

Steps to Spiritual Victory

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, if you would, and turn with me to the book of Mark chapter 14. Mark chapter 14. I'm not sure about any of you, but I have had some very embarrassing things happen to me that I would like to forget.

Some of them are funny, and some of them are sad. I was in a restaurant in Lima, Peru. I was in Pizza Hut, and I'm a rather large guy, and they have very weak plastic chairs.

And we were all sitting there with probably 20 people, 25 Americans with me, and everybody was telling jokes. And I had a friend there whose laugh could stop the Dixie Stampede in Gatlinburg for real.

But anyway, somebody was telling a joke. I started laughing. My chair broke. I fell on the floor, and he started laughing. The entire restaurant came around to look, and that was a pretty embarrassing moment.

There was a guy named Benedict Arnold. Arnold, you know, if you've read much about him, he probably is a tad embarrassed about what happened to him. After he betrayed our country and then moved to England, he never really got accepted.

[1 : 07] He never really got accepted, though he tried to move into society. And I read the story of Peter today, and I am really, I feel sorry for the guy. He's a good guy. He loves God.

He loves Jesus. He walks with Jesus everywhere. He's always the one that's up there at the very front. If there's a conversation going on with Jesus and somebody, Peter is probably going to be in the middle of that conversation.

John may claim to be the one he loves, but Peter's the one he talks to. And he might be fussing at Peter, but at least he's talking to Peter. If your name is Bartholomew, you don't even get a mention, except he was one of them.

And then one day, Jesus tells the people, I'm about to die. And in Mark chapter, if you want to mark it down, in Mark chapter 14 and verse 27, he makes three prophecies.

He said, I'm about to die. They're going to smite the shepherd. They're going to kill the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. So I'm going to die. He is warning them. He's told them over and over, I am here to die, and I'm going to die.

[2 : 12] And he makes that comment. And then he says to them, and all of you will be scandalized, embarrassed, bothered, run away, scared, hiding because of that.

And then he said, but I will see you guys in Galilee after this is all over. I love that probably as much as any part of it. Look at verse 28. He said, after that I'm risen.

I'll go before you to Galilee. I'll see you guys in Galilee. I'm going to die. I'm going to be buried. And then I'm heading to Galilee, and I'll see you there. And by the way, you guys are all going to mess up and deny me and run away from me, but I will see you there.

Well, Peter, you know, he reminds me of me. He's a big mouth, and he is so braggadocious and so proud. And he looks at Peter, and he looks at Jesus and says, whoa, whoa, whoa, cool it, cool it, chill.

Now listen, the rest of these jerks, they probably will deny you. Knowing them, they're not like me, but I will never deny you. And Jesus said, oh, yeah, you will. He said, oh, I would rather die than deny you.

