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## JOHN 18:1-27

### John Series

[PRAYER] Father, we are your children and we care about each other. We value our relationships and when one part of our fellowship is hurting it causes us to feel pain as well. So we are coming just asking for healing in the lives of these folks that need that this morning. We ask that you would touch their bodies. Father, we know that we all come before you as needy people as we've reflected already on this morning. Help us to be reminded about that continually – our need for you and the need to rely on your strength as we live each day. Remind us of what that looks like today, practical terms for each of our own lives. We dedicate the events of this week to you – the social event tonight where we fellowship around ice cream, and Wednesday when we gather for corporate prayer, the home fellowship that will take place this Wednesday too. Lord, we ask that in each one of those situations you would be honored and glorified. Thank you for what you're doing here among us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today I'd like you to open your Bibles to John 18. We're going to come to one of those passages that the Lord, I think, will use significantly in our lives. It's a reminder passage and so as you look at it with me, I want you to be thinking about how God might touch you in regards to the story of Peter denying Christ. He fell significantly. It caused damage to his own heart when this happened. I think that we are all at a place where we could easily fall in a place like this. As we go through the story, as we're weaving through the story of the trial of Jesus here, we're going to pull out the parts in particular that have to do with Peter and his lying that he engaged in in this story.

In John 18 let's start up in verse 1. We'll pick the rest of that theme up as we go through. John 18:1 says this: *When he had finished praying...* You remember last week we talked about John 17 and the high priestly prayer of Jesus. I like to call it the Lord's Prayer, but those words are already kind of taken for another prayer that Jesus prayed when He was teaching His disciples how to pray the Lord's Prayer. But it was a high priestly prayer. It says, *When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.*

This is the Garden of Gethsemane. So He's going to pray again and this time He's not praying for His disciples so much; He's going to pray for Himself. He's got some business He needs to take care of with the Father.

Now John doesn't tell us the story. We read about the story in the gospel of Matthew where Jesus takes three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, and He says, "Come with me a little bit further." He leaves them there and He goes off by Himself. They must be able to hear Him

because we're getting reports in the gospels of what He said and what He worked through. But He goes off by Himself and He prays.

The Bible tells us that those three guys, Peter, James, and John, fell asleep. And when Jesus came back He says, "Couldn't you guys watch and pray for one hour?"

Now we're going to take that information and use that. I just want to share that part of the story. It's not in the gospel of John. All we have in the gospel of John is that *on the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it*. But Jesus, when He went into that garden, He went and prayed by Himself and He prayed these words, Matthew tells us. He prayed, "*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*"

I'm sure this happens to you sometimes where you feel overwhelmed with emotion. And when you feel overwhelmed with emotion it's very important to go to the Father and work it out.

That's what Jesus is doing here. He comes back having worked out this business with the Father to deal with His overwhelming sense of emotion. Immediately when He leaves that, He comes back to His disciples, He wakes them up, and right away Judas is there with this group of people.

*Verse 2: Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.*

If you were to go to Israel today and you were to go to the Mount of Olives where this takes place, do you know that some of those trees that are there today are over 2,000 years old? So you would see those same trees that were there in the garden when Jesus was there. They are the same trees that are there today. It's kind of fascinating to even think that.

*Verse 3: So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.*

You have to picture this. We're in the dark. It's late at night, in the middle of the night. Judas is leading a group of people and I want you to see who's in the group. We've got Roman soldiers, first of all. Those are from the Roman government. You also have religious leaders that are there from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They are also present.

They're coming with their lanterns and they're coming with their torches. A torch was a stick wrapped with a rag soaked in some tar and then lit on fire. That would provide a pretty brilliant light. And then there was a lantern that was filled with oil and those were smaller lights that would be used to light up the particular area. That's what it's looking like in the middle of the night as they're coming here.

*Verse 4: Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"* So He starts the dialogue. He goes out and He says, "*Who is it you want?*"

You've got to picture it's dark. They've got torches and lanterns, but maybe they can't see who it is. Jesus looks like just one of the other guys. He doesn't have a glow on Him or something like that. He's just one of the guys there and He asks the question, "*Who is it you want?*"

Verse 5: "*Jesus of Nazareth,*" they replied.

