

The Road to Failure

by Chuck Smith

The sermon teaches that failure is a process that begins with a thought or fantasy and can lead to actions that ultimately result in death, and that prayer is the deciding factor in spiritual warfare.

Duration: 25:34

Scripture: Mark 14:33

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the passage in Mark 14:33-42 where Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus expresses his deep distress and sorrow to his disciples and asks them to stay and pray while he goes a little further to pray. The preacher emphasizes the importance of not neglecting one's prayer life and warns against falling into temptation. He also highlights the process of falling into sin, stating that it usually starts with neglecting prayer and gradually leads to denying Jesus in actions rather than words. The sermon concludes with a reminder to beware of boasting in oneself and to take heed to the teachings of the Bible to avoid drifting away from God.

Transcript

Well, it seems like we've been stalled in Mark 13 and 14 for a month, which is sort of the truth. But now we're moving on. This week, the final week in March 13th and 14th, and then next week we will finish the book of Mark as we are moving through the New Testament in our journey through the Bible.

But this morning, we'd like to draw your attention to Mark chapter 14, beginning with verse 33. This is telling about when Jesus came into the garden of Gethsemane. We read that he had set his disciples in one area, but he brought Peter, James, and John a little closer.

And we read that he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. He said to them, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow even to death. Wait here and pray.

And Jesus went a little further. He fell on the ground and he prayed that if it were possible that the hour might pass from him. He prayed, Father, all things are possible with you.

Take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will. And Jesus came and he found the disciples sleeping.

And he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch for one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Sleeping when he should be praying.

It is one of the steps in Peter's path to failure. When the moment of truth came, he found himself swearing and cursing, declaring that he never knew Jesus and denied that he was his disciple. Falling into sin is usually a part of a process.

A person doesn't go to bed at night and say, I think I will backslide tomorrow. Walk away from the Lord. It's usually a slow, imperceptible process.

The book of Hebrews said, take the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip away or we should drift away from them. James wrote, let no man when he is tempted say, God tempted me. For God cannot be tempted with evil and neither does he tempt any man.

But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin and sin when it is finished brings death. But we see that there are steps.

A man is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. When lusts are conceived, they bring forth sin. Sin when it is finished brings death.

It begins in your mind, the lust of your flesh. Maybe as a fellow you see an attractive girl and you think, wow, she's beautiful. I would love to go to bed with her.

That is lust. It leads to seeking to entice her, taking active steps to get acquainted, inviting her to have a cup of coffee with you. And lust is conceived and it begins to grow inside of you until you find yourself in bed and that is sin and it brings death.

It begins with a fantasy. It moves to actuality but it ends in death. Interesting how that so often we see a person that we are attracted to.

There's something about them that is attractive. Maybe a pretty face, maybe a beautiful voice and we're attracted. And we begin to fantasize.

That's where lust begins to be conceived as we begin to fantasize concerning that person. We remember in the Old Testament the story of one of David's sons who felt that he was in love with his sister and how that he was just sick. Could hardly do anything, he was so obsessed with her.

And of course, he then then through his subterfuge forced himself upon her, raped her. But as soon as he had raped her, the intensity of the love that he had felt turned into a hatred of equal proportions, ordered her out. And what happens is that so often when we see this tremendous reversal from what is a great obsession and love turning into a hatred is that you have seen something in that person that you admire but then you began to fantasize.

And you began to imagine this is the perfect person, this is the one that God created for me and all, you know, and heavens and all and this kind of stuff. And you begin to fantasize. And you fall in love with your fantasy.

You don't really fall in love with the person, you don't really know them. But you fall in love with your fantasy. And then when you really get to know that person, you really get to know them, you think, they

deceived me.

You know, and you get angry with them because, you know, you thought they were the perfect person but they deceived you, that's what they did. Young people so often go through that experience of, you know, fantasizing. And, you know, they're talking about some boy or some girl and, you know, there's just dreamy and stars in their eyes and a few weeks later you say, well, how's John doing? Oh, that crumb, I can't say, don't even mention his name, you know.

You know, and they've come to realize that he wasn't the dream man that they had fantasized him to be. And that's so common. And so this is the way, however, the progression towards failure, the path to failure, the fantasizing and then turning the fantasy into reality but discovering the reality isn't at all what you thought it was going to be.

Know this, reality can never live up to your fantasy. That's why reality is usually disappointing because it can never live up to the fantasy that you had. Now, as we look at this story in Mark concerning Peter and Peter's steps to the failure, the denying of his Lord, we see that it was in steps, progressing.

First of all, we find him boasting at the dinner, boasting in himself. When Jesus said, all of you are going to be offended tonight because of me, Peter said, though they may be offended with you, I will never be offended, boasting in himself, I will never be offended. What a dangerous thing it is to trust in our flesh.

In a short while, when they're in the garden, Jesus is going to warn Peter, the flesh is weak. That is not true just of Peter, it's true of all of us. Our flesh is weak.

Paul wrote to the Philippians that we have no confidence in our flesh. Again, Paul wrote, I know that in me that is in my flesh there dwells no good thing. Jesus told his disciples, apart from me, you can do nothing.

Isn't it interesting how that, as with Peter, we so often try to disprove the statement of Jesus, and we think, I'll show you I can do something, and we have confidence in our flesh, but that is a step towards failure. Jesus said, before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied me three times. Peter objected vehemently.

He said, Lord, I would never deny you. I will die for you. Peter is arguing with Jesus.

Now, that's again a step downward. Watch out that business of arguing with Jesus. Know this, if ever you find yourself in an argument with Jesus, you're wrong.