- [3 : 14] And Jesus said, well, you'll deny me. And you're going to deny me three times before the rooster can crow two times. And you know when an embarrassing thing happens to you? Nice people kind of try to forget that. You know what I mean? It's like you don't go around saying to the guy, let me bring up all your most embarrassing moments and have fun with that.
- But Peter's story has been being told for 2,000 years. And this morning we're going to talk about the four guys. By the way, he is going to go on to become a great missionary, a great evangelist, a great pastor, do a great work, write two books in the Bible.
- But he had a very embarrassing time. By the way, it wasn't that long a time, to be honest with you. Jesus made that comment. He just got through having the Lord's Supper with them where he celebrated what would remind them that he died for them.
- Then he told them that was going to happen. Then he went off to have a word of prayer. And he goes off and he said, I want to pray. I want to get a hold of God. And he goes to God and he said, God, if there's any way possible for me not to have to go through this, I'd sure appreciate it.
- [4 : 16] But whatever you want, I'll do it. And so God said, no, you're going through with it. And then he said to the guys, he said, y'all couldn't pray with me? And they didn't pray with him three times. They didn't pray with him.
- And then here comes the guys and they grab Jesus and they take him off. And Peter wants to know what's going on. And he follows a distance away, but he's at least following.
- He wants to be there. He wants to see what's happening. He wants to be close. And Jesus is in the room now. And those Jewish people are spitting on him and they're punching him and they're making fun of him and they're accusing him.
- And Peter can probably hear the noise of what's going on in the room. And Peter's nervous. He may be big and tough, but everybody around him doesn't like Jesus. And all he's hearing is stuff against Jesus.
- And then this girl says to him, hey, you're one of them, aren't you? And he says, no, I'm not. And by the third time around, he's cussing and saying, I don't know the man. That's a pretty sad story.
- [5 : 17] But I have to tell you that I have been in the ministry for 45 years and I really want to be used of God. And on more than one occasion, I have allowed sin to defeat me.
- I have spoken when I shouldn't speak. I have embarrassed people. I've hurt people. And I have been discouraged and I've had bitter thoughts before.
- I don't know. Probably none of you have ever had these problems. But sin sometimes beats me. Sometimes I am embarrassed by who I have been and what I've done. And I want victory. So I'm going to take and give you several things out of this story.
- And I'm basically going to turn what Peter did to the opposite of it. And let's look and see if we couldn't find some steps to victory. So take with me, if you would, to verse 29. First one, humble yourself.
- Don't you want to have victory over sin? If you do, say amen. Don't you want to tell the devil, hey, you can drop dead. I am not going to do the wrong thing. Well, the first step in the story, if we take the story and we just take what Peter did and turn it, we'll see that.
- [6 : 20] Peter said in verse 29, I will not deny you. And he said, more vehemently, I will not. If everyone else might betray you, I never will.
- I'd rather die than betray you. So why don't you write this down right here. You know what the key that gets me into sin and messes me up is? Pride. Pride.

The Bible says that pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before a fall. In Proverbs chapter 16, verse 18, pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12, the Bible says, if a man thinks he stands, he ought to wake up and realize he might fall.

In other words, the whole idea is, the whole idea is when I have pride, I think I have it under control. Now, Peter's got a sword with him. And Peter's probably thinking, man, I got my sword here.

I'll whip out the sword. I'll do whatever I got to do. I am not going to deny Jesus. I will do right. I have this under control. Do you think I would ever do that? Do you honestly believe I am capable of doing that?

[7 : 27] So pride sneaks in and messes us up. We think we can handle it. We don't see our need for God. We get used to handling things, right? We've been doing pretty good.

Peter's been doing pretty good. He's been doing pretty good. He's made some mistakes. He's been embarrassed a little bit, but he's been doing pretty good. And when somebody kind of doubts our character and thinks there's a possibility that we're not as perfect as we think we are, we get angry.

What? You think I would deny you? They might deny you, but I would never deny. Don't you look at me when you think it's possible that I might sin. So here's the first thing.

Humble yourself. James chapter 4 verse 6. If I could get you to look that verse with me. James chapter 4 verse 6. The key to victory is to humble ourselves and let God do a work in us.

Peter's attitude was, I will not. And our attitude ought to be, man, I need God's help. Instead of saying, I will not and I'm so strong. By the way, have you ever had a fight with your wife?

[8 : 29] You ever had a fight with your husband? You ever had, you ever got, I mean, and by the way, if somebody were to catch you in the middle of that, it'd be embarrassing. It'd be embarrassing. You know?

But most of it's around our pride. Here's a way we can have victory, I think. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 6, he gives more grace. Wherefore, he said, God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

To those of us who would say, boy, I need God. I need help. I don't do as right as I'd like to think I would. To those of us who expect that we might mess up and trust God we can have victory.

Verse 7 says, submit yourself unto the Lord. Submit yourself, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he'll flee. Here's step number one. Peter, it might have been a tad better if you hadn't have made such a big scene about it.

It might have been better, Mr. Peter, if you'd have said, Lord, I hope that's not true. It might have been better if you'd have said, God, help us that we don't mess up here. But Peter's like, nope, you can count on me, buddy.

