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Sermon Notes

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## **Sinful Self-Reliance Predicted, Exposed, and Cured**

### **Matthew 26:31-35**

In 1841, transcendentalist essay-writer and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote an essay called “Self-Reliance”, summing up the most basic and pervasive idea of the American dream and giving expression to many prominent and long-lasting American ideals. From individualism to entrepreneurialism, Emerson's writings emphasize the responsibility of each citizen to the self rather than to an outside authority. Living at a time when America was undergoing vast social and economic changes, Emerson provided an image of the young nation as enterprising, imaginative, and full of opportunity. A person's destiny lies in his or her own hands, according to Emerson, and therefore Emerson helps establish much of the rhetoric surrounding the American dream.

Emerson said, toward the end of his writing career, "I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man." That's why we begin our study of American transcendentalism with this essay. His basic philosophical faith (one shared by many Americans) is that the ultimate source of truth is within ourselves.

His ideal was lived out in the boldness and courage of pioneers who carved a new existence out of the wilderness of Kentucky with axes and muskets; his ideal was lived out in the self-reliance of the mountain men who roamed the Rockies all alone, trapping animals for furs and sleeping under the stars; His ideal was lived out in the economic boldness and courage of entrepreneurs and inventors like Orville and Wilbur Wright and Henry Ford and Thomas Edison... according to the national rhetoric, they lived out Emerson's central slogan: **TRUST YOURSELF!!!**

The Bible couldn't disagree more:

***Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.***

***John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.***

Overweening self-confidence is part of the sin nature... part of our fall in Adam. Amazingly, human beings can be living a daily life in total rebellion against the holy God of the universe, their minds at enmity with God at every moment, and they can still say “I'm basically a good person.” Though we are frail and weak, “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd,” we can feel mighty and powerful, capable of doing anything we set our

minds to. Our culture sells us this line again and again: “You can do anything you want to do, be anything you want to be, if you will just BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.” The message of “self-esteem,” of “self-confidence,” of “self-assurance,” of “self-salvation” is a huge part of the American message, the American educational system, the American dream... I would say “the American myth.”

The message of the Bible is diametrically opposed to all this. The message of the Bible is that we need a Savior... that we are lost, and cannot find our way back; that we are paralyzed and cannot move; that we are blind, and cannot see; that we are destitute and cannot afford to buy a thing; that we are starving, and cannot find a meal; that we are spiritual dead, and cannot raise ourselves to life.

Here in Matthew 26:31-35, we have put on full display the overweening confidence of the Apostles, with Peter as the main example... the self-confidence of these men is completely misplaced, as later events will bear out. They were absolutely certain of their loyalty to Christ, of their commitment to Him. They felt certain that nothing would shake that loyalty, and that they were willing to die for Him. All Eleven of them felt the same way... and it is truly UGLY.

They would eventually learn the truth, and deeply humbled, they would learn the basic lesson of the gospel: WE NEED A SAVIOR, and HIS NAME IS JESUS!

Jesus Himself would say, “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” We don’t really believe this as we should. We keep thinking more highly of ourselves than we should.

Today, we get a chance to look at the failure of the Apostles, and especially Peter, through the loving eyes of Jesus, who knows our hearts completely. We get to hear the truth spoken not just to him and the other Apostles... but TO US... because we are every bit as self-confident as they were. We need to be cured of self-reliance, to be humbled, and to learn how to serve Christ in a dangerous, hostile world by total reliance on His blood, His resurrection, His Spirit, His prayers for us.

