

**The Memoirs of Peter**  
**Unfaithful Disciples and A Faithful Lord**  
**Mark 14:27-31**  
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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

You have probably heard of a British monk by the name of Pelagius. Pelagius professed Christ in the year 400 A.D. It turns out he was a heretic. He denied original sin. He argued that human nature is good at its core and able to do everything that God commands us to do including repent and believe the gospel. Pelagius' favorite line was this: If I ought, I can. If I ought, I can. In the year 410 A.D. Pelagius traveled to north Africa where he met Augustine. And as you can imagine (if you're familiar with church history at all) there was a sharp disagreement between them. Pelagius was especially incensed by shocked and angered by a line in Augustine's confessions. This was the line that was the point of conflict. Augustine writes in his confessions,

“Give me the grace, oh Lord, to do as You command and command me to do what You will. Oh, Holy God, when Your commands are obeyed, it is from You that we receive the power to obey them.”

Pelagius saw that as an assault on human goodness, on human freedom and on human responsibility. Augustine argued that no man has the capacity to obey God on his own apart from the grace of God. In the passage that we come to tonight we see yet another illustration of just how right Augustine really was. When we obey and follow and serve God, it is not from our own strength or our own resolve or our own will; it is in the end an expression of the grace of God. As we come back to Mark 14 tonight Jesus and the disciples have just completed the Passover meal. It's on Thursday evening of the Passion Week. Sometime probably nearing midnight; ten to eleven probably in that time frame. The Passover could only be eaten at night on the 15th of Nissan according to Exodus. By Jewish reckoning that began at sunset on Thursday. In addition, according to the scribes, the Passover meal had to be completed by midnight. So, to fit everything in that happened in the upper room that night Jesus must have come sometime between late afternoon and early evening to the upper room, probably between 5 and 7 pm.

So, some time then shortly after sunset Thursday evening Jesus and the twelve came to the upper room in the home of a wealthy follower of Jesus, perhaps Mark's father. It would have been in the wealthy west side of the city. And there when they arrived, they found this upper room that was completely prepared for them to celebrate the Passover that had been prepared earlier that day by Peter and John. Shortly after sunset then (as Friday officially began in Galilee in reckoning and Passover began), they reclined at the table and celebrated the Passover. After all the preliminaries were over and the Passover meal had been fully explained as was traditional then as it is now, the main meal with the roasted lamb was served.

At some point while they were eating that portion of the meal, the main portion of the meal as the roasted lamb was served, two important events occurred. The first was that Jesus shocked them all by saying that one of them would betray Him. Immediately, of course, they began to discuss among themselves who it could possibly be? And then they began to question Jesus one by one, "Is it I?" "Is it I, Lord?" Peter, the indomitable one, has to know. And so, he's sitting somewhere where he can't have immediate access to the Lord, but he motions to John who was on Jesus' right, "Ask Jesus who it is." And so, John does. John quietly asked and Jesus quietly told John that it was the one to whom He would give the bread dipped in the sop. Jesus tore a piece of unleavened bread and dipped it in the charoset, that substance meant to picture the mortar the children of Israel made in Egypt. And He hands it to the person sitting on his left who is Judas.

In response to this gesture, really a gesture of friendship and love, Judas quietly and privately asked Jesus if he was the betrayer. He apparently had not participated in the sort of public questioning before, "Is it I, Lord? Is it I?" And now privately and personally in response to the bread he asked Jesus, "Am I the one?" In response to that Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Judas quietly, "You have said it yourself." He says, yes, Judas, I know you're the one. Then Judas left.

The second significant event that occurred during the meal itself was the institution of the Lord's table. Toward the end of the Passover meal Jesus took a piece of bread, unleavened bread, and then after the meal He took the third of the four cups in the Passover celebration, and He

invested them with a new meaning. After the institution of the Lord's Supper Jesus and the eleven disciples lingered in that upper room for a long time. We don't know everything Jesus said during that time, but we do know some of what He said. If you want to know exactly what He said after the meal was over, take time this week to read John 14 - John 17. That's called the upper room discourse. That brings us to the end of the meal and what happened after the meal.