[9 : 35] Bless God, I won't mess up. Do you understand that pride might be what's keeping you from getting saved? If you're here today and you're not born again, you don't know your sins are forgiven, you don't know you're on your way to heaven, it just might be that your pride stands in the way.

But here's what we do. I am a good guy. I don't mess up. I don't need help. There's a lot of sinners out there. There's a lot of bad people out there, but I am not one of them.

Do you understand that that's the same attitude Peter had? And if that's your attitude, you cannot get help. Nobody helps a guy who doesn't need help. If you're too well to go to the doctor, you're too well to get help from the doctor.

Today, why don't we humble ourselves and ask God to help us? The second thing that's interesting in the story, Mark 14 and verse 32, it's time to pray.

It's time to pray. And they came to a place which was named Bethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray. And he is hurting. He is hurting desperately.

[10 : 36] Jesus is hurting. The Bible says in verse 33, and he takes with him Peter, James, and John, and he began to be, you ought to underline this in the Bible, sore amazed. He was shocked at how much he was hurting, and he was very heavy.

And he turned to his friends, and he said, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful. Man, I am torn out of the frame. I'm a human, and I'm hurting.

I know I'm about to die. I know I'm going to be put on a cross. And I'm shocked at how much it hurts, and I'm feeling the weight of death on me, and I'm feeling exceedingly sorrowful.

And he went forward and prayed. If it were possible, verse 35, that the hour might pass from him. Verse 36, he said, God, everything's okay. Would you? Everything's possible. You can do anything.

If it's any way, take the cup away. In verse 37, he comes back, and he says, hey, Peter, are you sleeping, buddy? Are you sleeping, buddy? You couldn't watch one hour?

[11 : 37] You know I'm hurting. You know I'm facing death on a cross. I've told you that. You could see I was hurting. And instead of praying, and instead of watching, and instead of being ready for that, you're asleep.

You know, I'm afraid that's what ends up happening with us. Our pride gets in the way, but then we slack off on daily spiritual walk with God, don't we?

Our prayer life gets shifted to the back corner because everything's okay. If it were me who was in the hospital, if it were me that might be facing death, if it were me that might be going through a divorce, if it were me that were hurting, maybe I'd pray.

And here's Peter with Jesus, and he's not praying. In Mark chapter 13 and verse 33, he said, take ye heed, watch and pray.

Watch and pray. In chapter 14 and verse 30, he said, watch and pray. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. When the test and the temptation could come at any time, you and I ought to be praying.

[12 : 40] When whatever problem could face us, a good friend of mine this very morning, it's nighttime where he's there, but he is on his way into the hospital. He's probably already there. He has a blood clot in his bladder, and everything was fine, and everything was good.

And all of a sudden, now he's in a foreign country. Flights are messed up, and he's got to go to the hospital. So you can imagine, you know, he's tough, so he's probably acting like, oh, nothing's wrong.

Everything's fine, because that's what we do. That's what men do. No matter what we're facing. Now I'm fine. I'm fine. And the women leave, and then we cry. Then we wipe our tears and say, nah, I would never cry. Never. Not me. Not me.

I'm tough. I'm tough. But isn't our lack of prayer and seeking God another form of that same pride? Let me just ask you a question. Peter is going to be embarrassed, and we're going to tell his story even today.

And Austin Gardner faces problems all the time. Things are always going to come up in my life, and things are always going to come up in your life. And we get lazy about seeking God.

[13 : 44] We get lazy about our prayer life. We get lazy about getting time alone with God. We are not diligent in our personal walk with God. I mean, to be honest, you can't expect to come on Sunday morning and hear me preach and think that's going to be enough to get you through.

You can't hear me motivate you so you can have victory. You need God. And that means you need to spend some time in prayer, walking and seeking God and looking for him.

Third thing I would like you to look at, go with me to Mark 14, 38. We need to yield to God. Now here's an interesting thing. The apostle Peter says, I will never deny you.

