INTRODUCTION

Jesus’ earthly ministry was coming to an end; the hour was fast approaching when He would die for the sins of his people, God’s elect.

The ministry of Jesus was radical from the outset, His teaching was set apart from all others; He was described as one who taught with authority. Great and authoritative teaching was not all there was to Him.

There was a reason for the circumstance described in our lesson today that Jesus found Himself in. There was a purpose.

All men had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They were under the power of the Devil and thus of death. Many were subjected to slavery all their lives as stated in Hebrews 2:14-15. The world was an unrighteous place and in order to save the lost, God determined His Son, a member of the Triune God, Jesus Christ, would become incarnate, that is, be born as a man.

He would be made like a man in order to be humanity’s Prophet, Priest, and King, and effect the salvation of men through His life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

It was determined in eternity past that man's righteous Prophet, Priest, and King would have to: “suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.” (Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22.)

The Son Of Man had come to seek and to save that which was lost. The prophecies had indicated that He would come to His own and His own would not receive Him. He would be despised and rejected of men.

Note carefully that we are now beginning to see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7
"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man who stands next to me, says the Lord of hosts.
Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered."

Jesus himself had referred to this prophecy as the Lord’s Supper ended and He and His disciples made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Mark 14:26-31.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away; for it is written, ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.’
Peter said to him, ‘Even though they all fall away, I will not.’
And Jesus said to him,” Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the Cock crows twice, you will deny me three times."
But he spake themore vehemently, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you."
And they all said the same."
(Revised Standard Version)

One writer makes this very important comment about the hymn sung by Jesus and the disciples as the Lord’s Supper ended and they walked to Gethsemane.

Our Study Scripture features the attitude and action of the Lord Jesus as He approached death to redeem man. He faced death and He did not like it at all. But He was obedient to His mission laid down by His Father for He knew He was the only one capable of bearing the sins of man and facing and satisfying the wrath of the Father.

Our Study contrasts the attitude of Jesus with that of the disciples who though reading Scripture all their lives, and being warned by their Master of His coming death, displayed their human weakness and weak faith despite their bold and somewhat arrogant words of faith and strength.

If one is to regard how the disciples behaved as displaying struggling faith one is left to wonder how their behaviour indicated there was even a tiny bit of struggle in the faith.

Note that the prophet Zechariah had spoken of a day when the nation would look at Him whom they had pierced and there would be national repentance. Then there would come national cleansing for there would be an opening up of a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1).

But now, before then, the shepherd would be smitten by the Lord of Hosts, the Father, and the sheep scattered. The sheep would be scandalized or offended when they saw what happened to the shepherd, and they would disassociate themselves from Him, instead of believing in Him and delighting in Him. But now, as Jesus and the small band left the Upper Room they headed for the Mount of Olives, singing as they went. One writer explains:

"The very hymn that Jesus and the disciples sang as they left the upper room was a part of the Old Testament. Unquestionably, it was the Scripture we now know as Psalms 113-118. This was the traditional hymn called the great Hallel that was sung at the close of the Passover Feast. Hallel is the Hebrew for “Praise to God” and these Psalms focus on one theme: Hallelujah. It is significant that the closing verse of the great Hallel includes these words, “Bind the festal sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.”
(Psalms 118:27 NASB)
As Jesus sang Psalm 116, especially verse 3 He sang of His finding trouble, and sorrow and the sorrows of death which compassed Him, with the pains of Sheol taking hold of Him. Then in verse 10 He spoke of the fact that He was greatly afflicted.

But then He comforted Himself as He determined to pay His vows to the Father (verses 13, 14), for He knew according to Verse 15, that

“For Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints”.

In addition, He could speak of His resurrection in verse 9 for He was confident He would walk before God in the land of the living.

But as we study about struggling faith, we should note that 118:27 near the close of the last hymn of the Great Hallel, Jesus sung of the binding of the sacrifice to the altar, fully well knowing that unlike the animals who sensed they would die in the sacrifice, and who needed to be bond to the altar, He would voluntarily offer Himself. But as He contemplated what would happen to Him, He would still praise and exalt the Lord His Father for God is good and His mercy endured forever.