Notice verse 26 of Mark 14, "After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives." John puts it like this in John 18:1, "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron where there was a garden in which He entered with His disciples." If you'll notice down in verse 32, they specifically were headed to a garden named Gethsemane. Now why are Jesus and the disciples headed to Gethsemane? Well, remember that since they arrived for the feast of Passover the previous Friday afternoon, they had been staying in Bethany two miles over the Mount of Olives with their friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

But here's the problem with that. Both the Scripture and the Jewish tradition required that the Passover itself be celebrated within the city limits of Jerusalem. So, to accommodate the size of the crowds that came at Passover the Sanhedrin sort of made an edict that officially enlarged the borders of the city for the feast, and so, that included and encompassed the Mount of Olives. And so that Thursday night, Jesus and His disciples after celebrating the feast within the city limits still can't leave the city limits overnight during Passover. And so, they go to what is considered officially within the city limits for the sake of Passover, the Mount of Olives.

Jesus essentially intended He knew His death was coming but otherwise He would have intended to have camped out essentially overnight with His disciples in the garden. In addition, Gethsemane was a familiar resort for Jesus and the twelve. Luke tells us in Luke 22:39, "He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives and His disciples also followed Him." This was a place He often resorted for prayer. So, from the wealthy homes on the upper west side across the Kidron Valley to the foot of the Mount of Olives and to the Garden of Gethsemane that's the route they take and that would have taken approximately 20 minutes to walk. Now just so you have a feel for that let me give you a little bit of a geography lesson here.

This is Jerusalem from the east looking over the Mount of Olives to the city itself. You can see where the temple mount was, it's where the Dome of the Rock is; that's still the temple mount but the temple was where the Dome of the Rock is now. And you'll see the Mount of Olives and then you see the yellow line that I've marked there; that's the Kidron Valley. That gives you the large picture. Let me show you one other map. This would have been Jerusalem in Jesus' time. This is looking from the south so kind of reorient yourself. You see the Mount of Olives on the right then the Kidron Valley there. You see the temple mount there in the center. And then you see down at the bottom of the screen and to the left is the upper city. That was the raised portion of the city, and then, as now, the best real estate was always the higher you could go. And so that's where the wealthier families lived. That's where a home with a two-story facility would have been. It's in that area where the upper room would have been.

Now again this gives you just a little picture of what that would have been. This is a model of Jerusalem built from the best archeology they could put together. And you'll see again the Mount of Olives is to the right. You see the temple mount there almost to the right. And then, so we're looking from the south to the north, and then you'll see the lower city in the foreground .that again would have been the less expensive housing within the city limits. And the upper city with the red roofs there, that would have been the wealthier portion. That would have been where the upper room would have been held. So, Jesus and the disciples would have had the last supper in that area where the red roofs are almost certainly. And then would have moved across through the temple mount perhaps down into the Kidron Valley and to the base of the Mount of Olives.

This is what it looks like. You see the temple mount there on the left. It's raised. The Kidron Valley is there in the middle, and then you see the Mount of Olives on the right side. At the base of the Mount of Olives down at the Kidron is where the Garden of Gethsemane is. Here you see the temple mount, and you see Kidron marked there in the center of the Kidron Valley, and over there to the far right is Gethsemane, at the base of the Mount of Olives. Here's another picture. There's a church built there now, of course there's a church built everywhere in Israel, but The Church of All Nations at Gethsemane. But that would have been the general area where Gethsemane would have been. Here is the garden area and they think this is very likely the spot

because there are some ancient olive trees there that date not to the time of Christ but close. And so likely there was a garden in that area.

Now, with that background you see where they've been, you see where they're going. Let's read the text we want to look at tonight. Mark 14 and notice verse 27. Let's start in verse 26 just to get a running start.