"*I am he,*" Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "*I am he,*" they drew back and fell to the ground. What an amazing thing. Just the power of God making this statement *I am he*.

This word *ego eimi* (I am) is the word we've seen repeated several times in the book of John. *I am the door, I am the Good Shepherd*, and so on. But one time He says, *I am*.

It reminds us of the same words that God said to Moses. When God was having Moses talk to Pharaoh and issue the plagues and so on, God said to Moses, "I want you to go." And Moses says, "Well if I go there, what should I tell them your name is?" They've got lots of gods too is the impression here. How are you different? What's your name? And God says, "*Tell them I am sent you.*" The all-existent one. The to-be verb. That's *I am*.

That's the same thing's that being said here. And when He says *I am he* or *I am* then they fall to the ground. You can imagine the torches hitting the ground or the oil spilling out. They aren't just pulled back.

The story continues because Jesus again initiates with them. He says in verse 7, "*Who is it you want?*"

"*Jesus of Nazareth,*" they said, this time I think a little more sheepishly. Maybe they said "Jesus of Nazareth" a little bit different than their boldness at first.

In verse 8 *Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."*

Next week when we look at the next passage in John 18, we're going to talk specifically about this betrayal that took place with Jesus, how He was mistreated. We're going to look at another passage that references the crucifixion of Christ that helps us deal with mistreatment. I want to spend some time on that next week as we look together because there's a special application in the crucifixion and the trial and all this of Christ that Peter's going to use to help us understand it so that you and I can deal with mistreatment. We have to have a plan for addressing mistreatment. Peter gives us that and we'll talk more about that next week.

But today I'd like to speak directly about this idea of the fall of Peter. I'm going to call it the fall of Peter, but this mistake that he makes where he's actually going to be dishonest. He's going to lie three times. "I don't know Him" is what he's going to say. Three times he's going to do that.

I want to suggest that each one of us is on the edge of falling or engaging in some kind of sin unless we're careful. What I want to do is I want to go through the passage and I want to show how the progression took place. I think this may be a good model for us to be on guard for ourselves because some things happen in Peter's life. This wasn't just a spur of the moment thing. Things happened in his heart that led him to this place and then there was the trigger that took him into this problem. I want you to see what happens as we go through so you can understand it moving forward.

If you just think about your own life, I don't know where your weakness is. I don't know whether Satan wants to pull you down. But each one of us has areas in our lives where we can be drawn away. Maybe it's anger and so your desire is to get revenge. It can cause a significant problem in your life if you fall in that area. For others it's materialism. Satan knows that, so he may draw you and you may fall in this area of materialism. For others it's immorality and so just on the edge and the trigger's there and it could lead you to immorality. For others it's a habit like alcoholism or a drug habit or something that you're right on the edge.

I think we need to be very careful in our lives. And this is a warning passage here. I hope you'll take that to heart as I take you through what I think is a real anatomy of a fall here that any of us could experience in our lives.

I want to show you some different steps that take place. Some of them we've already covered. Before I go forward I want to talk about the statement that Peter made, remember, at the end of John 13 when they were still in the upper room and Jesus was predicting that some of them would go away.

Peter says this, "I will die for you." That's what he says. In other words, I'm never going to fall away. I'll go to death for you. There was a sense of confidence that he had that seems unrealistic taken a couple chapters later. Here he says I'm going to die for you and then he's unwilling to admit that he's even with Jesus just a few hours later in the story. Fascinating.

I think one of the dangers that we experience in our lives is when we think that we're strong – "Oh I can handle this. It's not a problem. Satan can't get me in this area" – I think that's when we're in significant danger. So we want to be careful of that. There was a sense of pride and self-assurance.

Then Peter gets into the garden with Jesus and Jesus says, "You guys wait here. I'm going over to pray." And He says, "Couldn't you pray? Couldn't you watch for just one hour?"

I would suggest that something was happening there even in Peter's life that's an indicator that we may be heading toward a problem. The indicator is that he decided he could sleep instead of pray. "I don't need to pray right now. I don't need to do that."

