

PETER'S DENIALS

Matthew 26:69-75

The single greatest gift God could conceivably give man is *forgiveness of sins*. Without forgiveness...there would be *no salvation...no eternal life...no reconciliation with God...no spiritual life...no victory over death...no prospect of heaven*. When God revealed Himself to **Moses**, He declared Himself to be...

“The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin”

~Exodus 34:6-7a

The apostle **John** declared...

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

~I John 1:9

Peter's denial of the Lord was a *great tragedy* but it shows all of us that even though we may have the *greatest of intentions*...we all *will*, and *do...fall short* of the *glory of God*. This account is a sobering testimony to the *weakness of the flesh*. But it's also an encouraging testimony to the *power of God's grace*. With **Peter's remorse** and *repentance*...and the Lord's *gracious forgiveness* and *restoration* of **Peter**...it should bring every believer *great encouragement*.

I. **PETER'S FAILURE:** (vs. 69-75a)

As Jesus was about to be *arrested* and *tried*...He warned **Peter** that Satan had *demanding permission* to *test* him. It was at that time that Jesus also told **Peter** that he would *deny* Him.

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. But he said to Him, ‘Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!’ And He said, ‘I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me’.”

~Luke 22:31-34

So while Jesus was undergoing His trial before the **Sanhedrin**, **Peter** was about to undergo a testing of his own. **Peter** had

followed the Lord and gained entrance into the courtyard of the high priest with the help of **John**...

“Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.”

~John 18:15-16

Now **Peter** was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with **Jesus the Galilean.**” (vs. 69)...**Peter** was *afraid*, yet he couldn't keep from following the Lord at a distance. His *love* for Christ was *real*...even though it was *weak*. He hoped to go unnoticed in the large crowd of officials, soldiers, and others as he sat in **the courtyard** warming himself by a fire (**Mark 14:54**) awaiting the outcome of the trial.

Jesus the Galilean...The term **Galilean** was frequently used by people who lived in Jerusalem to *ridicule* their *less sophisticated neighbors* to the north. To refer to someone as a **Galilean** was to suggest that he was *backwards* and *unprogressive*.

Peter would have *three opportunities* to speak up for his Lord. All *three* times *he would deny* that he ever knew Jesus...or was in any way ever connected with Him.

His first denial occurred when this **servant-girl** said in front of the others that he was one of those who had been **with Jesus**.

But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” (vs. 70)...This intimate friend who only a few hours earlier had *vowed to die* before he would forsake Christ, now denied even *knowing* Him. Not only did **Peter** deny *knowing* Jesus...but with each denial, the *intensity* of his denial *increased*.

When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with **Jesus of Nazareth.**” (vs. 71)...The next **servant-girl**, one who was at the *gate of the courtyard*, more directly pointed out **Peter** as one who had indeed been **with Jesus**.

And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” (vs. 72)...Not only did **Peter lie**...but he did it with an **oath**. A

Jewish **oath** was always assumed to be made in God's presence... whether His name was invoked or not (i.e. *As God as my witness*).

A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." (vs. 73)...

"After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too'."

~Luke 22:59

Finally, a number of those present came and accused **Peter** of being **one** who had been with Jesus...his **Galilean accent** gave him away. **John** stated that he was also *recognized by sight* by a relative of **Malchus**, *the man whose ear Peter cut off* (**John 18:24**).

Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed (vs. 74)...With the *third accusation*, Peter began to curse and swear...*swearing* that he didn't know *who this Man was*.

Curse...Gk. *katanathematizo*, a very strong term that involved pronouncing death upon one's self at the hand of God if one were lying. It was a legal way of seeking to affirm one's innocence. If death didn't follow...he would be *assumed innocent* by the others (**Job 31**).

Swear...Gk. *omnumi*, was a *less extreme pledge of truthfulness*, but was nevertheless a *strong affirmation*.

And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." (vs. 75)...As he *publicly denied* his Lord the *third time, immediately, a rooster crowed*. That triggered in his thinking the words of the Lord... "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (**Matthew 26:34**).

Peter knew immediately that he had failed the Lord. Even though he had affirmed that he *would never forsake the Lord*...even if it *cost him his life*...he had *publicly denied* the One *he loved*. Filled with *remorse*, he left the courtyard and **wept bitterly**.

II. PETER'S FLIGHT: (vs. 75b)

And he went out and wept bitterly (vs. 75b)

"The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

~Luke 22:61-62

The true heart of **Peter** isn't seen in his *denials* but in his *repentance* and *remorse*. His tears were tears of *true repentance* for having *forsaken* and having *denied* the Lord.

Like **Judas**...**Peter fled into the night**. But unlike **Judas**...he *returned to the Lord in faith*. His *faith* had *slipped* and was *weak*, but it was *genuine faith*...and Jesus Himself had prayed that it *would not fail*.

III. PETER'S FAITH:

Jesus told **Peter** that He was *praying for him* (**Luke 22:32**), that his *faith would not fail*. And his *faith did not fail*. When **Peter** heard that Jesus wasn't in His tomb, he got up and ran to the tomb. When he arrived, he stooped and looked inside the tomb and he saw that *it was empty* (**Luke 24:12**). What he saw...or rather, what he didn't see...*changed everything*. When a death-conquering Savior *prays that your faith will not fail...it doesn't fail...it doesn't*.

Jesus had a plan for **Peter**. It wasn't one without bumps and bruises, but it was Jesus's plan, and He would pray it through. What this means for us is that no matter how low we may have fallen, we again can stand *forgiven* and *restored*.

Later in **John 21**, we see Jesus *restoring Peter*. Where **Peter** had *denied* Jesus *three* times...he now *affirms his love* for Jesus *three* times.

Jesus...*full of grace...risen from the dead...praying for you...taking you when it feels like you have nothing to offer...when you feel like you've ruined your chances*...Jesus says to you, "I can use you. I want you."

Later in **Acts 2-6**, we see **Peter** completely *transformed*. He is no longer the *self-reliant, impulsive* person we have seen. He is a *spirit-filled, strong faith, bold believer* proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Jesus will give you another chance.** **Luke** opens the book of **Acts** by making this clear. No matter how bad you may have *messed up in the past...* or how *oblivious you may have been to the ways of God...* or how *stubborn you were* when wise people *shared their wisdom with you...* Jesus can *use* you. Jesus *wants* you. Jesus *desires* you.
- **The power of the Holy Spirit is what makes the difference in a person's life.** The difference in **Peter** between the time that he *denied Jesus three times* and when he *preach at Pentecost...* was the *power of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit didn't come until **Acts 2...** but when It came, everything was different.

But remember...you can *quench* the Holy Spirit and you can *grieve* the Holy Spirit. Just because It is present doesn't mean that It will move in power.