Everybody else might deny you, but I will not deny you. I would rather be dead. You know what Jesus is going to say to him? I know it, Peter. You really do mean it. See, Peter's a good guy.

I mean, this is all going to happen in a matter of hours. You do realize that maybe 20 years later when he goes in somewhere to preach, somebody says, Do you mind sharing the word of testimony about that night? Do you mind telling us how that was that night you denied Jesus?

[14 : 54] Do you mind sharing with us what happened there? You say, well, why would he ever ask that? They wrote it in the Gospels. I mean, Mark took the time to say, let me write down the story about the time Peter messed up.

That's in the story for a reason, because I mess up. Because I might deny Jesus. And here's the thing he said, if you look at verse 38, he said, The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak.

Peter really does love Jesus. He wants to please him. He wants to do the right thing. But he's unable to in his own ability. His heart says, I would never deny Jesus.

His body says, I ain't so strong. I get scared. I get scared. Our bodies are weak. Jesus walked off. These guys are tired.

They don't live a life like we do. Hey, when they get to the Garden of Yosemite, they didn't drive up there in a car. They didn't drive up in a pickup truck with air conditioning and get out of the thing and say, well, we're here.

[15 : 53] They walked up there. And they walked all the time. And they didn't eat the kind of food. They didn't eat all this great food that we eat. And he shows up there, and he's tired.

Our bodies are weak. I need to ask God for power. I need to watch God work in my life. I need to see God answer prayer. I need to be ready to know that temptation can come.

Now, let me just tell you this. If you're born again in this room, you want to honor God all the time, don't you? If you're a born-again person in this room, you want to be a good husband. You want to be a good wife.

You do not want sin to beat you. You want to live in victory. You want to enjoy the good times because you have a good heart. You've been born again. And your spirit is ready, buddy.

Your spirit is able. Your spirit wants to do something. But you're still human. And you're not as powerful as you think you are. Look, if you would, at the Bible in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13.

[16 : 52] You know, temptation is a regular thing for Christians. Peter was certain he would never deny Jesus. That young couple is certain they would never have premarital sex. That young lady is certain she would never get an abortion.

That man is certain he would never steal money from his company. That person is certain he would never commit that crime. Because we know, you know me, you know my character. I would never do that. Tell the truth.

You know I'd never do that. And I'll tell you, this is what Jesus said. I know you wouldn't. Not in your spirit, man. You wouldn't. You wouldn't. But you do have a body. And it's weak.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13, There is no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. You should underline this. Every one of us. I would never get a divorce.

I would never be disloyal to my spouse. I would never. I would never. That's the way we talk, isn't it? But it's common to man. It's common.

[17 : 52] And what happens in your life could happen in my life. And what happens in that person's life could happen in my life. And I need to be ready for that. That's why I'm going to humble myself. That's why I'm going to work on my prayer life. And that's why I'm going to say, God, I need you to work in and through me.

Look at what the Bible says in verse 13. God is faithful. Underline that. Yes, there's a lot of sin all around us. You know, man, preachers, big name preachers fall into sin.

Hey, people you would never think would get a divorce, get a divorce. People that would never do that, do that. Because it's common to man. But you can have victory. God is faithful.

Underline that in a verse. God is faithful. And he will not allow you to be tempted above what you're able. You are never going to face anything you couldn't have victory over. You are never doomed to fail.

Failure is not a part of your DNA. But your body's weak. And if you don't constantly work at humbling yourself and walking with God and saying, God, I need your help.

[18 : 52] It could happen to you. With every temptation, God will make a way of escape so that you'll be able to bear it. So here's three things I've asked you to think about this morning.

Humble yourself. I need the Lord, don't you? I'd like to tell you that I'm the best man in this room. I'd like to tell you I love Jesus. I'd like to tell you. And believe me, I really do love Jesus.

And I love my wife. And I love you. And I'd never embarrass you. I want to do right. That's Peter that day. Peter wasn't being a smart aleck.

