We need to understand that.

Friends, Jesus was not executed by His enemies. His enemies may have carried out the deed, but God was the One Who called for His death. God used Jesus' enemies to carry out the execution of His Son. Brothers and sisters, one of the mind-blowing truths about Jesus' death is that God the Father made God the Son the object of His wrath to save those who had sinned against Him.

As Isaiah 53:10a says:

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt.*

Jesus knew this, so it was no wonder He shrank from the prospect of going to the cross. The wrath of God was going to be poured out on the Son of God so that sinners may have a way to God in order to be saved from that wrath and have a restored relationship with God. Hebrews 12:2 calls Jesus the Author and Perfector of our faith. One of the ways for us to understand Jesus as the Author and Perfector of our faith is that Jesus blazed a trail to God for us. He did what no one else could do.

Why did He endure God's wrath on our behalf? It was because we could not be reconciled to God unless Jesus did it. God came in Christ and did that work for us. So, we should never think for one moment that we can somehow navigate our way to God. We cannot come to God by our own initiative. Jesus took the initiative for our salvation. We could not earn it, but Jesus earned it by receiving the Holy wrath and fierceness of God's anger for our sins on our behalf.

So, let's get back to our story. Here, the disciples are faced with the prophecy that Jesus had made. He told them that *they would fall away* because the Lord was going to strike Him. At this point, we still don't know whether the disciples understood that Jesus would die on the cross. He had told them that He would many times, but often, they just didn't get it.

In v. 32, Jesus wanted to let them know that even though He was going to die, it was not the end. So, He told them He would be raised. Look at v. 32:

*But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.*

Verse 32 gives them hope. The Father would strike Him down, but He would also raise Him from the dead. Jesus spoke v. 32 in the *passive voice*. He very precisely tells us with certainty what would take place when He said:

*After I have been raised.*

The Apostle Paul explained in Romans 6:4,

*Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*

Brothers and sisters, it was Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Christ that glorified God, and by that glory, God raised Him from the dead. God accepted Christ's redemptive work on our behalf and announced it in His resurrection from the dead.

Then Jesus told the disciples that after He was raised from the dead, He would go ahead of them to Galilee. Now, let's put this all together.

Jesus declared that the disciples would all fall away because of Him. The Shepherd would be struck, and the sheep would be scattered. However, their falling would be short-lived. After Jesus' resurrection, they would be reunited with Him because death would not separate Jesus from His disciples.

Next, in v. 33, we hear proud Peter's proclamation. Look at what Peter said:

*"Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."*

Like I said, we don't know whether the disciples truly understood what Jesus meant when He told them that God would strike Him; however, we do know that they understood what He meant when He told them "*they would fall away*" because of Him.

Most likely, they were still thinking about their conversation just a few hours earlier when Jesus said one of them would betray Him. When you read through the Last Supper scene, you see that they were unsure of themselves after He said that, and each disciple asked Him "*if he was the one.*"

Yet, now they've had time to gather their thoughts, and when Jesus told them that "*they would fall away,*" Peter didn't doubt himself here. He sort of looked at Jesus and told Him while pointing to the disciples and said:

*"Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."*

Peter was incredibly prideful and presumptuous. He was overconfident in his ability to love and obey Jesus. He also didn't think much of his fellow disciples because he threw them under the bus when he looked at them and told Jesus they might falter in their faith, but he wouldn't. Peter is saying,

*Hey, Jesus, they don't "got this," but "I got this." I got Your back on this one.*

Overconfident, he exaggerated his level of commitment. He thought he was tougher and better than the other disciples. Not to mention, he thought he had successfully corrected Jesus.

Yet, you don't "one-up" Jesus, do you? Look in v. 34. Jesus gave a stunning prophecy and nailed Peter because of his pride when He said:

*"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."*

Here's what it meant for Jesus to tell Peter he would deny Him three times before the *cock crows* or *rooster crows*. In the first-century world, the night was divided into four watches: Early evening was from 6:00 pm-9:00 pm; the late evening was from 9:00 pm- to midnight; then there is the period of time called *the cock crow*, which was midnight-3:00 am; and finally, the morning was from 3:00 am-6:00 am. So, when Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed, He was referring to the time of midnight to 3:00 am.<sup>1</sup>

For someone as proud as Peter, that was hard to take. He was the leader of the disciples, and there was no way he would betray or abandon Jesus. So, instead of being humble and teachable, he did the opposite. Peter doubled down on his original statement. Look at his reply in v. 35:

*"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.*

This time, he said he not only wouldn't abandon or deny Jesus but also he would die with Him if necessary. The disciples would not be outdone on this one, so they joined Peter and declared they would not abandon Jesus either.

Now, let's pull our text together with a few applications. I have four principles for us.

#### I. We should Prepare for Trials and Tribulations:

Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for the trial that was coming to Him and to them. Yet, they seemed to believe they were bulletproof. They didn't get it. They seemed to believe it wouldn't happen to them – but it did. So, Jesus wanted them to be ready.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus still calls us to be ready for the trials and struggles that come. The fact is, we are not immune to suffering or the fiery trials of life. As Jesus' disciples, we will go through them, and they will put our faith to the test.

The Apostle Peter learned from his mistakes. Listen to what he writes in 1 Peter 4:12-13,  
*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.<sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

Are you like me and surprised when the trial comes upon you? I still need reminding when the trial comes and my faith struggles.

#### II. We should Beware of Self-Confidence:

One of the ways to prepare is to humble yourself before the Lord. Repent of any self-confidence and pride lest you deceive yourself into believing that you can handle it on your own.