## I. Christ Predicts the Sinful Flight of the Apostles (vs. 31)

***Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."***

### A. Context: The Night of Jesus’ Arrest

1. Matthew 26:1-16... Jesus anointed at Bethany; Judas arranges Jesus’ betrayal for 30 pieces of silver
2. Matthew 26:17-30... Jesus prepares the final Passover, predicts Judas’ betrayal, and celebrates the Last Supper with them... instituting the body and blood as a permanent reminder of His death for them... “This is my body”

“This is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant”; “Do this in remembrance of me.” Then, they sang a hymn and “went out” (vs. 30)

3. John 14-17 carries all the beautiful teaching Jesus had been doing for His disciples... telling them of the Promised Holy Spirit, of the persecution and suffering they would go through in the world, of the fact that in this world they would have trouble, that they would be hated by all people and put out of the synagogues and even put to death by those who thought they were serving God... He would pray for them most beautifully in light of these awesome truths, that none of them would be lost; He would pray for those who would believe in the gospel through their witness... all of that marvelous teaching happened before they went out from the Upper Room... but the Apostles weren't really ready for all of that yet...

***John 16:12 I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.***

At some point, they would be ready for all those themes... but they had a very important lesson first, a BITTER LESSON... about themselves... they would have to learn firsthand of their own terrible weakness, spiritual frailty, their overwhelming FEAR OF DEATH

That lesson was about to begin... so, they finished their time in the Upper Room, sang a hymn, and **WENT OUT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES** (vs. 31)

4. Where were they going? To Gethsemane... the very place where Judas knew they would go... the place where Jesus would pray, and where He would also be arrested... they were making their way out of the crowded city of Jerusalem, where several million people would be for the Feast; they would cross the Kidron Valley, where the Brook would be flowing, filled with runoff from the spring rains and from the blood of the thousands of Passover Lambs that had been sacrificed that day... their blood was carried out of Jerusalem by the Kidron Brook; and as Jesus walked with His disciples, they undoubtedly could have seen by the light of the full moon the blood stream flowing from the temple... and could perhaps reflect on Jesus' words, “This is the blood of the New Covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”
5. So, they were going to GETHSEMANE on the Mount of Olives... a quiet place of retreat out of the bustling, crowded, frantic, noisy city

#### B. Jesus Drops a Bombshell

***Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."***

1. He had already dropped one bombshell earlier... concerning Judas
2. It had hit them all as they all wrestled with His words to see if He meant them:

***Matthew 26:21-22 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." <sup>22</sup> They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"***

3. Now, He is very clear about who He means... ALL OF THEM would fall away
4. Time Frame: THIS VERY NIGHT... within hours, they would all fall away on account of Him
5. What does "fall away" mean?
  - a. The Greek word is "skandalidzo" from which we get the word "scandal" or "scandalize"
  - b. Sometimes translated with a sense of stumbling over a stone...
  - c. Best sense is the setting of a trap or snare... so the Apostles would be caught in a trap or snare by Satan and his evil henchmen

C. The Root of the Scandal: Jesus' Suffering and Death

1. The scandal was clear: it was Jesus' arrest and subsequent trials, torture, and death
2. The disciples, Peter in particular, had never been able to accept Jesus' repeated predictions of His death
3. Clearest example:

***Matthew 16:21-23 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. <sup>22</sup> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" <sup>23</sup> Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."***

4. The Apostles all expected (after the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem) that Jesus would sit on a throne of glory to rule the world, and they would sit at His right and left on Twelve Thrones ruling with Him in security and glory
5. So... Jesus SCANDALIZED them with His arrest, suffering, and death... they could not understand it!!
6. A dead Messiah made no sense at all
7. The "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah made no sense at all...
8. They could not accept the need for Jesus to suffer and die for their sins

9. So, as He was being arrested, they would be scandalized by their shock, and would revert to their own former way of thinking... SAVE YOURSELF
10. They would not trust Him, but would be left bewildered and back where they started... as fishermen or a tax collector, if you could get your job back
11. The expression, "BECAUSE OF ME"... to fall away "BECAUSE OF ME" means because of what I am doing, what I have chosen... it is especially poignant when it comes to the disappointment of unmet expectations

E.g.: John the Baptist in prison:

***Matthew 11:2-6 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup> to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. <sup>6</sup> Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."***