After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP ... [WILL] BE SCATTERED.' But after I've been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." ... [And] Peter said to Him, "*Even* though all may fall away yet I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." But *Peter* kept saying insistently, "*Even* if I have to die with You I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.

Now, it is very likely that this conversation occurred on the way to Gethsemane. From the upper room to Gethsemane and the reason for that is several. You notice the text here it seems to lay it out that way. In Matthew, after this account occurs it says, "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane." That would seem to imply that this conversation happened on the way to Gethsemane. And then the story picks up from there. Also, here Mark 32 says, "They came to a place named Gethsemane." And He said the same thing to His disciples. So, almost certainly this conversation we've just read happens on the way.

In this section of course and during that 20-minute walk, in this section Jesus tells the disciples that they will all temporarily desert Him, and He tells Peter that he will disown Him entirely. It's a story of unfaithful disciples and a faithful Lord. At first blush in reading this story I think you can be tempted to think, boy that's discouraging. What a downer is that! But I think by the time we're done you'll see that exactly the opposite is true. Let's look at it together.

The record begins with a prediction of really unparalleled defection. Verse 27, And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’”

Now, this is not Jesus’ first prediction that the disciples will desert Him. It’s actually His third prediction that this is going to happen. The first of these happened during the last supper. Matthew and Mark record this particular prediction we’re studying on the way to the garden but both Luke and John have a similar prediction but theirs occurs during the last supper. Let’s look at John. Turn over to John 13. John 13 and verse 31,

Therefore when ... [Judas had] gone out ...” [so it’s still during the supper, this is earlier] ... Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him; [And] if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.” [And then He warns them that He’s going to be leaving them and] “Where I am going” [He says in verse 33] “you cannot come.” [So, Peter picks up on that in verse 36.]

Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, so where [exactly] are You going?”  
And Jesus answered, “Where I go you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow [Me] later.” Peter said to Him, “Lord why can I not follow You right now?”

And he gets the idea that Jesus is talking about death. Remember Jesus hadn’t hidden the fact that He’s going to be dying. He’s told them that again and again so he picks up on that here, and Peter responds with I can follow You. In fact,

... “I will lay down my life” notice what he says here, “for You.” [I will lay down my life to preserve Yours.] Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly I say to you a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.”

A second prediction had occurred during the last supper still but this one after the meal. Look over at John 16 just a couple of pages over. This is during the upper room discourse after the meal was over. John 16:31,

Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ...” that is in verse 30 ““Do you believe that I came from God?”” [And He says, verse 32,] “Behold an hour is coming..” and has *already* come for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone.”

The third prediction then, the one we’re studying tonight, occurred on the way to Gethsemane from the upper room to the garden. This third prediction is a prediction of total desertion. He says, “You will all fall away.” Jesus includes all of the remaining 11 disciples, Judas is gone, without exception. And what He says is pretty staggering. He says you will all fall away. The Greek word translated “fall away” literally means to stumble over something and fall. When it’s used in reference to a person, it means to be so offended by someone and either what they do or what they say or what happens to them that you don’t want to be with them anymore, and you want to withdraw from them or fall away.

Often in the New Testament this word is used of deserting the faith altogether. In fact, this very word is used back in the parable of the soils about those who have temporary faith, and when the hard and difficult times come, they fall away. But as Jesus has already made clear in the first two predictions, He’s about to make clear in the next verse in Mark’s gospel the defection of the 11 is not going to be like that. It’s not going to be final. Although the disciples would desert Him, there would be restoration and although the disciples would desert Him, I love this, Jesus would not be completely alone until the final three hours on the cross. I didn’t finish reading for you in John’s gospel, but back in John 13, or I’m sorry John 16:32 it says “they all left Him” or they’re all going to leave Me, Jesus says, but yet I’m not alone. The Father is with Me. The Father is with Me.