In the Garden of Gethsemane though we know He was immensely troubled for He knew His Father would smite the shepherd. His sweats became drops of blood and He prayed that the cup would pass as He submitted Himself to the will of the Father.

As He struggled He was the epitome of faith and obedience. He never gave up on His mission of salvation for He led His life totally in the will of His Father.

Clearly, Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him, for the prophets had revealed the divinely appointed program and He was its author.

He often told disciples about the coming ‘Cross’, and the coming light of the Resurrection.

We contrast this faith, obedience and dependence of the Father with the confidence of Peter and the other disciples, which rested on human determination, which was surely going to fail so that all their arrogance and resolve would melt away.

The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane marked the beginning of the ‘smiting of the Shepherd’.

It is interesting to note that false Christs and Messiahs were not uncommon and that most were likely dismissed as crackpots. None received the notoriety of Jesus, though some of their claims would have amounted to the same charge for which Christ was accused and crucified.

Jesus stood apart by the truths He taught, the power and authority He displayed throughout His ministry and His attacks on the distortions of the Commandments of God, threatened to undermine the status quo of these religious leaders. He taught this clearly:

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven, (Matt.5:20).
Jesus faced much opposition from the outset. The High Priest had his field operatives constantly trying to catch Jesus in a missed word or deed that they could use against him. They were determined to get him.

Today’s lesson takes us to the last hours of His life and the pinnacle of the opposition that He faced. As indicated previously, it was the time of Passover and Jerusalem was teeming with visitors from near and far coming to celebrate the Passover. Spiritual fervour and excitement was at an all time high.

There were less than two days remaining before the Feast and the High Priest and the scribes were looking for a way to kill Jesus, (Mk 14:1). They wanted to kill Jesus before the Feast began; they were afraid that if the people got wind of their plan there might be serious repercussions.

The stage was set. Judas had agreed with the religious authorities to betray Jesus and he would leave the company of the disciples and go do his dirty work. Judas returned at night when the crowds were not around to identify Jesus to a large contingent of Temple guards, who had come with him to arrest Jesus and take him to the High Priest. Judas with great treachery, betrayed Jesus with a kiss of friendship, and though Jesus is in command and is quite able to destroy all those who had come to arrest Him with a single word, He played along with them so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

**THE ACCUSERS**

The enemy was really Satan. But he had his henchmen. Caiaphas was the High Priest that year. It was he who unwittingly prophesied to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, that Jesus should die for the people,(Jn 11:50). Caiaphas was a Sadducee and a member of the council; his father-in-law was Annas, who he had succeeded.

Annas, was clearly the power behind the throne and according to one writer, he was politically savvy and was able to hold this office under Roman rule for nineteen years, when the average term was only four years. We are told that several of his sons, some say five sons, were appointed High Priests after him, and finally Caiaphas his son-in-law was appointed. Jesus was first brought before Annas and questioned by him but Mark does not record details about this trial or questioning.

Another commentator writes:

**Annas - Was high priest A.D. 7-14. In A.D. 25 Caiaphas, who had married the daughter of Annas (Joh_18:13), was raised to that office, and probably Annas was now made president of the Sanhedrim, or deputy or coadjutor of the high priest, and thus was also called high priest along with Caiaphas (Luk_3:2). By the Mosaic law the high-priesthood was held for life (Num_3:10); and although Annas had been deposed by the Roman procurator, the Jews may still have regarded him as legally the high priest. Our Lord was first brought before Annas, and after a brief questioning of him (Joh_18:19-23) was sent to Caiaphas, when some members of the Sanhedrim had met, and the first trial of Jesus took place (Mat_26:57-68). This examination of our Lord before Annas is recorded only by John. Annas was president of the Sanhedrim before which Peter and John were brought (Act_4:6).**
Because Israel was ruled by Rome at the time, Jesus had two trials; a religious one overseen by Annas and then Calaphas and a civil trial overseen by Pilate. The Jewish authorities wanted desperately to execute Jesus but they had no power to carry out the death penalty, since the Romans had reserved this power to themselves.