Peter wasn't trying to be rude or crude. He was just like, Jesus, you know better than that. You know I love you. You know I wouldn't do that. That's all he was saying that day.

I need to trust God instead of allowing my fear to take control. The next thing that happens is Mark chapter 14 and verse 19. Jesus, they're in the garden. And the scripture needs to be fulfilled because God's word always comes true.

[19 : 53] And in verse 50, everybody's running because they're in the garden. And all these soldiers come out to meet Jesus. They're Jewish soldiers. And they're coming out with a high priest and the scribes and the Pharisees.

Those boys, they've all come out there. And when they come out there to meet Jesus and to get him, Jesus said, Guys, I was in the temple preaching all the time. Y'all didn't ever come get me. I never have hid from you guys.

I've not ever run from you. And when they come to get him, it scares everybody because they march out like an army. In fact, there's a young man there who is probably the guy who writes the book of Mark.

And he's got a linen garment wrapped around him and he runs off naked. Somebody grabs his garment and he just spurts off. He's the first streaker. If you're old enough, you know what that is.

He ran away. But Peter's at least trying to be there. Peter's at least hanging around there. Mark 14, 54, he follows him afar off. But when they get in the house in Mark 14, 46, they say, He's guilty of death.

- [20 : 51] You can hear them chanting and yelling, We're going to kill him. He's done wrong and we're going to kill him. And Mark is just outside. And in verse 65, they are spitting on him. They're covering his face and they're beating him. And they're saying, Won't you tell us who's hitting you? And Peter denies him. I think he's scared to death.
- I mean, he's a man. He's a man. By the way, if you saw him, he's not like me, buddy. He's tall and athletic. He doesn't have a gut. He's been a fisherman.
- He's got muscles and he's tanned. And he's just a good-looking guy. And he's strong. But he's scared. Man, they're in there beating Jesus. They're beating his leader.
- And everybody knows who runs with Jesus. Everybody knows. And they're going to kill him. And a girl says, And you're one of them. And Peter's like, If I say I am, they'll arrest me.
- [21 : 54] They'll jerk me in there. And so in verse 68, he denies him. In verse 69, he denies him again. In verse 71, he starts cussing and denies him. He says, I don't know who y'all are talking about.
- Fear is a horrible thing. You're at work. Now listen to me. You're at work. And no, you are not an alcoholic. And no, you're not going to participate in drugs or alcohol or stealing or lying or cheating.
- You're not going to. But all the people that work with you, put all that pressure on you, we're all doing this. And you start going, Ah. Ah.
- So everybody's doing it. If I say I'm not doing it, they'll laugh at me. And pressure. And our young people go to school and pressure. Because if everybody's taking a drink, if everybody's getting drunk, if everybody's flirting around, if everybody's doing this, then I want to do it.
- Because I don't want to look weird. When I was in high school, I got it right when I was about 15. I started carrying my Bible to a public school. And they made fun of me relentlessly.
- [23 : 02] Relentlessly. They call me the Jesus freak. They call me queer. And that's the word they used for me back then. And they made fun of me. I was so tired of being the only guy that always got made fun of.
- They said, Are you a virgin? I said, I am. And they said, You're a virgin, huh? So you don't like girls, huh? They made fun of me relentlessly. So when I got ready to go to college, all I prayed for was, God, can I find one man, one student that's a male that'll stand for Jesus that won't have to be alone.
- And as soon as I got to college, I was hanging around a bunch of guys that were there. And they were all going to be in the ministry. And then they all wanted to go get a beer. And I was like, Oh, brother, here we go again. And so I'm thinking to myself, I'm going to tell them I don't want to go get a beer because I need to unpack.
- I'm going to tell them I don't feel well. I'm trying to figure out the best way not to look like a sissy. Because I want to fit in. And one of my buddies jumped up and said, Hey, glory to God, you need a gospel track.
- And he started preaching. I'm like... And then I was like, I had a friend that would stand. That's what's going on here. He's alone. And he's scared. But God hasn't given you a spirit of fear.
- [24 : 08] You don't have to be afraid of other people. You don't have to be afraid of what other people think. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1, 7, God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind.