I would suggest that a second indicator or a second step in the process that may have been going on behind the scenes, setting the stage for the trigger that would lead to the fall was that he was neglecting spiritual activity. That spiritual activity in our lives may be that we're not praying as much as we used to. "I don't need to pray today. I've got this covered." Or "I don't need to read

the Bible. I'm feeling pretty good." Or "I go to church all the time, so I can skip this week or that week." Or "I can miss several weeks of church." When we start neglecting spiritual activity in our lives, we're setting ourselves up. We need to be careful of what might happen.

Those are two things. I'm going to go onto a third one that we see next in the passage. Go back to John 18:10.

Now you have to remember these people who came after Jesus, Jesus asked, "Who do you want? I'm the guy," and they all fell back. So there's this question Jesus asked again and they said, "We want Jesus of Nazareth."

It's at that moment Peter becomes bold. In verse 10 it says, *Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)*

Where in the world did he get a sword? You've got to ask that question right off. Well, there's a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples just a little bit earlier, maybe a day earlier or a few days earlier, and that story takes place in Luke 22.

Jesus is talking about the end times and He's saying here's what you need to do. If you have two coats, you should sell it and get a sword. So the disciples said, "Hey, we've got two swords." And Jesus says, "*That's enough!*" I don't know when He says, *that's enough* if that's enough swords, or He's saying that's enough; we're not talking about this anymore. I don't know what He means by that. But there's where the swords are. So somebody among the disciples had some swords.

Peter must have known who it was because Peter grabs one of the swords or maybe he had one himself, and he raises the sword up and he cuts off this guy's ear. Now you've got to imagine he wasn't aiming for his ear. You've got to bet he was aiming for his head to cut off his head. Peter's this big guy. Probably the fact that he just woke up from sleeping for an hour, he's feeling a little groggy is why his aim is off, his accuracy.

Can you imagine? Because doctor Luke tells us that when the ear got cut off that Jesus picks up the ear and puts it back on Malchus. Can you imagine if he had knocked off his head? That would've been quite a story. God put his head back on. I don't know. I wonder what would've happened in the situation or what happened with Malchus after that.

You read in Acts where a lot of the Jews and Jewish leaders became Christians after seeing the testimony of the disciples and so on. I wonder if Malchus was one of those guys. I wonder if he was one of those guys who said, "Wow. I believe in Jesus." I mean he had a personal experience of healing right there on the spot, a miraculous healing that God did in his life. He saw the power of God and many of times it's the power of God that reveals to us what we need to do in our lives and move us in the right direction.

Peter's a big guy, strong guy. A couple chapters from now when we get into the end of the gospel of John, we're going to see that after the resurrection Peter sees Jesus on the land, he goes

to Him. It says the other guys were bringing the net full of fishing, straining with it. Then it says Peter just went it and he got it (by himself it appears) and he just brought the whole net and all the fish right up on land. I mean this guy is a strong guy.

Here he is knocking off the ear. I think he got may be caught up in the excitement of the moment. All the guys fall back, it's obvious why they're here, and so Peter decides this is the time. I'm going to do something about it. And so he takes on this action and does something. This is the last miracle of Jesus before His crucifixion.

I want to draw another principle here that I think sometimes leads us to a place where we're susceptible to Satan's attack or susceptible to our own desires that can get us into trouble, illustrated by Peter's initiative in this moment. I would suggest that what Peter's doing is he's relying on himself instead of relying on the Lord. He's not really taking his cues from the Lord. He's saying, "I can handle this. Come on, man," and he just brings out the sword and starts taking action on his own, doing something that is going to be dangerous. Dangerous because he's not paying attention to what God wants to do, what the Lord is doing in this situation.

Sometimes we start taking on the task ourselves. We start saying, "I can handle this," and go out and do it and we get ourselves in trouble. That becomes the problem. Another thing, I think, that sets the stage for Peter to have a significant fall yet to come.

Notice verse 11. It says, *Jesus commanded (that's a real strong word) Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"*

I think a good application here by the way is when you're betrayed you should put your sword away. Because the temptation for us is when we're betrayed is to get out and start whacking ears off of people.