The Jewish religious authorities in their religious trial had to find some reason under Jewish law to justify a death penalty, such as Jesus claiming to be God, which would be blasphemy and thus worthy of death and then they had to find some justification that the Romans would consider to be sedition under Roman Imperial law, thus warranting a death penalty, such as Jesus preaching insurrection against Caesar.

Of course, all the charges that were brought against Jesus would of necessity be trumped up charges, none of which would bring a conviction in a proper court of law. The High Priest, the scribes and the elders however, who were supposed to uphold the law, would outrageously violate and break virtually every point of the law, all in an attempt to kill Jesus.

In their minds they had predetermined that Jesus be put to death. The trial would clearly be a farce. We should note that the trial would be illegal from the very beginning and violate Jewish law as well as any concept of justice.

Note that evil people, including religious people, when they have predetermined an outcome because they hate someone, will never pay attention to the instructions or the wishes of God. It makes no sense thinking that they cared for ‘righteousness’, or that they will stop pursuing their course of iniquity.

True believers can rest assured and be comforted that as Psalm 76: 8-10 states:

"Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt though restrain."

The trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin can be viewed in four stages.
1) Accusation    vv 55-59
2) Interrogation  vv 60-61a
3) Condemnation   vv 63-64
4) Humiliation    vv 65

This same process would take place before Pilate. In both farcical trials there would be no justice.

But let us remember that the Son of Man in a position as representative of the Saints of the God Most High, must suffer defeat and oppression at the hands of his enemies (Isaiah 52 and 53) before coming into His glory (Daniel 7:15-25).

Though no one can or will ever face the physical, mental and emotional torment that Jesus endured; it is clear that in His sufferings, He set a pattern for believers.
It is certain that as we strive to serve God, we will also have to endure great trials and opposition. Jesus, for our sakes had to ‘drink the cup’, for it was the Father’s will. As we also submit ourselves to God we will find that there is no true fellowship without suffering. Indeed all who live godly will suffer.

THE TEXT

Verse 26

Verse 25 is the conclusion of the Lord's Supper ceremony in which Jesus states He will no longer participate in the Lord's Supper until His return and He is reunited with His people and all are present in the Kingdom of God. In verse 26 Jesus and those present with Him concludes the ceremony with a hymn, the Hallel, and they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Though Christ was in the midst of His enemies, yet He did not, for fear of them, omit this sweet duty of singing the beloved and customary psalms. The act of rejoicing through the singing of hymns and songs blesses both the participants and also the receivers of such joy as it highlights the joy that God gives to His followers even in dire times.

Paul and Silas sang, when the prisoners heard them. This was an evangelical song, and gospel times are often spoken of in the Old Testament, as times of rejoicing. Praise is expressed by singing. This was Christ's swan-like song, which He sung just before He entered upon His agony that which is usually sung (Psalm 113:1-118:29).

Verse 27

Christ continued to have “common” discourse with His disciples, as they were returning to Bethany by moonlight, when He had sung the hymn. It was now near bedtime, but our Lord Jesus had His heart so much upon His suffering, that He would not come into the tabernacle of His house, nor would He go into His bed, nor give sleep to His eyes, when that work still remained to be done. The Israelites were forbidden to go out into their houses the night that they ate the Passover, for fear of the sword of the destroying angel. But because Christ, the Great Shephard, was to be smitten, He went out purposely to expose Himself to the sword, as a champion. They evaded the destroyer, but Christ conquered him, and brought destruction to a perpetual end.

None of Christ’s actions were simple. We are again reminded of what God did to protect the children of Israel from the angel of death as it passed over the doors marked with blood and here, we see Jesus acting as an active and engaged protector of all His people.

Secondly, we see that He is willing with the foreknowledge of His death still stand to protect those who He loves. Finally, He shows His power, shows He will conquered death through His bravery and sacrifice, so that all may partake in the victory over death.