But their defection is not a surprise to Jesus. It was predicted back. It was predicted by the prophet Zechariah 400 years before it happened. Notice verse 27, “You will all fall away because it is written.” He quotes Zechariah 13:7 and He slightly changes the wording of it. In Zechariah’s

version Yahweh is actually speaking to His sword. And Yahweh says to His sword, “Strike down the Shepherd.” But here Jesus quotes Zechariah in such a way as to have God Himself saying “I will strike down the Shepherd” which of course is the basic meaning of Zechariah 13:7.

Think about what Jesus is saying. He is clearly thinking of His death in terms of Isaiah 53. In Isaiah 53 it is the Father Who is pleased to crush Messiah Who bruises Him Who makes Him an offering for sin. And here it is the Father, it is God Himself, Who strikes down the Shepherd. That expression “strike down”, it can be used as a light blow like the light blow the angel gave to wake up Peter in the book of Acts. But most often it refers to a deadly blow. A blow that kills. For example, in Acts 7 when Stephen is recounting the story of Moses and Moses saw one of his kinsmen being beaten. You remember he went over, and it says he “struck down” the Egyptian. He killed him. You understand what Jesus is saying here about Himself? He is saying that God Himself will deliver a lethal blow to Him. God will strike Him down.

What happens if you kill a shepherd of real sheep? The sheep have no one to direct them and what do they do? They scatter. And that’s exactly what this says. “Strike down the Shepherd [Messiah] and His sheep will scatter.” It is the Father Who is striking down the Shepherd, His Son, and as a result all of the sheep will scatter. That, by the way, is exactly what happened. Look over in verse 50. “They all left Him and fled.” So, they all deserted Him, and Jesus said that’s exactly what’s going to happen. But their desertion might be total, but it would only be temporary; temporary desertion. Verse 28, He says you’re all going to desert Me just as it’s written in the prophet Zechariah when God strikes Me down in death. You’re going to scatter. But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. Every time Jesus predicted His death, He always mentioned that the resurrection would follow in three-day’s time. And now He tells His disciples after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Jesus warns His disciples that although the Father will strike Him down with a lethal blow and they will all scatter the Father is also going to raise Him from the dead. He will continue, I love this, He will continue to be their Shepherd. They will all be reunited with Him and restored to Him. Jesus is here preparing those He loves for what is coming. What is coming very shortly. At this point it’s 11 to 12 at night. Within a couple of hours all of this will have unfolded.



Now in response to Jesus' prediction of unparalleled defection there immediately follows from Peter a profession of undying devotion. A profession of undying devotion. Look at verse 29, "But Peter said to Him ..." you got to love Peter "... 'Even though all may fall away yet I will not.'" Now give Peter the benefit of the doubt here. I think his response probably flows out of a heart of genuine love for Jesus Christ. And he just can't imagine anything that Jesus says or does or anything that happens to Jesus causing him to stumble and want to withdraw from Jesus.

And so, He makes this bold, brash profession of his undying devotion to his Lord. But it is a profession that literally wreaks of sin. It wreaks of the sin of pride. Peter's proud self-confident spirit courses through every word of this profession. He is utterly condescending of the other disciples. I mean do you read what he essential says here? He says, you know Lord, I see what You mean about those other guys. You know they really are weak, and they really do vacillate, and they're never as bold as I am. They never stand up for You the way I do. It wouldn't surprise me at all if some of them or all of them turn away from You. What's leading Peter's thinking here?

Well, I think we can know a little about it if you fast forward, and I won't have you turn there. But if you fast forward to John 21. In John 21 after the resurrection Jesus has that interchange with Peter, you remember it? Up in Galilee. And He says to Peter this, in John 21:15, "So when they had finished breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?'" Do you love Me more than these? What was He talking about? There's some difference of opinion about what He was talking about but most likely He was saying, Peter do you really love Me more than these other 10 disciples? It seems to be the implication that what Peter is saying before he denies his Lord, what he says in this response to Jesus is that I really do love You more than they do, and I'll remain true to You no matter what comes. He underestimates the other disciples, and he overestimates himself because he says, "I will not." In Matthew, Matthew 26:33 he says, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away."