I'm not opposed to self-defense. I was thinking about Nick this week. Nick is great at self-defense. He knows a lot about it. If I ever get in trouble I want to be standing next to Nick so he can protect me. But I want you to know that if someone comes into my house in the middle of the night and starts to attack me or my family, you're going to see more than the nice Pastor Scott there in that moment. I think self-defense is a very valid response for us.

I would suggest that most of the times as Christians when we find ourselves in difficult situations, God calls us to love and graciousness, which is a very powerful response, instead of revenge that we often take place in a situation. So he's relying on self instead of relying on God's leadership and that gets him into trouble.

Verse 12: *Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him.* They're going to bind him with rope, but there's something much more now that He's being bound with, of course. It's the sin of the world. He's done this work with the Father in the garden and He's ready to go forward. So He's bound by this whole process as well.



Moving forward notice it says in verse 12, *They bound him* (verse 13) *and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.*

Let me remind you of the politics of the day because this trial that takes place involves a number of characters in the story. If you understand what's going on behind the scenes here in the politics, it will make more sense. He's going to go to Annas, then he's going to go to Caiaphas. Those are religious leaders.

In the politics of the day, the Roman Empire was all over the known world that we're talking about at this point and many of the countries that were conquered were able to manage themselves. So Rome said to the Jewish people, "You can manage yourselves." That means you can put someone into jail. You can have them beat up as a punishment for their crime. But you cannot enact the death penalty on them. That was reserved for Rome itself. Now the Jewish leaders are going to want Jesus to be killed and they have to appeal to the Roman government in order to do that. So there's going to be this interaction between the various leaders here in order to make that happen.

It's interesting that the Roman government is the ones who brought crucifixion into the picture. If it was up to the Jews, the way they killed someone is that they would stone the person. So crucifixion is going to be an important person there because it was predicted in the Old Testament before we were even aware of crucifixion. So all of this is coming together in a way that God ordained it.

Notice Jesus is first taken to Annas. Annas was the high priest. He's not the high priest now. He's the father-in-law of the high priest now, but he was the high priest. He was a Sadducee. The Sadducees were known for their political engagement. Very much unlike the Pharisees. The Pharisees didn't even like the Sadducees in part because of this. The Sadducees were politically minded. The Pharisees were against the politics of the day. So most of the time the Pharisees and the Sadducees were against each other. But in this case, they're together to fight what they're considering the Jesus problem, to deal with that.

So they're coming together now and Annas is the former high priest, but a well-respected man. So they take Him to him first, this leader. Annas spends some time with Him, but then sends Him to Caiaphas.

Caiaphas was the high priest from 18 A.D.–36 A.D. So during the time of Christ's death Caiaphas is the acting high priest. So Annas needs to send Him to Caiaphas.

We're also going to see that He's going to be sent to Pilate, who's the Roman governor at the time. Pilate doesn't want to deal with Him, sends Him to Herod. Herod says you've got to go back to Pilate. So it's all this bouncing around that takes place in this particular trial. We'll talk about much of that as we go through. That's just the background so you can understand what's happening in the story politically.

Now as this is happening, as Jesus is before Annas at the moment, we get back to Peter and we're going to see something else about Peter that I think is going to be important for our list that we're adding here toward a fall.

Notice verse 15 of John 18. We go back to Peter. It says, *Simon Peter and another disciple* (that would be John) *were following Jesus*.

Matthew 22 says that they were *following at a distance*. I would suggest that a challenge here in Peter's situation is that he wasn't close to Jesus anymore. He was following at a distance and that closeness to the Lord is gone. When that closeness to the Lord is gone in our lives, we are very susceptible to a fall. Very important warning, I think, in our lives.

As we continue, let me read verse 15 and then I'll read the rest of it. *Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple (John) was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.*

John and his family were a well-respected family. We read in the gospels they had multiple boats, so they were probably wealthy. They had servants, according to those passages. Again, making a statement about their health. We see that John was known to the high priest, so he had some clout there. Probably a very well-respected family here.

John uses that respect to go back and say, "Hey, let that guy in." So Peter's going to come in. Like a backstage pass he's going to get into the courtyard where he'll be able to see what's actually happening. Matthew tells us that he comes inside and sits to watch the outcome.

