**God’s Servant Tried, Part 1**

**Mark 14:53-72**

Some weeks float lazily forward without any momentous events shaking our soul. For me, this was not one of those weeks. This week’s events drenched my thoughts in eternity and moved me to consider more carefully what I am doing with my momentary present life.

Four events this week confronted me with the truth that our present life is a fleeting vapor. It appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

Four events carried me to the gospel of Jesus as a strong tower of hope.

Four events this week unexpectedly awakened me with the longing to live a life that connects me to eternal glory.

Four events rooted my soul in the preciousness of the cross of Christ.

**The first event on Sunday was the death of my brother Jim** after a valiant battle with cancer. While I knew that Jim was dying, my soul was still upended when I received the news. He is my cool brother whom I sought to imitate in so many ways. His gentle voice of faith and love for Jesus and love for me still echoes in my ears as though he is still here. Jim’s funeral on Friday was filled with tears, laughter and thankfulness to God who is faithful every day of our lives and into eternity. I await a future day when my faith becomes sight.

**The second event on Monday was the start of chemotherapy treatments** for my nephew Wyn. Wyn is a young husband and dad with three young children and another girl due in November. He recently learned that he has Stage 3 cancer. Wyn loves the Lord and is full of faith and hope as he endures the first of four rounds of chemo therapy. We pray for God’s provision and healing for him and for the peace that surpasses all understanding for his family.

**The third event on Wednesday was the assassination of Charlie Kirk.** This murder of a young Christian conservative has shaken our whole nation and indeed the world. Though I do not know Charlie, nor did I closely follow him, the bullet **felt strangely personal to me**. Some of Charlie’s last comments expressed that Jesus Christ is a real Person . . . that Jesus lived a perfect life, was crucified, died and rose on the third day and that Jesus is Lord and God over all! I considered how quickly a healthy 31-year-old could complete his physical journey here in this world. After Charlie died, I was again impacted by the many evil comments from various people celebrating this assassination. Those vile remarks impresses upon me the spiritual darkness that controls so many in our nation. We are in a spiritual battle with cosmic powers of this present darkness. Jesus described Satan as a “murderer from the beginning” and this event made me aware of how many “ordinary” people are completely in the grasp of the devil. The Lord calls us to a spiritual war.

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#2Cor._10:4)*)*

**The fourth event on Wednesday was a conversation I had on a plane with a young woman names Nayelli.** When I sat in my seat, no one was to the left or my right. I confess that I quietly prayed that the Lord would either keep the other seats open OR send me someone who did not want to talk. **I was in the mood for some quietude.** When Nayelli sat down, I thought, *“Oh good. This young gal surely will not be interested in talking with me.”*  But the LORD had other plans. For two hours we talked about the hope of the Gospel. Nayelli shared that two months ago she was in Target and she met a young woman who invited her to church. She shared that for the past two months she has been attending and was really interested in what she was learning. I asked her what the church was teaching her about how she could know God and how she could go to heaven when she died. Of the many verses I shared with her, I shared with her John 3:16. When the plane landed Nayelli said, *“I believe everything happens for a reason and I believe God had me sit next to you to talk with you.”* I told Nayelli that God loved her and that to receive the benefit of Jesus she simply needed to believe in Him as her Savior and Lord. **I told her that I likely would not see her again in this life,** but that I pray that God would open her heart to believe and that one day in heaven she would tell me the rest of her story!

**Question: What does all this have to do with Mark 14:53-72?**

**Answer: Everything.** Every important matter that we face in life finds its meaning, its solution, its center in the story of Jesus death, burial and resurrection.

**Main Idea: Jesus triumphs over evil. He alone stands at the end of the age in judgment upon all who refuse to submit to His Lordship and to receive His mercy. He alone rescues all who come to Him in faith and delivers us from the power and the penalty of evil.**

Mark takes us to the Garden of Gethsemane very early on Friday morning before the sun rises. Judas has betrayed Jesus into the hands of the religious leaders. Remember that before Jesus is tried, Mark has told us in 14:1-2 that the religious leaders had already decided to kill Jesus. The trials are a show; their cause is already determined.

The demonic world of hate does not change . . . from the time of Cain to the events of the Passion week to the events of this past week, we find that the evil one murders in order to suppress those who speak God’s truth. Let us not be unprepared when polite society is not as polite as we thought it was.

*“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*

*(1 John 5:19* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#1John_5:19)*)*

The soldiers lead Jesus in the darkness down into the Kidron valley and then up the slopes to Jerusalem. They take Him to Annas house to begin a series of three religious’ trials. These trials have an appearance of legal order, but in a rush to obtain a capital conviction, every part of the proceeding mocks the principles of their own laws.