Not only does Peter response wreak of the sin of pride but it also wreaks, think about this, of the sin of unbelief. In his eagerness to proclaim his devotion to Jesus Peter has just said, Lord You're wrong. You just made a false prophecy. You're a false prophet. [Peter, remember, is behind Mark's gospel; he's the one who's shepherding Mark through this process. And so, Mark gives us the fullest account of Jesus' response to Peter. Look at verse 30, "And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night before a rooster crows twice you yourself will deny Me three times.'"]"

Now if you never read that, and you were reading it for the first time, you'd be absolutely amazed at that prophecy. Notice, first of all, the precision of the prophecy in reference to time. Jesus says here's what the Greek text says literally. He says, "Today, this night, before the cock crows twice. Today, this night, before the cock crows twice." Today. That is on Friday by Jewish reckoning remember the 24-hour period for Jewish (particularly for Galileans) began at sunset on Thursday and ended at sunset on Friday. Jesus says it's today. And He gets more specific, this night. Not only is it going to happen during the next 24 hours, but it will happen during the next six hours between midnight and 6 am. But then Jesus gets even more specific. He says before the cock crows twice. There's a lot of debate about exactly what Jesus means here. But I think if you go back to a text we've looked at before, you find out that the four watches of the night were essentially broken up into these. Listen to chapter 13, you go back to chapter 13:35. In the parable Jesus tells there He concludes it by saying to His disciples,

Be on the alert for you know not when the master of the house is coming.

Whether in the evening at midnight or when the roost crows or in the morning.

Be on the alert in case He should come suddenly and find you asleep.

Those are essentially the cock crowing in the first century was so predictable that one of the watches of the night was called cock crowing. The first watch of the night was the evening from 6 to 9. The second watch of the night was from 9 to 12, and it was called at midnight called that because of where it ended. The third watch of the night was called the rooster crowing, or the cock crowing. That was from 12 to 3. And the fourth watch of the night was called the morning, literally the Greek text says, "before dawn". That's 3 to 6 am. Jesus says before the cock crows twice. What does that mean when He said the rooster's going to crow twice?

Apparently, and we can't be absolutely sure of this, but apparently, it was not unusual for the common breed of rooster in the first century to crow not only in the morning at dawn but also around midnight and again around 3 am. I read a little bit on this this week, and it appears that different breeds of roosters in different periods of time actually crow at different times. And there's some conjecture that that's what He's talking about here. I think it's likely that Jesus means Peter's denial will come after midnight but before 3 am. It's possible that He simply means before dawn. We can't be absolutely certain. But notice what Jesus says will happen before the cock crows twice, verse 30, "Before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." The Greek word translated "deny" means to refuse to recognize. To refuse to acknowledge someone. It means to disown them entirely. And of course, that's exactly what happened. Go down to Mark 14:71. Now let's look at verse 69.

The servant girl saw him, and began once more to say to the by-standers, "This is one of them!" But again [Peter] denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you're a Galilean too." But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

In response to Jesus's predictions of Peter's denial three times Peter affirms his loyalty. Once during the last supper and now twice here on the way to Gethsemane. But Jesus says for every time you have sworn your loyalty to Me in your own strength; for each one of those times, you will deny Me. Now why did Jesus tell Peter what's going to happen so precisely? You ever wondered that? I think there really are two purposes. One is it served as a rebuke to Peter's conscience as you see right here in verse 72. As soon as it happened, he remembered, and it rebuked his conscience. And he began to weep. But I think also it served to bring Peter to repentance. So, telling Peter what was going to happen was actually an expression of Jesus' grace, because it would bring Peter ultimately to repentance. Now, what would you do, how would you respond if Jesus had said that to you? Look at how Peter responds verse 31, "But

Peter kept saying insistently ‘Even if I have to die’ ...” now notice he changes his wording instead of for You even if I have to die “... with You I will not deny You.”