Christ foretells that in His sufferings He should be deserted by all His disciples. “You will all be offended because of me, this night. I know you will (Mark 14:27), and what I tell you now, is no other than what the Scripture has told you before I will smite the Shephard, and then the sheep will be scattered”.

Christ knew this before, and yet welcomed them at His table He sees the falls and miscarriages of His disciples, and yet does not refuse them. Nor should we be discouraged from coming to the Lord’s Supper by the fear of relapsing into sin afterward but, the greater of our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by the diligent conscientious use of holy ordinances.

As God, Christ knows that we will fail. Soon we will be able to contrast good and bad failures. To be bold, failures where we may fall short in serving God, doesn’t necessarily mean that we will yield to sin, but does imply a lack of faith or some disobedience. In contrast to the failures we encounter where we actively must go to God to ask for forgiveness and receive it without punishment, there may be some punishment needed sometimes as part of the redemption process.

Individually, there might be some discretions that God might allow us, but even then it is best to be led by the wisdom of God in all our actions, so it is then upon us to ask for guidance in all our actions as we continue to move forward and serve God.

Christ tells the disciples that they would be offended in Him, meaning that they would begin to question whether He were the Messiah or not, when they see Him overpowered by His enemies. When our heroes we look up to seem to fall down to a human level of error or frailty, we often don’t look at them the same in terms of their brilliance. With Christ, they might recognize His power, but then in this instance think that He is just like them or be confused as to why He would not act to protect Himself. Either way the same result is reached. They see something different from the Messiah they imagined.

Hitherto, they had continued with Him in His temptations though they had sometimes offended Him, yet they had not been scandalized, nor turned their back upon Him, but now the storm would be so great, that they would all slip their anchors, and be in danger of shipwreck.

Some trials are more particular (as Revelation 2:10, the devil shall cast some of you into prison) but others are more general, an hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world. The smiting of the Shepherd often leads to the scattering of the sheep. Magistrates, ministers, masters of families, if they are such, should be shepherds to those under their charge, and be very cautious and careful, for when any thing comes amiss to them, the whole flock suffers for it, and is endangered by it.

**Verse 28**

Christ never spoke of the cross without putting it into the context of the light of the resurrection which would dawn. He offers up the worst first to make us realize the life that we have chosen will not be one of comfort only. It will not be an easy walk, but it is all very achievable if we look to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit for strength to stand in that day, Christ encourages them after His warning, with a promise that they shall rally again and shall return both to their duty and to their comfort. Ezekiel 34:11-12. Christ will stand in front of us to lead us. He will stand behind us to protect us and to ensure we do not fall, and stand beside us to encourage and lend support, as He is our strength.

**Verse 29**

He foretells what will happen to Him but promises a reunion. They will recover from scattering and distress. But Peter is upset that Jesus says all will be offended in Him. He is confident in himself and full of bravado that he contrasts himself with the other disciples, for in his mind even if the other will deny Him, for they are all untrustworthy, Jesus is wrong in believing that he will deny Him.
But Christ tells then, that though they should be kept by His grace from Judas’s apostasy, yet they would have no reason to boast of their constancy.

One small good that we might do is not anything great in the sight of God, Isaiah 64:6, and truth be told it is just what would be expected of a servant to the Master. Note, though God keeps us from being as bad as the worst, yet we may well be ashamed to think that we are not better than we are. God has always said we should be humble in all aspects of our walk.

Peter among all is confident that he should not do so ill as the rest of the disciples. Though Christ mentions all should be offended, specifically all the brethren at the time gathered with Him, Peter excludes himself from the pack for some reason. He supposes himself not only stronger than others, but so much stronger, as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and bear up against it, all alone to stand, though nobody stood by him.

It is bred in the bone with us, to think well of ourselves, and trust to our own hearts. Peter has already forgotten the teachings of Jesus, that humility and strength are gifts given by God the Father; anything outside that will only lead to failure, we cannot trust in our own strength.

