

Restoring Grace  
Mark 14:27-31

**Slide 1**

Many of us can remember what would happen in elementary school when the teacher had to leave the room.

She'd always tell the class, "*Be quiet while I'm gone and study!*," and as soon as she left, just about everyone would start misbehaving.

Then, when she returned, there was that last minute adjustment as everyone scurried back to their seats and pretended like nothing had happened.

This is what happened in Exodus when Moses was called by God to go up into Mount Sinai.

While he was away the Israelites grew restless, forgetting everything that God had been trying to teach them.

They ended up making a golden calf as an idol and dancing around it in worship. How quickly the human heart can change. How easy it is to fall away.

Most of us know that old hymn *Come, Thou Fount*. It was written by Robert Robinson who had been saved through George Whitefield's ministry in England.

Shortly after that, at the age of twenty-three, Robinson wrote that hymn.

*Come, thou fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.*

Sadly, after writing this hymn Robinson fell away and lived many years away from God. One day, while he was traveling by stagecoach, there was a young woman sitting opposite him engrossed in a book.

She ran across a verse that she thought was beautiful and asked him what he thought of it. Quoting the words of his song she read: *"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."*

Bursting into tears, he said, *"I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."*

How true it is that our hearts are prone to wander. Prone to leave the God we love.

As we continue our series, Amazing Grace, we've looked at Saving Grace and Sustaining Grace. Today I want us to look at Restoring Grace.

Peter understood what it was like to fall away from Jesus. Listen to Mark's narration about Peter's demise.

Mark 14:27-31, *"You will all fall away, Jesus told them, "for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, "today -- yes, tonight -- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same."*

Our relationship with Jesus is like any other relationship. It has to be maintained. No relationship ever stays the same. We're either growing closer to the Lord or drifting away.

You just don't become a Christian and that's it. You're either having your heart grow warmer every day or it's growing colder.

So, why do people turn away from God? Let's examine the life of Peter and see what can make us turn away from God.

## **Slide 2**

First, Peter became overconfident. We begin to think we can handle everything on our own. We think we're so strong we could never fail, and say, *"That would never happen to me!"*

Anytime you hear about someone else's stumbling and you say, *"That could never happen to me,"* you're setting yourself up for a fall. Given the right situation, any one of us in this room is capable of any sin.

1 Corinthians 10:12, *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"*

The disciples spent 3 years walking with Jesus. They saw the miracles and heard His teaching. In fact, on the night Jesus was betrayed, He told them that they would all fall away.

Yet, Peter speaks up and declares in Mark 14:29-30, *"Even if all fall away, I will not." I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, "today -- yes, tonight -- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."*

The Bible says that the heart is deceitful. That means we lie to ourselves as much as lying to others. We don't always know why we do what we do. So, you should never say, *"I could never fall for that."*

That's called overconfidence and that's the first step in falling away. That's your ego talking. Do you know what ego stands for?? EGO stands for Edging God Out.

When I get overconfident, I let ego into my life, I'm edging God out. I'm already backing away and heading down the slippery slope of falling away from Christ.

When the king of Austria died in 1916, his was the last of the extravagant imperial funerals.

A procession of dignitaries and elegantly dressed members of the imperial court escorted the coffin draped in the black and gold imperial colors to the Monastery in Vienna.

To enter the monastery, you had to pass through a large iron door. When the officer leading the funeral procession came to the door, he cried out "*Open!*"

The Cardinal of Vienna appeared and asked, "*Who goes there?*" The officer responded, "*We bear the remains of his Majesty, Franz-Joseph, Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, Defender of the Faith, Prince of Bohemia-Moravia, Grand Duke of Lombardy...*" and on and on he went.

At the end, the Cardinal replied, "*We know him not,*" but then asked again, "*Who goes there?*" The officer replied, this time saying simply, "*We bear the body of your ruler, the king of Austria.*"

"*We know him not,*" the Cardinal said and asked again, "*Who goes there?*" This time the officer knelt down and said, "*We bear the body of Franz-Josef our brother and a sinner like the rest of us.*"

At that the doors swung open and Franz-Josef was admitted.

### **Slide 3**

Next, we see that Peter compromised his faith. This is why it's important, as believers, to develop healthy habits.

Things like praying every day, reading the Bible every day, and being in a small group. These things help us.

However, we all know that life can get busy. We grow tired, and when we get tired, we start overlooking healthy habits.

After having a Passover meal with His disciples and warning them that they would all fall away, Jesus takes His closest friends, Peter, James and John, to the garden of Gethsemane to pray.

When they get there, as He is going off to pray, He asks them to keep watch and pray with Him. But when He returns, He finds them asleep.

Waking them up, He warns them in Mark 14:38, *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”*

Then He goes off and prays a little more. Coming back to check on them, He finds them asleep again. Mark 14:40, *“When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.”*

Again, He went off to pray; again, they fell asleep. Suddenly an angry crowd appears, Judas has arrived to betray Jesus. The disciples, unprepared for this, all ran away.