During the last supper Peter had responded similarly back in Luke 22:33. He said to Him, “Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death.” In John’s gospel [13:37] as he records what happened at the last supper, he says “Lord, why can’t I follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” And right now, on the way to the garden, Peter just doesn’t say this once. Notice what Mark says, “He kept on saying” and moreover he said it insistently, literally emphatically. Peter went over the top on this 20-minute walk to the garden saying, “it’s not going to happen.” Not going to happen. Verse 31 ends by saying, “And they all were saying the same thing also.” The rest of the disciples all chimed in as well professing their undying devotion and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

But that’s not how it happened. Our Lord was right. It’s a remarkable story; a remarkable prophecy. So, how do we respond to this? What do we learn from this? Well, there are a number of lessons we could draw. We could certainly see Jesus’ omniscience. I mean after all think about how remarkable His prediction really is. I mean human wisdom might predict that some of the 12 may turn away, but He predicts that all of the 12 will turn away or all of the 11. Human wisdom might predict that Peter would deny Him, but only omniscience would put it in the right three-hour timeframe, and only omniscience could know that it would happen not once but three times in that time frame. Our Lord was a man. But He was more than a man. And that was proven once again even in the prediction of the disciples’ desertion of Peter’s denial.

We could point to Jesus’ confidence in the Scripture and God’s sovereignty. I mean right here in the darkest moment of His life where does He go? He goes to for assurance even in the desertion of His disciples in the Scripture. And in God’s sovereign purpose in it all He quotes Zechariah 13:7, a prophecy made 400 years before. Yet confidence in God’s sovereign purpose being worked out. Listen, if God in flesh, if Jesus our Lord, in the middle of His darkest hour, an hour darker than you and I will ever face He can find His confidence in the Scripture and in God’s sovereignty, then certainly we should as well when our troubles come. But those are not the primary lesson I think behind this story. So, what is the main point?

It's a remarkable one. And it's this: it's the story and lesson in God's preservation of His own. Here's the main point behind this passage: we all share this in common with Peter and the 11 and with every true disciple of Jesus Christ. We are not kept, listen to me carefully, we are not kept by our commitments, by our promises of allegiance, we are not kept by our resolve and by the force of our own willpower. As I thought about that this week I was thinking, you know, in a sense Peter was ahead of his time. There's this: there's a real sense in which he was the first promise keeper. Three separate times he promised and pledged his unfailing allegiance to Jesus Christ, and the last time he did it again and again and again. And he did so emphatically. And I'm glad he did because Peter shows us that, like him, (and like the other disciples) we really cannot keep our promises. We are not promise keepers; we are promise breakers. In fact, Jesus is the only real promise keeper. In verse 28 He makes a promise, and He kept it.

So, if we're not promise keepers, if we can't keep ourselves in the love of God, then what hope do we have? Here's the point. Our hope is this: we are kept by the power of God through the intercession of Jesus Christ. Let me say that again we are kept by the power of God through the intercession of Jesus Christ. Jesus told the disciples that they would all turn away, fall away. But then He told them that they would all be with Him again in Galilee after the resurrection.

Now how did that happen? It obviously wasn't their willpower, wasn't their resolve, wasn't their strength. How did it happen? Well, I want to look back and show you something absolutely crucial that Jesus said to Peter when He first predicted his denial in the upper room. Turn back with me to Luke 22. This is the first prediction in the upper room, Luke 22:31.

“Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat.”

[He wants to destroy you. He wants to destroy your faith. He wants you to really fall away ultimately and finally.] “But I have prayed for you.” [Let that sink into your soul for a minute. Jesus says to a human being,] “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Why did Peter continue with Christ even though he denied Him? It wasn't because of Peter's willpower and resolve. It was because of the power of God working through the intercession of Jesus Christ. "I have prayed for you."