D. They Would ALL Fall Away!!

1. This scandal would sweep all of them down the drain of Christ-denying self-preservation
2. They would run for their lives, abandoning Him to His vicious enemies... no one would stand by Him
3. Amazing, isn't it... how little loyalty they had after the most powerful, perfect, glorious, miracle-working ministry He had done in their midst

E. Note: Jesus' Knowledge of the Future... Based on Scripture

1. Jesus is making a prediction, and He is absolutely certain about it
2. Not, "This very night, MAYBE SOME OF YOU will fall away... YOU WILL all fall away
3. Only God knows the future... and Jesus is God; this sweeps away the strange teachings of Open Theism, which says that God cannot know the future of free will beings like humans
4. Jesus knew everything that would happen to Him... and He speaks these predictions for one simple reason... to strengthen their faith

***John 18:4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"***

***John 13:19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.***

***John 14:29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.***

5. Here, Jesus specifically links it to Scripture... an obscure prophecy in Zechariah:

a. The same book that predicted Judas selling Jesus for 30 pieces of silver

***Zechariah 11:12-13 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. <sup>13</sup> And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-- the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.***

b. In Zechariah 13:7, it makes this prophecy

***Zechariah 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.***

c. This prophecy shows that, even their falling away, their running away to save their lives, was part of God's eternal plan, written before any of them were born

d. Without Jesus' explanation, however, I don't think anyone would have linked Zechariah 13 to the night of Jesus' arrest... "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain"

e. In the original context, Zechariah was talking about God's commitment to remove false prophets, some of whom would renounce their wicked false prophecies... but suddenly, in Zechariah 13:7, the prophet speak these words... STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL BE SCATTERED

f. The prophecy calls for God's sword to awake against "MY SHEPHERD, MY ASSOCIATE"

g. Very strange for God to use this language of any man... but it points amazingly to the deity of Christ...

***<sup>KJV</sup> Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God***

***John 10:30 I and the Father are one.***

The Zechariah prophecy says God will strike down His Shepherd, His Associate, the One Close to Him (a prophecy of Christ's bloody death) and when He does, the sheep, the little ones will be SCATTERED

Notice also the awesome protection that Jesus alone gives... when the Shepherd is struck down, they all run for their lives, because He is our shelter

Yet amazingly, it was IN BEING STRUCK DOWN that Jesus provided the GREATEST SHELTER POSSIBLE for the sheep... shelter from the wrath of God!!!

At this point, Peter and the other Apostles display their sinfulness in deepest colors:

## II. Peter Displays His Sinful Self-Reliance (vs. 33)

***Matthew 26:33 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."***

### A. Perhaps the Worst Statement Ever Made in Scripture by Any True Follower of Jesus

1. Look what's involved in it:
2. First: Peter's statement is ARROGANT IN THE FACE OF JESUS: "Jesus, you're WRONG!!"
  - a. We've noted it before, but Peter is amazingly bold in calling Jesus, the perfect Son of God WRONG, and he does it FOUR TIMES
  - b. Trace out the word "Never" in Peter's statements in the NIV... notice that in every case, Jesus has the final word!! (Praise God!!)
    - i) Correcting Jesus about His death (as we've already seen above)

***Matthew 16:22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"***

***Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."***

- ii) Correcting Jesus about the footwashing

***John 13:8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."***

- iii) Correcting Jesus about his own falling away (here)

***Matthew 26:33-34 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." <sup>34</sup> "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."***

Actually, this one counts TWICE:

***Matthew 26:35 But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."***

iv) EVEN AFTER the Resurrection, correcting God about eating formerly unclean animals

***Acts 10:13-15 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." <sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."***

- c. These statements all come from an OVERWEENING PRIDE, a self-confidence directly in the face of Jesus
- d. In effect, Peter is saying to Jesus: "You know a lot of things, and you have some amazing powers... but you need to be corrected from time to time. You're just simply WRONG, Lord!"
- e. On this one, the root issue is PRIDE... "You're wrong ABOUT ME, Lord... you don't know me very well!"
- f. And yet, isn't this true:

***Psalm 139:1-3 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.***

- 3. Secondly: Peter's statement is ARROGANT COMPARED TO THE OTHER APOSTLES... He's saying "I am better than all these men! They MAY fall away, but I NEVER WILL!!"
- a. In effect, I am the best, most loyal, the most courageous follower in the world
- b. Perhaps they will ALL fall away; but I am BETTER than they are... the circumstances may press on them and they will abandon you, Lord... but I NEVER WILL
- c. We see here the kind of jockeying for position and selfishness that made these Apostles argue frequently about which of them was the greatest!!
- d. What about this:

***Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.***

## B. The Root Issue: Pride and Self-Reliance

1. We've seen the deadly pride in this statement
2. Strongly related to it is SELF-RELIANCE
3. Yes, he underestimates the incredible trial that's about the face him... he doesn't know how the Prince of this World (Satan) is able to craft circumstances and sift everyone like wheat... he vastly underestimates Satan's power
4. But even worse, he vastly OVERESTIMATES his own virtue... his own courage, faith, loyalty, zeal, dedication, love... He thinks, "Tough times may come, but I WILL BE UP TO THE TASK!!"
5. He is relying on himself... and that self-reliance is exactly the opposite of faith, which relies wholly on the Lord
6. More on self-reliance at the end of the sermon!!

## III. Christ Predicts Peter's Three-Fold Denial (vs. 34)

***Matthew 26:34 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."***

### A. The Specific Prophecy

1. This very night [for the second time in this account... Jesus is very clear about the timetable... amazing that someone can change so quickly from arrogant confidence to total terror, running for his life... but THAT VERY NIGHT it was going to happen to Peter]
2. Before the rooster crows: [even more specific about the timetable... the Jews divided the evening into four main sections—
  - a. Evening: from six to nine o'clock
  - b. Midnight: from nine to twelve o'clock
  - c. Cock crow: from twelve to three o'clock
  - d. Morning: from three to six o'clock

NOTE: by the time they arrived at Gethsemane, it was probably after midnight... so Jesus is saying that Peter would be denying Him three times WITHIN THREE HOURS!!! The time frame was amazingly short

Note #2: The rooster crowing would be the very instrument that God would use to call Peter back from rebellion and cowardice to repentance

and tears... at the very moment he would utter the third denial, the rooster crowed!! The timing was incredibly accurate!!

3. You will disown me: to say "I never knew Him!" A terrifying statement to make, especially when calling down curses on yourself...

Our whole salvation is based on Christ, the Son of God "owning us" as one of His own, vouching for us, calling us by name, taking us by welcome into the very presence of God... to disown Christ is to sever the relational tie that is the essence of our salvation:

***John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.***

Conversely:

***Matthew 7:23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'***

***Luke 13:25 you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' 'But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'***

***Luke 12:9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.***

***2 Timothy 2:12 If we disown him, he will also disown us;***

4. Three times: [Jesus is very specific about the number of times Peter will disown Christ as well]

#### B. The Specificity Displays Christ's Omniscience

1. The details of Christ's future knowledge here is astonishing...
2. Christ knows the future in detail... nothing is too small for Him to know or reveal
3. These details give us a sense of the supernatural exaltation of Christ as the Son of God

#### C. The Prediction Underscores Christ's Grace and Love

1. Christ knows what Peter is going to do ahead of time, and loves him anyway
2. In a few moments, He's going to choose Peter, along with James and John to stay close by Him in Gethsemane while He prays
3. Christ knows what sins we will commit in the future, and yet still covers us with grace and love... because He also knows the FINAL OUTCOME... Peter will be rescued from his self-reliance and his selfish saving of his own

life, and by the power of the Spirit he will testify to Christ, and die a martyr's death for the glory of God