Peter's there watching, but before we get ahead of ourselves here, it says that he comes in in verse 17 and the servant girl says, "*You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?*" she asked Peter. And Peter lies for the first time in this part of the story right there. *He replied, "I am not."* Interesting.

Verse 18: *It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.*

I would suggest that he's warming himself by the enemy camp at this point. I would suggest that if we're following in anatomy of the fall here that we might come to another category of area where we might find ourselves really close to danger when we are comforting ourselves with the world or we are being comfortable with the world. As soon as you start being comfortable with the world, you're in danger. Because this is not our home. And if it's becoming really comfortable to you then you're in trouble, you're in danger of some kind of a trigger that might lead you into some kind of a fall in your life. Sometimes small, sometimes large, but when the trigger comes – watch out. It's there.

Back to John 18:19. *Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or*



*at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.”*

It’s interesting. In our Christian faith there are no secrets. In some faiths there are like secret handshakes or secret underwear that you have to wear. That’s not the case in Christianity. It’s all open. It’s available. It’s accessible. So we can see it. It’s open to everyone to see.

*Verse 22: When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” he demanded.*

*“If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?”*

I want to suggest that sometimes you may be doing the right thing and still you’ll offend some people. That you may be speaking truth and there still may be some people who are going to get offended by what you’re doing because of what you represent. We need to know how to respond to those. We can see from the story that even if you’re perfect, they’ll crucify you. So we need to be careful and not be surprised by the fact that people will sometimes be offended by the truth.

*Verse 24: Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. So He goes from Annas who was the former high priest, who has a lot of respect, to the acting high priest because some action needs to take place.*

*Verse 2: Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?”*

*He denied it, saying, “I am not.” One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him.*

It’s amazing to me when you start lying how you start finding yourself in other situations. You’ve just got to keep lying. Unless you come and tell the truth, you’ve got to make up another lie to cover up that lie.

*“Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?” Weren’t you one of His disciples out there too? “Didn’t I see you in the garden?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.*

So we see Peter making the significant fall in his life. Something I’m sure was devastating for him, painful for him.

Luke tells us then when the rooster crowed that Peter’s eyes met Jesus’ eyes in that moment. I wonder what kind of a look that was from Jesus. Was it a condemnation look? I don’t think so. My thought is it was probably a compassion look. That Jesus knew that Peter just blew it, that this is going to wreak havoc inside of Peter’s heart. He’s going to have a hard time forgiving himself for this mistake that he made. Painful situation. He was dishonest. He lied.

As I'm working with children I tell them that dishonesty always takes place under pressure. Dishonesty always takes place under pressure. Sometimes it's the pressure to get out of trouble, like the situation with Peter here to get out of trouble. Sometimes it's the pressure to get something you wish you could get, but you can't get it right away so you lie in order to get it. Sometimes the pressure is wanting to be liked by other people and so you lie by exaggerating the story. Dishonesty always occurs under pressure and it requires internal courage to take a stand for honesty, to do the right thing, to rely on God's grace under pressure in your life.

You don't have to lie under pressure. You can rely on God's strength under that pressure. It's very important.

It starts small in a person's life. They start lying. Sometimes they start lying to themselves – "It'll be okay" – and they start lying to other people thinking that it'll be okay and they'll get away with it somehow. And we end up in a significant problem. So God has created something in your heart and my heart (it's actually in the heart) called the conscience and this conscience prompts us in the area of honesty and dishonesty.

Let me show you a verse in the scripture in Romans 9:1 that ties lying to the conscience just so you can see it right out of God's word. In Romans 9:1 it says this: *I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit.*

It's very important, this idea of the conscience, and so it's very important for us to be very sensitive and to recognize the sensitive nature of the conscience. God has placed it in your heart and my heart for a very important reason. It's one of the tools that God uses to keep the heart going in the right direction. When the heart is tempted to do the wrong thing, the conscience is there to say, "Hey, do the right thing." It's prompting us in that right direction.

It's so important that Paul further writes in 1 Timothy 1:18-19 to Timothy – I want to tell you something, my son, that's really important for your life. *Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well.* And you're going to do that by holding on to two things. Notice what they are in verse 19 – *holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.*

I'm convinced that one of the greatest gifts we can give to our children is a clear conscience and a strong faith. Because it comes right out of the word. How important it is to line up those lights as you're going through the harbor, the clear conscience, strong faith to guide you through so that you won't get sidetracked by those rocks on the side that could easily create a problem, cause us to fall. Peter fell. I'm sure it was devastating for him; it was painful.