What can we learn from this? When you get tired, you’re setting yourself up for major temptation.

It's more difficult to do the right thing than it is to do the wrong thing. Doing the wrong thing is easy. It just means going with the flow.

Last week we talked about the fact that the more tired we get, the easier it is to compromise our faith. It’s hard to go against the flow.

If you don't know how to recharge yourself emotionally, spiritually, and physically, then fatigue is going to set in.

Fatigue should always be a warning light that something's going wrong, something's out of order. When you're tired, that's when you're most vulnerable to temptation.

Christians, who've stumbled in major areas in their life, often did so when they were in a time of great stress.

It was when they were tired that they ignored the warning signs. The devil loves to hit us when we're most vulnerable.

We've got to keep our guard up because when we start letting it down, through over confidence and compromise, we're starting on that slippery slope to falling away.

#### **Slide 4**

The third reason people turn away from God is cowardice.

After running away from Jesus when He was arrested, Peter wanted to know what's happening so he went to the courtyard outside the High Priest's home to see if he could find out what was going on.

Mark 14:66-68, *"While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway."*

Peter was hiding. He wanted to know what was happening to Jesus, but he's afraid that he'd be arrested, so he hides the fact that he's a disciple.

Have you ever been like that? Have you ever been hesitant to tell someone that you're a follower of Jesus because you're afraid of what they'll think of you?

Mark 14:54, *"Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire."*

Do you ever try to follow Jesus at a distance? You want all the benefits of being a Christian without any of the cost.

It's like the old statement: *"If all of a sudden they outlawed Christianity and they made it illegal and you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Would your neighbors know you were Christian or simply that you always seem to be gone on Sunday mornings, but they didn't know why?"*

One of the ways that you can know if you're slipping away from Christ is that you start to become embarrassed by your faith. You start making excuses. You're following from a distance.

You're ashamed to be seen reading your bible at school or having a bible on your desk at work.

You're ashamed to pray over a meal in a restaurant in public. You're ashamed to be seen with a group of other Christians in public.

Proverbs 29:25, *"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe."*

When you start worrying about what other people think, you're headed for trouble. It's a snare that'll eventually catch up with you.

Mark 8:38, *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

That's powerful. There are no secret agents in God's army, no closet Christians. It's time to come out of the closet.

A lot of Christians can talk about anything except Jesus. They are Arctic River Christians -- frozen at the mouth.

A Sunday School teacher asked, *"Can someone tell me the lesson we've learned from the book of Jonah?"*

*A little boy raised his hand and said, "I know what I have learned from the book of Jonah: backsliders make whales sick!"*

You can't follow Jesus from a distance. Jesus is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. Over confidence, compromise and cowardice – but there's one more... Convenience.

## **Slide 5**

We want to have faith, but we want to have a comfortable faith. We want it to fit our schedule. Sure, I want to follow Christ as long as it means I don't have to change.

Peter was following Jesus from a distance. The verse we read says, *"he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire."* That must have been an amazing scene.

Here's Peter, surrounded by the people that had just arrested Jesus. Why? Because it was warm.

He's hanging out with the very people that are about to beat Jesus and hand him over to be crucified, because it was comfortable.

If you try to enjoy the world's campfire, you're eventually going to get burned. You're not in the same kingdom, the same world, or the same lifestyle anymore.

I've seen people, who were on fire for God, who suddenly got sidelined. Do you know, there's a pattern people follow when they begin to fall away from Christ.

When a person is active in church and they start falling away, often the first thing they stop is their giving.

Jesus said your giving indicates your heart. He said, "*Where your treasure is your heart will be.*"

It's a thermometer of what's going on inside you. When you're walking in faith and trusting God, you give. When you start doubting and get lazy, you stop.

The second thing they stop is prayer, and finally they just stop attending. So, what happens to those people?

What happens to a person who's a genuine Christian, who's committed their life to Christ, but for one reason or another they've backslidden and fallen away?

How does God respond to those kinds of people? When a Christian sins, does he lose his salvation? When a Christian sins, does he go to hell? How does God respond?

God responds the way He always responds to His children. By grace. People sometimes ask, "*Can a person lose their salvation?*" For me this is not a theological question, but a pastoral one.

If someone comes to me and says, *“Pastor, I’ve really blown it. I’ve sinned, does that mean I’ve lost my salvation?”* No, you don’t lose your salvation just because you sinned. Aren't you glad for that?

If you could lose your salvation every time you sinned, you’d lose it every 15 minutes.

Let's say you lived for Jesus Christ your entire life and five minutes before you die you blow it, you go to hell. You’d live in fear your entire life.

Paul reminded the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 2:6, *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”*

If you’re in Christ, then you’re already seated with Him in the heavenly realms. Past tense! There’s no condemnation when a Christian sins. They’re covered by the blood of Jesus.

However, there are also those who think that just because they sometimes go to church or once said a prayer that they can live however they want for the rest of their life with no consequences. To them I say, *“You cannot be a Christian and still live like the devil.”*

Matthew 7:16-20, *“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”*

Don’t claim to be an apple tree if all you’re producing is pears. To all who’ve fallen, Jesus wants you to know today that God is a God of second chances. And third, and fourth, and...