**Verse 30**
Christ tells him that he will do worse than any of them. They will all desert Him, but he will deny Him not once, but thrice and that presently
“This day, even this night before the cock crow twice, thou wilt deny that ever thou hadst any knowledge of me, or acquaintance with me, as unashamed and afraid to own me”.
Some mistakes are worse than others. Here Peter supposing that he could stand all on his own is one of them. But that is just pride talking. Christ could have shielded him, but then sometimes it is important to let people learn valuable lessons about themselves as long as it doesn’t lead to their ruin. This was just one of those experiences.

**Verse 31**
Peter stands to his promise, even to the point where he says he would lay down his life for Jesus, and no doubt he believed that, when he said and thought it. In comparison, Judas didn’t have this same mindset. He sinned by contrivance, Peter by surprise. Judas devised the wickedness, Peter was overtaken in his fault. It was folly of Peter to suppose he would not yield to temptation like the others, and even more so contradict his Master. If he had said, with fear and trembling, “Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil,” it might have been prevented: but they were all thus confident they who said, Lord, is it I?

Now they said, *It shall never be me*. Being requited from their fear of betraying Christ, they were now secure. But he that thinks he stands, must learn to take heed lest he fall and he that girdeth on the harness, not boast as though he had put it off.

Remember always that Jesus sees through your firm resolves, your confident arrogance, and as one writer calls it “your clenched-fist determination”.

With all those confident disciples, as Jesus struggled in distress and deep sorrow asking the Father that if it were possible to let the Cup pass from Him, Peter and the disciples slept, ignoring Jesus’ plaintive cry for their company.
Verse 66
Here we have the sad and well known story of Peter’s denying of Christ. Mark makes the point that the cock would crow twice to alert Peter as to what was predicted by the Lord. Peter kept a certain distance from Him, not with the intension of denying Him yet, but to watch over for His safety as His disciples had done in the past when the crowds reached for Jesus. Peter followed far off, and now was beneath in the palace, at the lower end of the hall.

Those that are shy of Christ, are in a fair way to deny Him, that are shy of attending on holy ordinances, shy of the communion of the faithful, and loth to be seen on the side of despised godliness. Peter was not the bold self he would soon become yet, but we know he did, and so too must we follow his example of growth in becoming that mature Christian and child of God willing to testify about Him to all.

It was occasioned by his associating with the high priest's servants, and sitting among them.

Be warned they that think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to suffer for him, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with His enemies, because there they may be drawn in to sin against him.

"Now Peter sat without in the palace"--or quadrangular court, in the center of which the fire would be burning; and crowding around and buzzing about it would be the menials and others who had been admitted within the court. At the upper end of this court, probably, would be the memorable chamber in which the trial was held--open to the court, likely, and not far from the fire (as we gather from Lu 22:61), but on a higher level; for (as our verse says) the court, with Peter in it, was "beneath" it. The ascent to the Council chamber was perhaps by a short flight of steps. If the reader will bear this explanation in mind, he will find the intensely interesting details which follow more intelligible.

We might compliment Peter for following more closely than most of the other disciples. After all, they all turned and ran, but we can almost see Peter remembering what he had said and fighting with himself to ensure that Jesus’ prediction about his behaviour would not come true, and Peter’s faith in himself that he would be there to support of Jesus in His time of need would be as he had said.

Here in this is the only evidence of Peter’s struggling faith, which of course contrasts poorly with the determination and constancy of our Lord.

Verse 67
When the maid approached where Peter was sitting she recognized him. The light from the fire seemed to illuminate Peter above the rest of the people sitting by. Her gaze was solely fixed upon him.

"Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" that is, thou as well as "that other disciple," whom she knew to be one, but did not challenge, perceiving that he was a privileged person.
In Luke (Lu 22:56) it is given as a remark made by the maid to one of the by-standers--this man was also with Him." If so expressed in Peter's hearing--drawing upon him the eyes of every one that heard it (as we know it did, Mt 26:70), and compelling him to answer to it--that would explain the different forms of the report naturally enough. But in such a case this is of no real importance.
The women had asked Peter the question which he had dreaded when he had noticed her looking on him.