Keep in mind that Mark writes this Gospel to believers in Rome who are suffering for their faith in Jesus. **In this part of Jesus’ story, Mark wants suffering followers to see the danger of spiritual failure of two different kinds and the hope we have in Jesus to lead us to victory.**

Mark purposefully sets Jesus in contrast first with the religious leaders and then he contrasts Jesus with Peter. Mark warns us through this story about the danger of two different kinds of spiritual failure.

The religious leaders and Peter both fail the LORD in this hour. But they fail Him differently. If you are taking notes, we observe Two Types of Spiritual Failure. First we look at the Spiritual Failure of the Hardened Hypocrite. And then the Spiritual Failure of the Feeble Faithless.

**Spiritual Failure of Two Types**

1. **The Failure of the Hardened Hypocrite.**

*It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”” (Mark 14:1-2* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:1)*)*

Notice the hypocrisy of their heart. They made an external confession of commitment to God and to His Law. Yet they did not see the conflict between their zeal for God and the murder of God’s Son. They did not see the irony of their wanting to uphold the religious ceremony of the Passover and their intent to murder Jesus.

**Definition: A hypocrite is someone who identifies on the outside as someone that he/she is not on the inside. A person who presents themselves as someone that they are not.**

A hypocrite often believes his/her own deception. The Pharisees did not recognize that they were not who they claimed to be. They claimed to be godly men and they thought that they were. But their hearts were not soft, nor humble, nor repentant, nor clean before the LORD.

Hypocrisy is a particular danger to those who desire to be thought of as righteous. It is not wrong to desire a reputation for righteousness. Every godly person desires a good name. But it IS WRONG to be more concerned with a reputation for righteousness than with an internal reality of righteousness.

**Question: How might a person KNOW if they are a hardened hypocrite or not?** Answer: The clearest indication that a person is a hardened hypocrite is a lack of love and devotion to Jesus. If there is no fire for Jesus and for His glory, then a religious person is likely engulfed by hypocrisy.

Consider how much the Pharisees despised Jesus.

*Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. (Mark 14:55-59* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:55)*)*

As officers of the court, their role is to discern whether accusations have merit. But here they hire the best witnesses and in so doing they sidestep the very judicial process that they are tasked to uphold. A righteous trial has one purpose: To uncover the truth. But this trial has a different purpose. The whole reason that these judges convene is to find some excuse to convict an innocent man.

**Truth: Hypocrisy looks for reasons to do what we want to do in the first place. Hypocrisy does not seek to honor God, but to advance our own will.**

*And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”” (Mark 14:60* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:55)*)*

**The high priest is getting frustrated that the trial is not producing the verdict that the whole illegal proceeding was intended to yield.**

*“But he remained silent and made no answer.” (Mark 14:61* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:61)*)*

Jesus is not personally frustrated or internally disturbed by the injustice against Him. He receives it calmly as a part of His divine assignment as Savior. He understands the evil that opposes Him and He faces it like a man who understands that His Father is using the malice of evil people to accomplish His glorious purpose through Him.

Isaiah prophesies centuries earlier that the future Messiah King would respond to oppression with calm and quiet resolve.

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”*

*(Isaiah 53:7* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Is._53:7)*)*

*Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophesy!” And the guards received him with blows.” (Mark 14:61-65* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:61)*)*

All pretense of justice is now completely thrown away as the accused is spat upon and beaten during the trial! The judges look upon these beatings with gleeful approval!

*“with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek.” (Micah 5:1* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mic._5:1)*)*

Who is “the judge of Israel”? Who is appointed by God to be the One who sits in judgment over the actions and motives of the people of Israel. Not the Sanhedrin! Jesus! The fact the Sanhedrin sits in judgment of Jesus is in itself a dark rebellion against the LORD’s righteous decree. No amount of condemnation by the religious leaders changes the fact that Jesus is the One whom God appointed judge over Israel. Jesus is the One to whom all must give ultimate account for sin. No amount of abuse and beating changes what happens on the last day.

**Truth: The failure of hypocrisy is eternally fatal because it turns away from Jesus as Lord. Hypocrisy bows the knee to personal desire, but not to the righteousness and majesty of Christ.**

Friend, do you feel the danger of hypocrisy pressing against your soul? How can you tell if it hypocrisy is wrapping its deadly fingers around your heart?

Our hearts are not immune to the soul disease that afflicted this group. In fact, as a church going people, the religious leaders offer us the most relevant warnings. If we think we are somehow spiritually superior to the religious leaders by our own goodness, we prove to BE THEM. So we consider the religious leaders with humble hearts, asking God to give us Spirit so that we can detect the symptoms that betray a “religiously formal” heart.

