



dishonored you in the past week.

Please help us to rest fully on Jesus and his finished work. Thank you that Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to you. And we pray, Heavenly Father, for the help of your Holy Spirit, to live trusting and dependent upon Jesus, and that we would walk in step with your Spirit in the days ahead.

Lord, we particularly pray for our nation. We ask for our government, that you sustain them and strengthen them and give them wisdom at this time, as things change all the time with the virus.

[ 6 : 11 ] We pray that they'll be driven by what is just and fair for the nation, that we will continue to have peace, and Lord, in your timing, they'll be able to meet and gather again. We pray, Father, for our cities.

We pray for the city of Brighton. Thank you so much for Calvary and other faithful churches who want to live for Jesus there. Please, we pray that you'll be building them up and strengthening them, bringing them back to the simplicity of the gospel and to the authority of your word.

We pray particularly for the church at Calvary, that you would please unite them and knit them together in love and in unity help them to make decisions together about the future. We pray, Lord, particularly for those who are having a rest and a break from their normal activities and holidays.

We pray that they'll be refreshed spiritually as well as physically, in order to serve you as part of the church in the coming months. We pray for the leaders of the church.

We pray for Phil and for Chris and for Ben. I pray that you would give them great wisdom as they work together for the gospel in these trying circumstances. Pray, Lord, that they would be renewed in their strength to serve as servant leaders in the church, being faithful with your word, being good pastors of the flock, we pray.

[ 7 : 26 ] Lord, we pray now as we come to the scriptures to have it read and to consider its meaning. We need your Holy Spirit to help us. Help me so far away to be able to do that with your Spirit's help and help us all as we listen to be refreshed, renewed, strengthened.

In Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. How deep the waters have for us How vast beyond all measure That he should live with only son To be the wretch his treasure How great the pain of searing cause The Father turns his veins away As wounds which follow Joseph while Bring many sons to glory Behold the man upon a cross My sin upon his shoulders Ashamed I hear my mocking voice For out among us lovers It was my sin that held him there Until it was accomplished His dying breath has brought me life

I know that it is in him I will not go see anything No gifts, no plan, no wisdom But I will boast in Jesus Christ His death and resurrection Why should I gain from his reward I cannot give an answer But this I know with all my heart

His wounds have made my world soon To be a sin that died verses 31 to 35.

[ 11 : 28 ] In your series, you'll know that Jesus has just instituted the Lord's Supper, reminding them of what he would do at the cross, forgiveness of sins, symbolized through bread, through wine.

And now as they've walked to the Mount of Olives, Jesus makes some sobering predictions about what is to happen next. Matthew chapter 26, verses 31 to 35.

Then Jesus told them, that's their disciples, this very night you will all fall away on account of me. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

But, after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. Peter replied, even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.

I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, this very night before the cock crows, you will disown me three times. But Peter declared, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

[ 12 : 49 ] And all the other disciples said the same. Well, we need the Holy Spirit's help, don't we, as we hear God's word. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray that your spirit would help us to understand and apply these things through the finished work of Christ tonight. Please strengthen and build up your church, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. There's an outline on the screen, but please do keep Matthew chapter 26, verses 31 to 36 open in front of you.

Well, the Puritan pastor and Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, applies these verses with some very sobering words when he says that there is a proneness in good people to be overconfident of

their own strength and stability.

We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ.

[14:07] But it is because we do not know ourselves. Well, Peter and all the disciples here are a warning to us, an example of how they did not truly know themselves.

that in themselves, they were not as strong or as faithful or as courageous as they thought they would be.

We must take that on board as well. But you know what? When we truly begin to know ourselves, then we truly learn to lean upon Christ.

And there, my friends, is our hope, our joy, our future. What we're going to learn tonight, that as we lean on Christ, we lean into his finished work, accomplished at the cross, the application of that graciously in our lives today, even when we fail, as they failed on that momentous night, then we find great joy and great hope.

The passage can be broken down very simply. Verses 31 to 32. Here, Jesus predicts that all his disciples will fall away on the night of his betrayal. And in verses 33 to 36, Jesus deals with Peter's presumption that he alone is the exception.

[15:35] He wouldn't fail. Firstly, let's see verses 31 to 32. We see here Jesus' prediction that all of his disciples will fail.

They will fall away. Verse 31, Jesus told them that this very night you will all fall away on account of me.

Now, we've already seen in this chapter that Judas will betray Jesus. But on the night of his betrayal, as he goes to the cross, on this Mount of Olives, after having this wonderful meal together, Jesus says that they will all fail him.

