

## FROM FELLOWSHIP TO FAILURE

### **TEXT: MARK 14:22-52**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Our Lord's disciples had spent three years with Him. In His presence all was well. But eventually they were tested, and the testing revealed their weakness (cf. Mark 14:32-41, 50).
2. Testing reveals our weaknesses. We are what we are -- not when things are going well -- but when we are in an emergency.
3. A crisis reveals our true character. Abraham was tested, and he passed the test.
4. Genesis 22:1 says, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (test) Abraham."
5. Abraham passed the test, and afterward the LORD said to Abraham, "For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Genesis 22:12).
6. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Trials and tribulations are very good for us in that they help us to know ourselves better than we knew ourselves before."
7. Tests reveal the genuineness of our Christian profession. In fact, tests often reveal whether or not we are truly born again.
8. Our Lord said in Matthew 13:20 and 21, "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."
9. The disciples were tested, and they failed. Mark 14:50 says, "And they all forsook him, and fled."
10. I have entitled my message, "From Fellowship to Failure."

#### **I. FELLOWSHIP ENJOYED (14:22, 23)**

1. After observing His last passover (14:17-21), our Lord instituted what is referred to in I Corinthians 11:20 as "the Lord's supper" (Mark 14:22-25).
2. Mark 14:22 and 23 says, "And as they did eat," and, "and they all drank of it." This speaks of fellowship.
3. The Lord's Supper is a beautiful picture of fellowship. We sometimes refer to it as "communion," which means "fellowship."
4. The Greek word translated "communion" means "fellowship."

5. First Corinthians 10:16 says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
6. The same word is used in II Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"
7. It is also found in II Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."
8. It is not mentioned in Mark's account, but this particular Passover meal had been according to the "desire" of Jesus. Luke 22:15 says, "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."
9. Our Lord desires fellowship with us. First Corinthians 1:9 says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
10. Spurgeon preached often on this great theme: fellowship with Jesus. Spurgeon said, "I would not change my bless'd estate For all the world calls good or great."
11. The hymnwriter said, "Friendship with Jesus! Fellowship divine! O what blessèd, sweet communion! Jesus is a Friend of mine."  
(Joseph C. Ludgate)
12. Philippians 2:1 refers to the "fellowship of the Spirit."
13. First John 1:3 says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."
14. This fellowship supper enjoyed by the apostles was a very solemn occasion because it was right before His crucifixion. Our Lord said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."
15. This fellowship was in the shadow of the cross. Soon our Lord would be crucified for the sin of the whole world.

## **II. FAITHFULNESS ASSURED (14:31)**

1. Soon the fellowship would be broken. Our Lord told them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (14:27).
2. "It is written" in Zechariah 13:7.
3. Not surprisingly, Peter was the first one to speak up. In verse 29, Peter boldly declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

4. Peter was too self-confident. He was impulsive, self-sufficient, and over-confident, even a bit boastful. And even after our Lord told Peter that he would deny Him thrice, Peter "spake the more vehemently," and said, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise" (14:31). Peter actually contradicted our Lord.
5. "Likewise also said they all" (14:31b).
6. These strong assertions of faithfulness reveal a serious ignorance of their personal weakness. Soon they would all desert our Lord. Peter, the loudest and the most vehement, would not only desert our Lord, he would also deny Him; and not once, but three times.
7. Which brings us to my third, and very sad point -- "Failure Manifested."

### **III. FAILURE MANIFESTED (13:32-42)**

1. First -- there was fellowship enjoyed. Then there was faithfulness assured. Then there was failure manifested.
2. There was a failure to watch and pray (14:38; cf. 13:33). Every failure begins with a failure to pray. "Watch and pray" means continual vigilance and dependence upon God, because "the flesh is weak."
3. R.A. Torrey said, "The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came. Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory."
4. We are all constantly one decision and one step from failure.
5. We must recognize the ugliness of sin. It is easy to recognize the ugliness of sin in an Anthony Weiner or in an Elliot Spitzer, but it is not always so easy to recognize it in our own hearts.
6. The apostle Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27).
7. "Castaway" means, "not standing the test, not approved."
8. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God." R.A. Torrey said that Scripture kept him from sin. He did not want to grieve the Holy Spirit.
9. Our Lord asked Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37).

10. They were all sleeping, but it was Peter that our Lord addressed. Verse 37 says, "And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter..." This was the same boastful Peter, who had just insisted that he would be faithful unto death. And now he could not even stay awake for one hour (14:37; cf. 14:39-41).
11. This is a sad illustration of the weakness of the flesh (cf. 14:38). The apostle Paul said in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."
12. And then in Romans 8:8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Flesh-dependence always produces failure.
13. It gets worse. Mark 14:50 says, "And they all forsook him, and fled."
14. When we consider that our Lord had warned them, their failure seems even more tragic. It was needless, unwarranted, and unjustifiable.
15. It was needless and unwarranted because our Lord had been teaching them repeatedly. He had just told them, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
16. There was no reason to panic or to flee. Our Lord said, "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
17. Our Lord had told them in Luke 10:19, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."
18. When we see people (even Christians) stumble and fall, we are often amazed. But we shouldn't be because the Bible has many, many warnings.
19. There are two words we find often in Scripture -- "Take heed."
20. First Corinthians 10:11 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
21. Consider Samson. Once Delilah started asking Samson about his great strength, he should have been very suspicious (Judges 16:6). He had been deceived by a Philistine woman once before, but that was long ago and apparently he did not learn his lesson (cf. 14:15-17).
22. It is amazing how to see how Delilah, this seductive temptress, was so easily able to entice Samson. Three times she actually warned him that he would be "afflicted" and "bound" (16:6, 10, 13). She told him what her plans were.

23. Here is Samson, a giant in physical strength, but helpless in Delilah's hands, unable to resist her enticements (16:5, 6).
24. For a while, Samson resisted Delilah, lying to her on three different occasions (16:7-15). Samson should have known Delilah was up to no good; she kept shouting, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson" (16:9, 12, 14).
25. Even if Samson did not see the Philistines hiding and waiting to pounce upon him (cf. 16:9, 12), he should have been suspicious when Delilah shouted, "The Philistines be upon thee Samson" (16:9, 12, 14).
26. But Samson was so consumed by his sensual appetites that he was blinded to what was happening around him. Samson is a picture of a believer who walks in the flesh. Samson was infatuated with Delilah and he found her difficult to resist.
27. It is very sad when people (especially Christians) fail. It is even sadder when they are warned ahead of time. The Lord said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).
28. Satan wants us to fail, but God wants us to succeed in our Christian life.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. In his first epistle, the apostle John says in chapter 2, verse 1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This means failure is not inevitable or unavoidable.
2. John wanted to warn his readers against sin and the terrible consequences of sin.
3. This was his pastoral desire for God's people -- "That ye sin not." This is the will of God for you and me.
4. And then John adds, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). This means failure is possible. This recognizes the awful possibility of sin.
5. The Bible has much to say about man's failure, and human frailty, and the seductive power of sin and Satan.
6. Falling into sin does not destroy our membership in the family of God, but it disrupts fellowship between the Father and His child.

7. God's holiness demands that sin must be dealt with.
8. If you are not saved, then you are not a part of God's family. You need to be born again.