Eight symptoms of hypocrisy

1. We read God’s Word, meditate upon God’s Word and speak God’s Word, but we do not receive God’s Word implanted in our soul. We become hardened to the conviction of God’s Word and so it bounces off of us without changing us into the image of Jesus.

*“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” (James 1:21* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#James_1:21)*)*

1. We judge others’ sins harshly and our own sin lightly. We often see sin in others when there is not sin and we do not see sin in ourselves when it completely overtakes us.
2. We are offended when we are corrected or rebuked for our sin.
3. We hide our sins from God and others rather than confess them openly and honestly.
4. We are concerned with the external appearance of our lives more than the internal integrity of our heart. We love the externals of religion, but we miss the internal transformation of the Spirit.
5. We are overly concerned with people’s opinions today and not with God’s judgment in the future.
6. We are religious and yet do not make much of Jesus. We are attracted to spiritual things, but do not see Jesus as the foundation and center of every religious thought and action. We have a zeal for God, but think that we can produce our own righteousness.
7. We feel right about hating people who annoy us or who impede our agenda.

Is there hope for the hypocrite?

Jesus loved the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He died for them as much as He died for anyone. His interactions were filled with warnings, not because He hated them, but because He loved them. Two of the 70 seem to have received the love of Jesus. Not many. Religious externalism holds the majority of its members captive without moving them to true faith. But a few!!! God’s grace.

Is there hope for the hypocrite? Yes, but not without a broken and contrite spirit. Hypocrisy damns our soul to eternal condemnation.

In Jesus first year of ministry, He directly confronts the religious formalism of the Pharisees. ***“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”***

***(Matthew 5:20 ESV).* This was a shocking statement because everyone knew that the Pharisees devoted their lives to living the most moral, religiously scrupulous lives in the whole community.**

**Truth: Jesus urges us to understand the difference between a person who is superficially moral and a person who is spiritually alive . . . between a person who ACTS righteous before men and a person who IS righteous on the inside.**

He draws sharp distinction between those who appear to be close to God through their religious habits and those who are close to God through their broken and contrite spirit before the Lord.

**The statement made the hearer wonder, “How can anyone have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees?” Answer: Only those who have righteous imputed to them through faith in Christ.**

**Truth: We need Jesus Christ to BE our righteousness or we will not be righteous enough to stand accepted by God.**

Friend, do you know it is possible to participate in good prayers and sing great songs and even teach good Bible lessons and still be spiritually dead? Do you know that it is possible to be sincerely religious and yet spiritually lost?

1. **The Failure of the Feeble Faithless.**

*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 tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.” (Mark 14:26-31* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:26)*)*

Peter is not a hypocrite. He is on the inside what he presents on the outside. But Peter still has a spiritual problem. He is a man who is feeble in his faith. He has too much confidence in himself and so he does not lean enough upon the LORD for his strength.

*And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”” (Mark 14:37-38* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:37)*)*

Jesus seeks to help Peter be ready for the pressure that he is going to endure. But Peter feels confident and sleeps when he needs to be praying. He needs to prepare his heart for the spiritual assault that is coming, but he feels capable in himself and not concerned about the power of the evil one.

*“And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.” (Mark 14:54* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:54)*)*

Peter is making good on his self-confident promise that he will not forsake the Lord! It this an act of faith? A bright show of courage? No. Sadly, Peter is still living in foolish confidence in his own strength. Peter’s motives may be noble, but his spiritual understanding is still so very dull. Peter believes that whatever he faces in the courtyard of the high priest’s palace, he will live up to the moment. And so instead of avoiding temptation, Peter steps right into it.

Cold night so he remains by the fire.

Spurgeon comments, “It is much better to be cold than to warm ourselves where we are exposed to temptation.”

*And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.”” (Mark 14:66-68* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:66)*)*

The best of men are men at best. No matter who we are, we must not think we are above failure. We must not whisper to ourselves, *“I am too strong to fail.”* Our weakness is not an excuse for our faithlessness, but it is a cause for us to lean upon the Spirit of the LORD moment by moment.

Illustration: This week I was on a fishing boat in the Gulf of America. The waves were 4-5 feet and the boat was tossed here and there. When I walked from place to place on the boat, I realized that I needed to grab on to a rail or a post with every step. One step without and I may crash down to the ground!

*“The LORD had the strength. I had the weakness. So we teamed up! It was an unbeatable combination!” Vance Havner*

*“And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.” (Mark 14:68* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:68)*)*

At this point, there is no indication that the first crowing of the rooster awakens Peter to the danger. He seems oblivious to Jesus’ earlier warning. The swift current of fear has grabbed hold of him and he being carried down this path of faithlessness to the Lord.