In 1 John 4, verse 8, he said, There's no fear in love. Perfect love, cast out fear, because fear hath torment. So you're going to have to choose to trust God or let your fears deal with it.

You're going in for that surgery and your fears are screaming. Goliath is standing out there and your fears are screaming. Your friends are all around you saying, Let's do wrong. And your fears are screaming, Let's do wrong because I don't want to look funny.

But you can trust God. Twelve guys went into the promised land and came back out and ten of them said, We can't do it. And two of them stood. Ten were fearful and two were trusting.

Ten were fearful and two were trusting. Faith is knowing God and seeing God when you can't see hell. Faith is knowing God and seeing God when you know you're unable. Because he really did want to be used to God.

[25 : 11] And the fear had to be horrible. A beautiful thing that is very true about Peter. This one is not the opposite. Go with me to the last one. Mark 14, 72. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

This Peter, man, he is some kind of guy. Man, he just feels his love for God. He wears his love for God on his sleeve.

He is in love with Jesus. If you look at verse 72, the second time the cock crew, Peter remembered, he called to mind the word that Jesus had said, Before the cock crows twice, you will have denied me thrice, three times.

And he cried. And his heart was broken. You know what I love about Peter? You know he's going to be there. He'll meet Jesus in Galilee. You know he's going to be faithful the rest of his life.

And this time that he's denying him is very likely an hour or two. The whole sad story is a series of minutes.

[26 : 15] But in the middle of that, Peter said, I know what God wants. You see, Jesus had promised to give them the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit would direct them and guide them and lead them into all truth.

And you as a Christian, by the way, if you're saved, the Holy Spirit lives in you. And you will be at work this week and you'll be called on to do things you ought not do. And the Holy Spirit will rise up inside of you and say, don't do that.

Then don't quench the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, quench not the Spirit. Don't you say no. There'll be an opportunity. A lady will be presenting herself in a way that she's flirtatious with you.

And you've been fussing with your wife and you're at work and this person starts making these overtures. And the second you start thinking the wrong thing, something inside goes, don't do that.

Don't quench. Ephesians chapter five, that was the first Thessalonians 5, 19. Ephesians chapter four, verse 30, don't grieve for the Holy Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit. Listen to him.

[27 : 16] I like what I like about old Peter. Because Peter was like, he wouldn't like that. I know he wouldn't. Peter said, I don't need anybody to tell me in my heart. I know what God wants.

Holy Spirit leads. So I give you five things to think about today to have victory. Number one, humble yourself. I don't want sin to beat you. I don't want sin to hurt you. Be diligent in your walk with the Lord.

Stay in prayer. Stay faithful to church. Stay faithful to be around other Christians. Yield yourself to God so that his power works in through you. Your flesh is willing, your spirit's willing, but your flesh is unable to keep up.

Trust God. Don't let fear motivate you and push you and manipulate you. And always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. And right now is the time to be sensitive. Because some of you in this room aren't saved.

And right now in the heart, in your heart, you know you're not saved. You know your sins aren't forgiven. Something inside of you is reminding you it's time to turn from your sin and turn to Jesus.

[28 : 17] You should do that right now. And there are Christians in this room that you have allowed fear to manipulate you and to force you. And you've been doing what you know wasn't right. You've been allowing your fears to push you.

You've been too weak to stand against the temptations that have come your way. You've been too cocky and proud. In fact, just right now, you'll have a hard time ever yielding and saying, I'll get on my knees and pray. You'll have a hard time ever admitting you did wrong.

That's what's going to cause us to fall in sin. We don't want to play those games. Let's humble ourselves before our God. Let's seek our God. Let's give our lives to our God.

Let's trust Him. Let's trust Him.