We'll tell the story more when we get up to the end of the gospel of John where Jesus restores him. "Do you love me, Peter?" Three times He asks him. We'll talk about that more. Jesus restores him back and I'm sure that was such a blessing for Peter, so much so that he wrote about it in his epistle. He wrote 1 Peter and 2 Peter and so when we go to 1 Peter and read some of the words that Peter wrote now we are encouraged.

I know that as I'm talking here it's likely you have some regrets and you think about something that you've done in your life that you're sorry for and you're torn up about it and you may have trouble forgiving yourself for it. So when God restores you, you're so grateful for what He's done.

When we think about that whole experience in Peter's life, we come to this passage in 1 Peter 1:3. Notice what Peter says. Listen to the words, thinking about his experience and where he's come. Peter says this: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* See, Peter knew that what he needed was this new birth that comes from Jesus Christ.

If you're here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to know there's a new birth and living hope mentioned in this passage. You need them both. God provides those things for you.

But it's not just a message for people coming to the faith. All of us need this living hope that God would have for us. That's why we named this church Calvary Chapel Living Hope. It's a place where people can find this hope that God has given to us. It's a place where we can recognize that God restores us, that God blesses us, that God gives us the strength to deal with life every day. It's a hopeful message.

I don't want you to leave today only being warned about the fall. I want you to recognize the tremendous mercy and grace that God provides. It's so important for us to understand that living hope and what God wants to do in our lives because we don't want to put ourselves on the shelf spiritually because we've failed. We want God to use us fully and God wants to use us fully. It just reminds us that we need to embrace that living hope that He has provided.

But it's important for us to have a plan for dealing with a fall. Do you have a plan – a plan for an area of weakness in your life? You might even write out the plan.

Peter gives us one and I'm going to show it to you in 1 Peter 5. He gives us several specific instructions about how to address challenges in our life. I think this comes out of Peter's personal experience, and you and I can identify with this as well since we just read this story.

In 1 Peter 5:6-10 it says, *Humble yourselves.* In other words, don't have this pride and self-assurance that you can move forward. *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* Don't think that you can handle it yourself or take matters into your own hands. Come to God and give Him your anxiety because He cares for you.

Verse 8: *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* What is your area of weakness? I'm going to give you a trigger and if you're not ready, then you're likely to fall.

Verse 9: *Resist him, standing firm in the faith.* Not neglecting spiritual activity, but *standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* You're not unique. We all are experiencing suffering in our lives.

Verse 10: *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

Don't let the devil get you down. If you're having some problem in your life right now, don't say, "I'm going to take out my sword and I'm going to solve this problem for God." Just rely on the Lord. Allow Him to lead you. As you do, God is the one who will provide you with that firmness, that strength, and that steadfastness inside your heart.

A beautiful passage. I'm convinced that Peter was referring to himself. He learned some valuable lessons and wanted to pass them on to us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of course, as he wrote the scriptures.

God is teaching us. We need to have a plan. Do you have a plan for a fall? If you don't have a plan, you're open bait for the lion who's looking for a way to just get you in trouble. Develop a plan and rely on God's grace in the midst of that. And then if you've found yourself in a difficult situation you want that hope that God provides. It's a beautiful thing that we can enjoy, that living hope that's available to each one of us.

We're going to sing a song in just a moment and as we do I want you to take an opportunity to reflect in your own heart about what God is doing in your own life. It's important for us to bow down before Jesus in our hearts regularly and just worship Him in everything that we do.

If God is speaking to you in a particular way this morning and you'd like prayer in your life, then I'd encourage you to get up and go to the prayer counselors. They'll be on the side and just allow them to pray with you about any area that you're thinking about or you want prayer for a friend or whatever. Take advantage of the prayer that's offered this morning through the prayer counselors as well.

Let's focus on what God wants to do in our hearts as we respond to Him now after hearing His word. Let's stand and continue to worship the Lord together.