Now, let me ask you a question. What did Jesus pray for Peter? What exactly did He pray for Peter? Well, we get a glimpse of that in the prayer Jesus prayed just before He and the disciples left the upper room to walk to Gethsemane. Look at John 17. This is at the very end of their time in the upper room celebrating the Passover. John 17, this is truly our Lord's prayer. The longest prayer of His we have recorded in all the Scripture. I just want you to notice a couple of verses with me. I was thinking this through this week and enjoying meditating through this prayer. Look at John 17:11. Jesus is praying to the Father. He says,

"I am no longer in the world and yet they themselves are in the world." He's praying about the disciples here. The eleven. And I come to You, Holy Father or "I come to you. Holy Father keep them in Your name. The name which You have given Me that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, ..." [while Jesus was here on earth] "I was keeping them in Your Name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

In other words, I kept every single genuine disciple of Mine. I guarded them. I kept them. I protected them. And now I want You, Father, to take over that role since I'm not going to be with them. Look down in verse 15. "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." That's what Jesus prayed for Peter and the disciples. That's why they fell away, but it wasn't final, and it wasn't permanent because they were kept by God's own power through the intercessory prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here's the amazing thing: Jesus still does this today. He does this for you if you're truly in Christ.

Look with me at Romans 8. Romans 8:33,

Who ... [shall] bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He Who died, yes, rather who was

raised ....” [now watch this] “... who is at the right hand of God, who also ... [is interceding] for us.

If you're in Christ, Jesus is still praying and He's praying for you. You see this again in Hebrews. Go over to Hebrews 7. Hebrews 7:23. The writer of Hebrews says, look at verse 24,

“... Jesus, ... because He continues forever, [He] holds His priesthood forever ...” [unlike the others]. “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him...” [watch this. Here's why He can save us forever, why our salvation is secured, why we are protected and kept,] “... [because] He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Listen, Jesus lives in the Father's presence to pray for you, that your faith fail not. That you will be kept and presented before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. Look over in chapter 9, Hebrews 9:24. “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands ...” He didn't enter into like the high priest did on the day of atonement into the most holy into the holiest of holies in the temple. Some human building which was a “... mere copy of the true one. But [Christ has entered] into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God ...” note this “... for us.” It's incredible. Do you understand the larger point behind what Jesus tells His disciples?

What's He saying to us? Our promises, our resolve, our willpower are absolutely as weak as that of the disciples. But thank God we are not kept from permanently falling away because of our commitments of allegiance to Jesus Christ. We are kept by the power of God. And God exerts that power to keep us and He's not going to lose one of us and why is that? Because He's responding to the intercession of Jesus Christ for us. Our Lord says as the Good Shepherd He knows His sheep, and He remembers us by name before His Father.

Listen, ever wonder what would happen if something too difficult for you came along, if some trial you couldn't handle, some temptation that's too great? You don't have to worry about that. If you are in Christ, you are kept by the power of God through the intercession of Jesus Christ. You might, like the disciples, fall for a time, but you will always get back up, you will always

get back on the path of holiness and righteousness; you will always continue to follow Jesus Christ, not because of who you are, not because you have such strong devotion and allegiance to Jesus Christ. Ours, our devotion is smoke and shadows. Vapor. But because you are kept by God in response to the specific prayers of His Son for you. You see what I mean about this passage? It looks like it's going to be a downer, but it ends up being the most encouraging thing in the world because we're just like them. And we're kept in the same way they were.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we are amazed at what we learn from Your Word. We thank You, oh God, that, like with the 11, our Lord even now appears in Your presence interceding for us. Praying that through life's troubles and circumstances and difficulties and temptations that our faith won't fail. To protect us from the evil one and his intentions to destroy us.

Thank you, Father, that we are kept by Your power until the day when You present us faultless before Your presence with exceeding joy, and thank You that You do all of that in response to the ongoing intercession of Your Son Who appears in Your presence right now for us. We are staggered by such grace, but we worship You and praise You.

In the name of Your Son. Amen.