Peter is the representative disciple in this text. Here's what I mean. It was Peter's failure to see that at the root of his life, he was weak and self-serving. He didn't realize it. He had too high an opinion of himself.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur's New Testament Commentaries: Matthew 24-28*, 162.

The truth is, all of us do the same thing. But we must recognize that apart from Christ, apart from the grace and strength that He gives, we would deceive ourselves.

So, what should we do? We should listen to the advice of the Apostle James. He writes in James 4:6,  
*“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

James goes on to tell us how to humble ourselves before the Lord in vv. 7-10,  
*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

You are never more vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy than when you believe, *“You got this.”* So, what do you do? Verses 8-10 tell us:

*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*

When you draw near, you are confessing that you are weak. You are leaning on His strength. It really is a picture of repentance of the sin of pride. You’re confessing that you have a double mind to think you’re strong, but you’re really weak. When v. 9 says:

*Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*

This is simply a picture of the integrity of the heart. It is confessing that you are weak. It is weeping over the sin of self-deceit and humbling yourself before the Lord.

III. We should only Boast in the Cross of Christ:

Next, we move from boasting in ourselves to boasting only in the cross. There are only two things that I know in which we may boast. First, our weaknesses. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10,

*But he [God] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Secondly, we may boast in the cross of Christ. The Apostle Paul also wrote in Galatians 6:14,  
*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Boasting in our weaknesses and the cross go hand-in-hand. When you bring these two boasts together, you’re humbling yourself before the Lord. You’re trusting in the work of our humble Savior who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and despised its shame so that we may be made strong in Him.

You see if we have any strength or anything to boast about, it is the person and work of Christ on our behalf. Our Savior humbled Himself before the mighty hand of God and died on the cross to save us from our sins and eternity in Hell under the wrath of God. Jesus was buried and raised in power from the dead so that He may be our strength when we are weak and friends; we are always weak.

#### IV. Learn to Preach the Promises of Christ to Yourself:

Learn to preach the power of the person and work of Christ to yourself (and others). Don't overlook what Jesus told His disciples just before they went through the fiery trial. Look in vv. 31-32:

*"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.'<sup>32</sup> But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."*

He is telling them that after they have failed in their faithfulness. He will be faithful to them because He will be raised from the dead, and He will come to them and restore them back to right relationship with Him and the Father.

Here's what I mean. I can tell you all the things you can do to endure, and some of the strategies might help, but these things are only external strategies. They are limited in their ability to help you.

However, do you know what is unlimited in its effectiveness? It is knowing and reminding yourself that Jesus knew His disciples would fail, and yet He still went to the cross and died for them. Then He pursued them and restored them by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. This is the work of the gospel in your life. This is where the rubber meets the road in your heart.

Friends, there are going to be times when your faith fails. You will stumble, and you will struggle. You may even believe you have gone beyond restoration, but you have not. John's Gospel tells us how Jesus pursued Peter and restored him by asking him three times if he loved Him. Peter didn't declare any overconfidence this time. He was humble, and Jesus was merciful and restored Him.

Friends, Jesus is still restoring His faithless disciples today. He is faithful to us when we are not. He is tender with us when we are nothing but a smoldering wick. He doesn't snuff us out but renews and refreshes us by fanning into a flame the gift of God in us.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:28-30 why Jesus does this and how Jesus does this. Paul writes:

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?<sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge<sup>2</sup> against God's elect? It is God who justifies.<sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn?<sup>3</sup> Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate<sup>4</sup> us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?<sup>5 36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Verse 34 tells us that Jesus is our Mediator. He is interceding for us in our trials, our struggles, and our failures. How does that happen? It is because "God did not spare Jesus but gave Him up for us." Now, through the

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<sup>2</sup> This would be a charge of sin, failure, rebellion or any kind of disobedience on God's child.

<sup>3</sup> The condemnation would be that we are beyond saving or not worthy to be saved because of our sin.

<sup>4</sup> Means that Jesus can't come to us to restore us because we are failures and sinners.

<sup>5</sup> Not only can these things not separate us from Christ but these things are such horrible events that they might cause us to sin and be separated from God but because of the person and work of Christ, the gospel, we are not.

death and resurrection of Jesus, *God graciously gives us all* that we need, and Jesus intercedes for us in our trial and in our faithlessness to strengthen us and restore our faith.

Conclusion: I want to close by circling back to v. 30. Remember what Jesus and His disciples did before He headed into His suffering and death, and they unknowingly headed into a crisis of faith—they sang a hymn of faith.

One of the means of grace that God uses to carry us through trials, sufferings and a crisis of faith are hymns. It is one of the ways we preach the gospel to ourselves in those times. It is one of the ways we remind ourselves and others of the faithfulness of God to us.

I want us to close our time by singing *He Will Hold Me Fast*. It is a wonderful hymn that reminds us of our faithful Savior and that He will not let us go because He bought us with His blood. Look at the words to the hymn in your Service Guide:

*When I fear my faith will fail  
Christ will hold me fast  
When the tempter would prevail  
He will hold me fast*

*I could never keep my hold  
Through life's fearful path  
For my love is often cold  
He must hold me fast*

*Those He saves are His delight  
Christ will hold me fast  
Precious in His holy sight  
He will hold me fast*

*He'll not let my soul be lost  
His promises shall last  
Bought by Him at such a cost  
He will hold me fast*

*For my life He bled and died  
Christ will hold me fast  
Justice has been satisfied  
He will hold me fast*

*Raised with Him to endless life  
He will hold me fast  
'Til our faith is turned to sight  
When He comes at last!<sup>6</sup>*

Hymns that are filled with the gospel are so powerful to remind us why and how Jesus does His work in our hearts and lives.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://gccsatx.com/hymns/he-will-hold-me-fast/>.