**Verse 68**
This was the first time that Peter denied Christ. Baseball was not invented at this time, but most people today would call this strike one. He answered the question and said that he did not know this Jesus of Nazareth, neither did he understand this particular line of questioning that she was doing linking Jesus and him together. The cock crowed the first time, but Peter did not seem to take notice of it, nor remembered what Christ had but a few hours before said to him.

**Verse 69**
The temptation was, his being charged as a disciple of Christ; *Thou also wert with Jesus of Nazareth. This is one of them* she said, *for thou art a Galilean,* one may know that by thy speaking broad. It doth not appear that he was challenged upon it, or in danger of being prosecuted as a criminal for it, but only bantered upon it, and in danger of being ridiculed as a fool for it. While the chief priests were abusing the Master, the servants were abusing the disciples.

Sometimes the cause of Christ seems to fall so much on the losing side, that everybody has a stone to throw at it, and even the abject gather themselves together against it. When Job was on the dunghill, he was had in derision of those that were the children of base men, Job 30:8. Yet, all things considered, the temptation could not be called formidable; it was only a maid that casually cast her eye upon him, and, for aught that appears, without design of giving him any trouble, said, *Thou art one of them,* to which he needed not to have made any reply, or might have said, "And if I be, I hope that is no treason."

**Verse 70 & 71**
The sin was very great; he denied Christ before men, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned Him, and to have appeared in court a witness for Him. But denial was intended to save his life, even if in fact he did not have to deny Jesus to save himself.

Jesus Christ had often given notice to His disciples of His own sufferings; yet, when they came, they were to Peter as great a surprise and terror as if he had never heard of them before. He had often told them that they must suffer for Him, must take up their cross, and follow Him; and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering, upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lie and swear, and do anything, to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own Him; but now that He is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of Him, and will own no relation to Him.

His repentance was very speedy. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was worst of all, for then he cursed and swore, to confirm his denial; and that the third blow, which, one would think, should have stunned him, and knocked him down, startled him, and roused him up.

**Verse 72**
Then the cock crew the second time, which put him in mind of his Master's words, the warning He had given him, with that particular circumstance of the cock crowing twice; by recollecting that, he was made sensible of his sin and the aggravations of it; and when he thought thereon, he wept.
Some observe that this evangelist, who wrote, as some have thought, by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of Peter's sin as any of them, but more briefly of his sorrow, which Peter, in modesty, would not have to be magnified, and because he thought he could never sorrow enough for great a sin. His repentance here is thus expressed, epibalouµv eklaie, where something must be supplied. He added to weep, so some; making it a Hebraism; he wept, and the more he thought of it, the more he wept; he continued weeping; he flung out, and wept; burst out into tears; threw himself down, and wept; he covered his face, and wept, so some; cast his garment about his head, that he might not be seen to weep; he cast his eyes upon his Master, who turned, and looked upon him; so Dr. Hammond supplies it, and it is a probable conjecture. Or, as we understand it, fixing his mind upon it, he wept. It is not a transient thought of that which is humbling, that will suffice, but we must dwell upon it. Or, what if this word should mean his laying a load upon himself, throwing confusion into his own face? He did as the publican that smote his breast, in sorrow for sin; and this amounts to his weeping bitterly.

So Peter had been sifted like wheat. One writer comments:

“Everything was taken from Peter but his faith. And the faith itself, weak though it was expresses itself in the weeping bitterly.
Ah, he was a weak man really. He wasn’t a brave man. All of this, Though all be offended in thee, I will not be offended in thee. I will go to death with thee”.

All chaff. And every kind of trust in human things will prove to be chaff in the final analysis. Every kind of trust in your own strength will prove to be chaff finally.