And they will all fall down because of him. Well, you see the fulfillment of Jesus' words in verse 56. Just turn to verse 56, where it says that after his arrest had taken place, fulfilling the writings of the prophets, then all the disciples deserted Jesus and fled.

[16:44] His words were true. Now, it's true that this is a unique moment in the storyline of the Bible. We know that Christ alone has to face the cross.

But these things do remind us that Jesus knew his disciples and he knows us as his disciples today far better than we truly know ourselves.

The scriptures say that the heart is deceitful above all things. You see, Christian, you and me, we are not the all-conquering heroes of faith that we like to be.

We are finite people and we often have little strength in a crisis to stand faithfully with Jesus. And we are also fallen people.

We're sinners, forgiven, saved, accepted. But we are still sinners. And so in a crisis like these disciples, we would fail too, as we often do, to stand faithfully by Jesus today.

[17:51] Friends, that should make the local church, whether that's here in Guildford or at Calvary in Brighton, a very humble congregation, shouldn't it? For one time or another, we have all failed to stand by Jesus as Jesus predicted his disciples would do.

But a wonderful thing is that there is good news in this prediction. Jesus doesn't say it just to tell them off. He says it will happen, but here's the reassurance for you that you really are my disciples. I guess, firstly, the good news is that this is a prediction. Jesus knew all about their coming fall. And then he seeks to reassure them that their failure as true disciples is not the end of the story. Isn't that wonderful? So Judas will betray Jesus showing that he never truly belonged to Christ. But these failing disciples really are his and they are held strongly by his grace as we are as we put our faith in Christ today.

Just see the two things that Jesus says to reassure them as well as the fact that it's a prediction in itself. The first thing is at the end of verse 31 is that their failure on this night had already been prophesied in the Old Testament.

[19:20] So Jesus quotes as the reason for their failure the writings of the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah chapter 13 verse 7. He says, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

It's going to happen tonight, says Jesus. The eye there is God, God the Father. The Lord will strike the shepherd king, Messiah Christ his son and the result of which the sheep will be scattered.

Now in those words I will strike the shepherds is a wonderful hope for their forgiveness. You see, their coming failure is also part of the story of their forgiveness.

Isn't that amazing? So as Jesus is betrayed and is crucified on a cross, the language from Zechariah is that the sword of the Lord's righteous judgment would fall.

Wrath will be poured out. It's the wrath that the Lord's people deserve, that his disciples here deserve for their failure, that we deserve for our sin against Christ.

[ 20 : 34 ] But these things will be paid for because the sword would not fall upon them, it would fall upon Christ, their great shepherd king. Christ died for our sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

friends, maybe you're listening here tonight and you are reminded of your failure in discipleship, your failure to stand by Jesus in integrity and faithfulness.

And we all can remember those periods in our lives. But here, we are called to remember with thanksgiving that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because God in his justice sent his judgment down upon his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in our place.

That's good news, my friends. I will strike the shepherd. Therein lies the forgiveness for failing disciples.

The other thing that Jesus does in verse 32 to reassure his failing disciples is that he predicts the end of the story is a good one.

[ 21 : 52 ] Look at verse 32, he predicts his resurrection and his reunion with his disciples in Galilee. Look at verse 32, but after I have risen, he says, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.

their great shepherd, Christ, after he has been struck at the cross, will rise and then he will gather his failing and scattered flock.

Of course, these things were fulfilled in Matthew chapter 28. Again, the witnesses to the resurrection were promised, see, he will be in Galilee just as he promised. But then you read from verse 16 in Matthew chapter 28 that the 11 disciples go to Galilee.

They go to the mountain where he had told them to go. And they see him and they worship him. Some doubt it. So their failure and the cross is not the end.

It is followed by resurrection and it is followed by reunion with the shepherds. How kind of Lord Jesus on the night of his betrayal as he predicts their failure in the hours ahead.

[ 23 : 05 ] He provides for their forgiveness. Think about the Lord's supper. This is the blood of the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins. The sword will strike the shepherds.

And he also shows that they will be preserved through their failure as he rises and regathers them again as his flock.

Now although we were not there as part of the eleven, we too as Christians can take the same reassurance from Christ in our failure.

For there is forgiveness and perseverance for us, not in us and because of us, but because of the cross and the ministry of our risen shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Friends, this is good news. We are to know ourselves. Our failure is real. But we are to know Christ and his finished work.