***John 21:18-19 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.***

#### IV. Peter and the Other Apostles Deepen Their Sinful Self-Reliance (vs. 35)

***Matthew 26:35 But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.***

##### A. Amazing Arrogance!

1. Peter goes even deeper, despite the specificity of the prophecy about his denial of Christ
2. NO, LORD... you are SO WRONG ABOUT ME!
3. In this, we see the total reliance on SELF, for there is no mention of God's assistance; they are not looking to God's power or strength to help them be faithful... they will prove this in a few minutes by their PRAYERLESSNESS

##### B. The Mention of Death Goes to the Heart of the Matter

1. It will be precisely this that will cause Peter to deny Christ... He will be afraid of arrest and suffering torture and death on a cross
2. That is why he will lie when the servant girl challenges him at the entrance to the High Priest's house
3. He fears death and shrinks back from death... and yet, Jesus had talked about this as the exact issue when Peter first rebuked Him about His prediction of death on a cross

***Matthew 16:24-26 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"***

4. The heroes of the faith in the Book of Revelation are described like this:

***Revelation 12:11 They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.***

5. But Peter loves his life in this world too much, and shrinks back from death, shrinks back from confessing Christ
6. Completely understandable... for it is NATURAL to seek to survive... to seek to keep on living and to avoid death; it is SUPERNATURAL to joyfully face death...
7. That's what makes Peter's self-reliance so bad... only God can make us supernaturally confident in the face of our own death; it is only BY FAITH that we can face the visible reality of our death with a supreme confidence in the INVISIBLE reality of heaven
8. Self-reliance looks ahead to that trial, looks inward at one's own capabilities and says "I can DO IT!!"
9. Faith looks ahead to the trial, then looks UPWARD TO GOD and says, "O God, without your help I cannot do it! Grant me courage, grant me strength, grant me faith!!" See, the issue is PRAYER! And Peter is about to squander his prayer time in sleep!!

#### V. Christ Predicts the Cure (vs. 32; Luke 22:31-32)

***Matthew 26:31-32 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." 32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."***

- A. Jesus, Even as He Made His Initial Prediction, Pointed Ahead to His Resurrection Victory!!
  1. The prophecy said "I will strike the shepherd...": He's going to die!!
  2. BUT His death is not the end of His ministry to them or with them
  3. He would SEE THEM AGAIN!! He would RISE AGAIN!! And His death would cover all their sins, and His resurrection would be the power of their new lives in Him
- B. Furthermore... They Would See Him Again... They Would Not Be Abandoned
  1. Jesus could have said, "You will all fall away on account of me, and I will never see you again... I can't have such weak-willed, cowardly men as my Apostles! I will replace everyone one of you with someone who will stand courageously and testify about me!!"
  2. Instead, He gives them a word of assurance that, even this terrible sin on ALL their parts would not disqualify them from ministry... they would meet with

Him in Galilee... there He would give them the Great Commission, and send them out into the world as His witnesses

### C. The Power of the Holy Spirit

1. Jesus had already told them that only by the power of the Holy Spirit would they be able to face arrest and death as powerful witnesses for Him

***Matthew 10:18-20*** *On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup> for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

2. This one verse showed why everything changed:

***Acts 1:8*** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

3. The future coming of the Holy Spirit was the only remedy to BOTH of their problems... their self-reliance, and their self-serving terror of death
4. After the Spirit came, Peter was completely unafraid of death: in Acts 4, arrested for the healing of a lame man, he boldly spoke these words:

***Acts 4:8-13*** *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." <sup>13</sup> ¶ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

5. The Spirit alone empowered them to lay down their lives for Jesus: So also all the other Apostles... as church tradition tells us:

**PETER** and **PAUL** were both martyred in Rome about 66 AD, during the persecution under Emperor Nero. Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified, upside down at his request, since he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

**ANDREW** went to the "land of the man-eaters," in what is now the Soviet Union. [Christians](#) there claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified.