**Truth: We often do not understand the power of sin to pull us away from our Master until it is too late.**

*And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it.” (Mark 14:69-70* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:69)*)*

Our faithless decisions always begin as a drop but soon turn into a river. Once we move away from our devotion to Jesus, we open the door for deeper and deeper sins against Him.

*And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.”” (Mark 14:70-71* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:70)*)*

Think of Peter’s denial! “I never knew this man!”

Peter denies that he knows the One who healed his wife’s mom, . . . who took him up on the mount of Transfiguration and showed him His glory, . . . who called him out of the boat to walk on water and then rescued him from drowning, . . . who gave him the name Peter, . . . who loved him for three years. And he denies Jesus not just once, but three times.

How far we all might fall once we lean upon our own strength!

*“And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.” (Mark 14:72* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:72)*)*

It was not the sound of the rooster’s crow that broke Peter. It was the remembering of Jesus’ words. If we are to repent and find solace in Christ, we must remember His words to us! His Word pierces our heart and brings godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

God sets Peter’s faithlessness before us to teach us that though we are in Christ, we are yet filled with weakness. We must walk in humility before the Lord and not with proud confidence. We can read through scripture and see that Peter is not alone in a godly man who becomes faithless before the Lord. Think briefly with me of Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, Jonah . . . just to name a few.

Let us learn that while faithlessness does not bring eternal destruction upon us, it always brings great loss and deep sorrow to our lives. **Though we are forgiven our sins, we are not immune to the pains that our sin presses upon us.** Our faithlessness never makes us happier . . . never brings us peace and joy. It crushes our hearts with shame and remorse. Friends, let us be convinced that there is no profit to us in walking carelessly in this world of dark attacks. Let us watch and pray!!

**Perhaps you say, “I have already been faithless. What do I do now? Is there any hope for me?”** Jesus will restore Peter. That story is told in John 21.

Jesus’ love for His own has no limit . . . no end . . . no bottom. His love surpasses our sins and failings. His compassion to us never fails and His forgiveness of us is complete. If you feel your faithlessness, do not hesitate to run toward Him. His look is not one of anger or condemnation, but is one of mercy and grace. Go to Him! Fall into His saving arms.

If you confess your sin to Him, He is faithful and righteous to forgive your sin! Yes, come to Him sorrowing over your sin. But come to Him ready to be consoled by His love.

*“To dwell on the past simply causes failure in the present. While you are sitting down and bemoaning the past and regretting all the things you have not done, you are crippling yourself and preventing yourself from working in the present. Is that Christianity? Of course it is not.” - Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

THIRD PERSON IN THIS STORY: JESUS

Who is NEVER hypocritical? Who is NEVER feeble and faithless? Jesus!

**Spiritual Victory of Divine Decree**

**The Victory of the Suffering Servant**

Notice the prophecy that Jesus brings to the religious leaders during His trial.

*Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”” (Mark 14:61-62* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:61)*)*

Jesus pushes the religious leaders beyond the present into eternity. At the moment it seemed like they were in power with the ability to pass judgment upon people. But appearance are not what they seem. The one who is condemned at this trial is the One who wears the robes at the ultimate day of reckoning.

Friends, let us live every day with the truth that Jesus is going to return in glory. He will be the One before whom every person must give an account. He is the One who offers eternal life to those who bow in submission to Him.

Four events. Is evil winning? No. God is allowing evil to bring greater glory to His Son on that last day. The LORD uses evil to establish salvation to all who repent and believe.

We are not rattled by the work of sin and Satan in this world. We know how the story ends. One day every eye will see Him. He will occupy the position of honor and will give glory to all who belong to Him. The same Jesus who is mocked, condemned, crucified and buried . . . is the Jesus who possesses all honor and power and glory and blessing. He will one day come in the clouds with his angels to put an end to sin and to make all things new.

We glory in His sufferings because through them we have hope of forgiveness. And we glory in His future return because the darkness will one day be removed and never touch us again.

Friends the question asked and the answer given removes all excuses that we may have.

*Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”” (Mark 14:61-62* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#Mark_14:61)*)*

We cannot plead ignorance regarding the Person of Jesus. He tells us plainly. Will you believe Him?

*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5* [*ESV*](https://accordance.bible/link/read/ESVS#John_1:4)*)*

**Main Idea: Jesus triumphs over evil. He alone stands at the end of the age in judgment upon all who refuse to submit to His Lordship and to receive His mercy. He alone rescues all who come to Him in faith and delivers us from the power and the penalty of evil.**

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