Satan loves to take us at our strong points. Courage was Peter’s strong point. It isn’t long after this he is wielding the sword. He is a man who’s up and down, but he has courage. It’s physical courage and so Satan takes him at that”

CONCLUSION

So we are warned by one writer. We have to ask God to teach us about ourselves as the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ. Never forget we are still flesh and blood. It is noted:

“Moses was the meekest of men, and God allowed Satan to take him when he lost his temper. Abraham was a man of faith and he falls at the point of faith. Elijah is the strong man who was able to confront all the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove and win a great victory and then Jezebel the woman says a word to him and immediately he’s running south as far as he can.

So we see illustrated the power and the powerlessness of Satan. He takes us captive at our strong points, and the very time that we come to think we are strong in this or we are strong in that, probable is at that point that you’ll be proved to be simply chaff by the Lord.

And yet we also see the willingness and the weakness of a man.

You can trace the steps in Peter’s downfall. They are very simple. He disregarded the first warning.

He slept when he should have been watching in the garden.

He was fighting when he should have been quiet.

He was following afar off, putting distance between him himself and the Lord.

He disregarded the second warning.

And finally he was sitting with the enemies of Christ around the fire”.
No matter how we look at it, whether from a Gentile perspective or from a Jewish perspective we must marvel at the determination of Jesus and his total and consistent obedience to the plan of salvation.

But note the power of Jesus. He knew Satan wanted to destroy Peter and eradicate his struggling faith. So Jesus said He had prayed for Peter that his faith did not fail. And we can see that his faith did not fail. His faith stayed. And when he was converted as Jesus wished, he strengthened his brethren.

Note however, that all these events took place inside the will of God, all things are ultimately in God's control, it is He who works all after the council of his own will.

So as Peter warns, Be sober and vigilant. You can be restored even if you have denied Christ, even if you have in the past put much distance between yourself and Christ. We pray that God will give us the courage to look at ourselves and realize what we are weak in, and realize our need to depend on the Holy Spirit that lives within us.

That is what Jesus and the cross does to all of us, it strips away all of our pretence and forces us to see whether there is enmity in our own hearts against Him and against His people.

We too must look at ourselves and decide whether like Pilate we are afraid of Jesus but also afraid of the crowd, trying to please two opposing forces, deciding things in our lives on the basis of expediency.

Are we cowards, afraid to make a decision for God on the basis of wisdom, justice and gratitude for what God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit has done for us?

Remember that Pilate and the Jewish religious leaders were exposed for what they did and if we do not do the right thing we too will be exposed for what we really are. One writer says it this way:

“As the cross of Jesus comes into the life of any man, woman, boy, or girl, it has a powerful way off ripping off all our disguise, and we have to answer finally, clearly, and honestly, what our reaction is to Jesus.
That is why the great question of all time is, “What we you do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?” what is your attitude toward Jesus?
Do you love him?
Paul writes,
“Anyone who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, led him be accursed”.

The word is, “let him be damned”.
Now why does he say a harsh thing like that? Because, you see, that is the test. If you do not love Jesus, what do you love? You love the opposite. Instead of loving love, you love hate.
Instead of loving truth, you love lies. Instead of loving honesty, you love deceit. It is the final testing of all-time, of every person. What do you feel about Jesus?”

Brethren, let us understand that serving God requires sacrifice and that “all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer”. When one takes a stand for the truth, it is likely that you will face opposition; you can hardly find an example where this is not true.
Opposition from the world is likely and reasonably to be expected, but opposition, resistance and even persecution and ostracizing may come from those who profess to love and serve God. It is even possible that there is one very close to you who may even betray you.

But the Holy Spirit will guide, guard, illumine, and strengthen. Our shepherd is alive and well. And He rules.

We know that Christ’s death was an integral part of the plan of salvation and therefore the will of God. Likewise when we are truly in line with the will of God it may involve suffering on our part, albeit momentary.

The Scripture is replete with examples of God’s suffering servants, of which Christ is chief. The scripture are also filled with God’s demonstrated power to deliver his people, however let us not be deceived; it is not possible to totally escape these trials.

It is through these trials that the saints mature and are perfected, thus it is the will of God. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* (James1:2-4).

Let us fight the good fight and rest assured that this present suffering cannot be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us.