So, why doesn't God reject us when we turn away from Him? Let me give you four reasons...

## **Slide 6**

### 1. His Love is Perfect

Lamentations 3:22, *"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."*

You can underline the word NEVER. God's love is a perfect love. It's not based on what we've done but on Who God is.

### 2. His Salvation is not based on Performance. Titus 3:5, *"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy..."*

Salvation is based upon what God does, not what we do. It's a gift, not based on works. You can't earn it, you can't learn it, and you don't deserve it. It's a gift.

There's nothing you can ever do to make God love you more than He already does, and there's nothing you can do to make God love you less.

### 3. He has already taken our Punishment. God doesn't reject you when you sin. Why? Because Jesus has already taken your punishment. He's already paid the price for it.

In the justice system there's the law of double jeopardy. It says that a person cannot be tried for the same crime twice.

This is true of God's justice as well. People are not punished for the same crime, or the same sin, twice.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus stretched His arms out on the cross and took the punishment for our sin. He said, *"It is finished!"*

He paid the price for you and me. He took our place, was convicted instead of us, and served our term.

He took the death penalty for us. The bible says that the penalty for sin is death, and that's what He did. He died in our place.

Can you imagine God coming to you the next time you sin and saying, *"By the way, what Jesus did for you just wasn't good enough. So, I'm going to punish you as well."* Does that make sense?

I don't know how to say it any clearer than this. If you're a Christian and you've received the grace of God, God doesn't punish you when you sin. That punishment was already taken by Jesus on the cross.

I know what some people are thinking. If Jesus has already been punished for all the things I'm ever going to do then that means I can just go out and do whatever I want? I can just keep on sinning.

I once heard a pastor say, *"If you've never asked yourself that question before then you've never really understood the gospel."*

Paul understood this: Romans 6:1-2, *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"*

One translation says, *'perish the thought!'* No genuine believer would ever pervert the grace of God and try to flaunt it in such a way.

When you understand the price that Jesus paid for your salvation it makes you value God's grace, not abuse it.

Grace should make us want to do what's right. When we really understand grace, we'll say, *"God, I am so grateful."*

*You're telling me that everything I'm ever going to do wrong is already taken care of and I am so grateful for that. I want to serve You the rest of my life. I want to love You. I want to do whatever You made me to do in this world."*

4. He's Patient. Jesus knows what it is to be human. He's sympathetic and understanding. He knows our frailties.

One of the most beautiful truths you're going to need to learn in the Christian life is this: God is patient with you. He doesn't get impatient.

*You may be thinking, "I've gone so far down the slope there's no way back. It's just going to take too much effort, too much energy. It's too long. I've gone too far away."*

You're wrong. Very wrong. Returning to Jesus isn't this long, drawn out, complex process that's going to take years for you to get back in fellowship with God. It's just one step.

Many people don't understand the difference between fellowship and relationship. Fellowship is your current status. Relationship is your permanent position.

Can I be out of fellowship with my wife and still be married to her? Of course, I can. Can I be out of fellowship with my children and still be their parent? Of course, I can.

Likewise, when you sin you don't lose the relationship. You lose the fellowship.

Those of you who're parents know that you can try to raise your children in the right way, but when they get older, they're going to make their own decisions.

There may be times in that process when your fellowship with them is strained, but they'll always be your child. The fellowship may be damaged, but the relationship will always be there.

When you became a believer in Christ, you were born again into God's family and you can't be unborn.

So, although the fellowship with God may be broken, the relationship is still there. You're only one step away from returning.

## **Slide 7**

### Conclusion

So, what should you do when you sin? One word: Return! Come back to Christ. It's that simple.

There's a happy ending to the story of Peter's denial. If ever there was a sin you'd think was unforgivable, it's denying Jesus three times on the night He's betrayed.

But Jesus knew Peter would deny Him and even knew he'd come back to Him. In fact, before it even happened, Jesus said it would happen.

*Luke 22:31-32. "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."*

After the resurrection, Jesus showed up on a beach to spend quality time with Peter to restore him. He even allowed Peter to reaffirm his devotion 3 times, replacing every betrayal.

Of course, we know the rest of the story. Peter would be filled with the Holy Spirit in that upper room and go out proclaiming Jesus to Jerusalem and beyond.

Jesus knew that Peter's ministry would be more effective after his denial than it was before. And sure enough it was. Peter even wrote two of the books of the Bible called 1 and 2 Peter.

Maybe you've betrayed Jesus. Maybe you've denied Him many times. Come home to Jesus. God still wants to use you.

A.W. Tozer hit the nail on the head when he said, *"In every Christian's heart there's a cross and a throne. The Christian is on the throne until he puts himself on the cross.*

*If he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne. Perhaps this is at the bottom of the backsliding and worldliness among believers today. We want to be saved but insist Christ do all the dying."*