[ 24 : 12 ] Crucified, risen, gathering, leading his flock. That's Jesus' prediction, verses 31 to 32.

But the grace of Christ is magnified even more as Jesus deals with Peter's presumptuous claim to be better than others.

That's verses 33 to 36. Peter's presumption. Let's look at verse 33. This is how Peter responds.

Peter replies, Lord, even if all fall away, all the disciples fall away on account of you, I never will.

how presumptuous that he is different, that he is better. Not me, says Peter. I'm different.

I'm better than the others. Now, I've got to be honest that on my best day, and maybe your best day as well, we can all feel like that, can't we? Others stumble and fall around us.

[ 25 : 13 ] Oh, terrible. But I'm different. Friends, even on your best day, you and I are disciples that are finite and fallen, so never, never.

It's a very dangerous word, isn't it? Matthew Henry says again that those often fall soonest and foulest are those that are most confident of themselves.

Those who are least safe are the ones that feel they are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such people.

They are most off their guard and God leaves them to themselves to humble them. Friends, this is a warning, I think especially to leaders in the church.

Presumption and self-reliance rather than humble dependence upon Christ is a dangerous thing. Peter here is both self-confident thinking he has the strength to be different from the others and shockingly he thinks he knows better than Christ.

[ 26 : 28 ] He's just predicted that all of them will fail, all of them will fall. Well, the Lord Jesus has a final prediction in these verses, a personal prediction for Peter, a prediction that will ultimately humble him and bring him to greater security in Christ.

Look at verse 34, Peter, I tell you the truth, says Jesus very solemnly, Peter, this very night before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.

So Peter will not just fail to stand by Jesus as he said all of them would do, instead he will do something even worse, he will deny and disown his Lord Jesus.

He who thinks himself stronger than his brothers becomes the very one who proves to be weaker than them all. And Peter here shows how little he truly knows himself.

And he shows it even more as he responds with even stronger language in verse 35. Peter declared to Jesus, even if I have to die with you Lord Jesus, I will never disown you.

[ 27 : 53 ] I will never fall away on count of you Jesus. I will never disown you Jesus. But Jesus knows him better. And Jesus knows us better too.

Well as we know Jesus' personal prediction to Peter was fulfilled. Just look at verse 69 and the following verses. How Peter disowned Jesus.

The cock crowed verse 75 and Peter goes outside and weeps bitterly. Even his strongest resolution which was a good one to be faithful to Jesus was not matched by his ability because he was also fallen.

Well all the disciples presumed that they would be as faithful too. Verse 36 35 all the other disciples said the same thing and Peter and all the disciples were proved wrong weren't they?

Calvary these are humbling verses aren't they? It's very easy to make the same mistake to view ourselves as stronger and more capable and more courageous and more faithful than we really are to think we're slightly better than the other disciples around us.

[ 29 : 23 ] But just remember what Matthew Henry said that there is a proneness in good people to be overconfident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations to go through the hardest and most hazardous services and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ.

But it is because we do not know ourselves. Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. The Lord Jesus isn't grateful that we are on his team. Oh, I really couldn't do it without you, David.

Now, instead, in the local church, we are all eternally grateful that Jesus, who knows us, truly knows us, has included us on his team.

We are forgiven. We are preserved, as they were, by grace alone. And that is truly freeing and reassuring.

as I read these verses, I came away thinking about my own life, my own discipleship, my place in the church, my ministry, my future, and rather than presuming that it would all be about me, I came away thinking, Lord, when you think about my failures as a disciple, I'm just pleased to be here.

[ 31 : 00 ] Thank you, Jesus. And help me, Jesus. You see, when disciples truly know themselves, get a glimpse of what they are like, as Jesus knows, then they will lean totally upon Christ, forgiven, preserved.

May you be strengthened by that truth tonight. Amen. Let me pray for you. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you have included these embarrassing and challenging sections of scripture to reassure us, similarly faithless, weak, sinful people, that all our security is in the finished work of Christ.

Pray for us as we go through individual trials, which are not the same as the trials the disciple faced, or the trial that Jesus faced. we pray Father, that we will do so not in overconfidence in ourselves, but in humble reliance on Christ, his forgiveness and his strength to help us persevere.

Please forgive us Father, if we have been more over reliant on ourselves than we should be. Pray for Calvary Church Lord, that you would keep them a humble people who are walking humbly with each other, loving each other through their failings as they look together to Christ and that they would walk in increasing faithfulness to Jesus, magnifying your grace in the months and years ahead, we pray.