He's always right. And here he is arguing with Jesus. But the next step towards failure is found in verse 37 of this chapter.

When Jesus had placed him there in the garden and told him to watch and pray, as he came back, and Peter was fast asleep, Jesus said, Peter, are you sleeping? Sleeping when he should be praying. That is a step towards failure. I think of that song, Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Jesus told us that we should pray, that we should pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Prayer so often is the deciding factor in the spiritual warfare in which we're involved. And Satan knows this.

And that is why Satan fights so hard to keep you from prayer. Isn't it interesting how that when you get down to pray, there can be so many distractions. Whenever I get down to pray, I always remember all of the things that I had forgotten to do.

So I've learned to take a notepad with me rather than getting up and doing them. I'll jot down so that I can do them later. But it's interesting how that when I get down to pray, I'm sure or in the office, someone comes in and as I'm praying with them, the phone will always ring.

It's like there's a connection between prayer and the phone and it'll always ring when we're praying. Satan will do anything and almost everything to keep you from prayer. Why? Because it's the deciding factor in the spiritual battle.

If you were walking down a dark alley and someone jumped you and you began to fight with them. And as you were fighting, they would pull a knife. Suddenly the whole attention in that struggle would be upon the knife and the control of the knife.

Because you know that the knife could be the deciding factor in this battle that you're in. Prayer is the deciding factor in this battle that we have with Satan and that is why he fights so hard to keep you from prayer. Even to make you drowsy as with Peter.

Peter are you asleep? Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. Someone has said that the lack of prayer for one week will make one weak. You have to think that one through.

Jesus had warned, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. I think of how many victories are wrought through prayer. We're involved in a spiritual warfare.

Paul tells us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but they are mighty through God by which we can pull down the strongholds of the enemy. One of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal is the weapon of prayer. Spiritual battles are won in prayer.

It is the power by which we can bind the strong man of the house. Once he is bound, spoiling his house is only a matter of mopping up as we take the victory. Paul, when he talked about our spiritual warfare to the Ephesians, after he had gotten them all equipped in their armor, he then said, praying with all prayer and supplication.

Going now into the battle, you're all decked out with your weapons, with your sword of the Spirit, with the helmet of salvation, with the breastplate of righteousness. You're all ready to go. Then he says, praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, let your request be made known unto God.

Because it is a spiritual battle, we need to take advantage of our spiritual weapons. The third step towards Peter's failure found in verse 54. We read that as they led Jesus away from the garden to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, we read there, and Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest.

There is always danger in trying to follow the Lord afar off. It seems like there are always those who seem to try to find how close they can live to the world and still be a Christian. And they're always looking for that fine line.

As a Christian, can I do this? Or as a Christian, and how close can I live to the world and still maintain my walk with Jesus? I think that it's much better, rather than to try to find how close I can live to the world and still walk with Jesus, is to ask, how close can I walk with Jesus? Trying to find the line that would delineate between being in or out is not a healthy thing. You're trying to follow Jesus afar off. I do not believe that the Lord has any covert spies that are living in the enemy's camp and are still loyal to him.

The Bible plainly tells us in 2nd Corinthians 6:17, come out from among them, be separate, saith the Lord. Do not touch the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and you will be my sons and daughters. He's calling us out of the world.

The Bible warns us in 1st John 2:15, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For he that hath the love of the world in his heart, hath not the love of the Father. Jesus said, you are the light of the world.

And he said, you don't take the light and hide it under a bushel basket. You put it on the candlestick that it might give light to all in the house. You can't be a secret Christian.

Many people endeavor to do that. It just doesn't work. So trying to follow Jesus afar off inevitably leads to denying him.

But the final step to Peter's failure, we find also there in verse 54, where we are told, and he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Finding warmth at the fire of the enemy. When you can find warmth at the enemy's fire, you're in serious spiritual condition.

If you can find entertainment in a movie that is filled with immoral activities and cursing and swearing, and if you can enjoy seeing that portrayed, you're in serious spiritual trouble. You're finding warmth at the enemy's fire. And the next step is that of failure and defeat.

If you can enjoy a night spent in a club where there's drinking, dancing, socializing, you're in a dangerous spiritual state. There are places where you as a child of God have no place being, and especially trying to find warmth there. Because it will lead you to denying the Lord.

Do you find yourself finding warmth in worldly things? If so, you're in real danger. You're about to fall. If he were truly the Lord of your life, you wouldn't be doing the things that you are doing.

You can deny Jesus in actions as well as words. And so many people deny him in their actions rather than in words. But Jesus said, if you deny me before my father, or beg your pardon, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father in the presence of his angels.

You can't have it both ways. You can't deny Jesus before men and expect Jesus to confess you as one of his before the father in that day. So from this text, we learn these lessons.

Beware of boasting in yourself of what you are or what you will or won't do. Beware when you find yourself arguing with Jesus. Beware when you begin to neglect your prayer life.

Beware when you are seeking to follow the Lord afar off. And beware if you can find warmth at the enemy's fire. Lest that day would come when you find yourself swearing and cursing and denying that you ever knew the Lord.

Paths that lead to failure. May God keep us from them. Father, we thank you this day for the privilege of walking close to you.

And for the strength and the help that you give to those who acknowledge and recognize their weakness. Lord, we realize that there are those today that have been drifting away. Their prayer life is almost gone.

They're becoming more and more involved in the things of this world. Enamored by them, finding warmth in them. The Lord helped them to realize that this is the path to failure.

And Lord, draw them again back to a full commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ. In his name we pray, amen.

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