"Doubting" **THOMAS** was probably most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as India, where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

**PHILIP** possibly had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

**MATTHEW** the tax collector and writer of a Gospel, ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Some of the oldest reports say he was not martyred, while others say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

**BARTHOLOMEW** had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.

**JAMES** the son of Alphaeus, is one of at least three James referred to in the New Testament. There is some confusion as to which is which, but this James is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

**SIMON THE ZEALOT**, so the story goes, ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

**MATTHIAS** was the apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning.

**JOHN** is the only one of the company generally thought to have died a natural death from old age. He was the leader of the church in the Ephesus area and is said to have taken care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home. During Domitian's persecution in the middle 90's, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. There he is credited with writing the last book of the New Testament--the Revelation. An early Latin tradition has him escaping unhurt after being cast into boiling oil at Rome.

## VI. Applications

### A. Forsake Your Self-Reliance and Come to Christ!!

1. The most deadly form of self-reliance is the one that says "I am good enough to face death and judgment day on my own... I don't need Jesus as a Savior! I am basically a good person, and that's got to be good enough for heaven, if there is one!"
2. Forsake that! Realize that you are a sinner, and that Christ's death on the cross is the only possible salvation from sins that you could ever have

3. COME TO CHRIST!! Forsake your own righteousness and your own schemes for self-salvation!!

B. See in This Account Your Own Weakness

1. The weakness of self-preservation and loving your life in this world too much
2. The weakness of self-reliance in looking to yourself to solve all your problems
3. See how many ways these two things pop up in your life... how many ways you choose to preserve your comforts in life and effectively deny your Savior; how many witnessing opportunities you pass up so as not to rock the boat or cause trouble for yourself; see how many ways you choose luxury and self-indulgence rather than self-denial
4. See how many ways also you display self-reliance... figuring your money, or your intelligence, or your good works, or your people skills, or your educational credentials, or your skills with your hands, or something ABOUT YOURSELF will be what is needed to survive the trial you are facing

C. A Lifelong Battle Against Self-Reliance: Lessons from Paul and 2 Corinthians 1:9; Lessons from Deuteronomy 1

1. Paul had a lifelong battle with self-reliance... and said that one of the most severe trials he ever had in his life was to teach him this lesson

***2 Corinthians 1:8-9 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.***

2. If Paul had to learn it, so do you!!
3. And in Deuteronomy 1: Two-sides of the same coin
  - a. Just about to enter the Promised Land, Moses sent out twelve spies
  - b. The spies came back with a report about a fruitful, delightful land... but also stated that the people in the land were HUGE and so were their cities

***Deuteronomy 1:28 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky.***

***We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them. (Numbers 13:33)***

They were LOOKING INWARD to face the trial, and, lacking the resources, they were reduced to faithless DESPAIR

God then judged them for not trusting in Him...

***In spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. (Deuteronomy 1:32-33)***

He swore that none of them would enter the Promised Land, but only their children. Then they changed their minds, and the people rebelled again. Stunned by Moses' words and God's declaration of their punishment, they did an about-face and, looking inward again at their own military prowess, they put on their armor,

***thinking it easy to go up to into the hill country. (Deuteronomy 1:41).***

It was just the other side of the same coin: self-reliance! Self-reliance that looks inward and fails to find the necessary resources to meet the threat results in despair. But self-reliance that looks inward and actually finds the necessary resources to meet the threat results in arrogance. Israel clearly displayed both of the results of self-reliance. Despair and arrogance are merely two sides of the same coin. God despises the coin itself: self reliance. For the rest of Israel's history, God fought their habit of self-reliance.

D. The High Priestly Ministry of Christ... Praying for Our Faith: Luke 22

***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. (Luke 22:31-32)***

***Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25, ESV)***

E. Lessons from *Pilgrim's Progress*... ongoing sustaining grace

The "Fire Burning Against the Wall" was one of the most potent:

Then I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it, to extinguish and put it out, is the Devil; but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that. So he had him about to the backside of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of which he did also continually cast, but secretly, into the fire.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart: by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still. And in that thou sawest that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire, that is to teach thee that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.

F. Central Idea: “Apart from me, you can do NOTHING!!!”

***John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***