

PETER DENIED THE LORD THREE TIMES

TEXT: LUKE 22:54-62

Introduction:

1. In Luke 22:31-34, our Lord gave Peter a solemn warning. This was the big turning point in the life of Simon Peter.
2. Peter was often impulsive and impetuous; bold and self-confident. The story of how Peter denied Christ is an important lesson about the danger of over-confidence.
3. When our Lord explained to His disciples that he had to go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day, Peter actually rebuked our Lord and contradicted Him.
4. Peter said, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Matthew 16:22).
5. After that remark, Jesus sad to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23).
6. Then our Lord spoke about the need to deny self (Matt. 16:24-26).
7. As we approach our text this evening we are reminded that before he denied Christ Peter had not been brought to the end of himself.
8. Peter did not really understand his own weakness. He had not yet come to the place where he saw no good in the flesh at all. That is a very important lesson indeed!
9. Like many people (even believers), Peter was too full of himself. And then he messed up badly (just as our Lord had warned him).
10. That was the problem with Peter – too much self.
11. Self has to leave before God can take over (cf. 22:25-27).

I. BAD PLACE

1. Peter was in a bad place. Cold and tired, and torn between curiosity and cowardice, “Peter followed afar off” (22:54).
2. I say “curious” because Matthew 26:58 says Peter “went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.”
3. Peter was fearful, but John was brave. “Peter followed afar off” (22:54), but John went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

4. John 18:15 and 16 says that John went into the house with Jesus, but Peter stood at the door without. Curious but fearful.
5. Peter should have gone on ahead with Jesus, instead of hanging around with our Lord's enemies.
6. Next, we see Peter sitting down among the worldly crowd (22:54, 55). Mark 14:54 says Peter warmed himself at their fire. He was hanging around with mockers and unbelievers.
7. Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."
8. And there in the glow of that fire, Peter denied our Lord three times. Peter was in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people, and then he did the wrong thing.
9. A certain maid recognized Peter as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, "This man was also with him" (22:56).
10. Mark 14:66 says that she was "one of the maids of the high priest."
11. Peter's denial is recorded by all four of the Gospel writers, and it is good to study all four together.
12. Luke compresses the three denials into just a few quick verses, but they actually took place over a period of two hours.

II. SAD DENIALS

1. One might think that after his first denial, Peter would have been more careful, but apparently not (22:56-58).
2. Both the first interrogator and the second interrogator were women. Matthew 26:71 says, "And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth."
3. This is how Mark records Peter's third denial: "And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:70-72).
4. Luke does not mention Peter cursing, but Matthew and Mark do (Luke 22:59, 60; cf. Matthew 26:73-75).

5. Before God saved him, Peter was a fisherman, and perhaps being around worldly fishermen, Peter learned to curse and swear like them.
6. And now, in his weak and backslidden condition, Peter reverted to his old life of cursing and swearing.
7. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”
8. But in his backslidden state, Peter was allowing corrupt words to come out of his mouth.
9. Many years ago, I was working on a construction job in Long Island City. The whole crew went out to eat lunch at a diner on Queens Boulevard, and during our conversation, the foreman used a dirty curse word. I mentioned that I was a preacher and his face turned red because he was a Christian.
10. After that I never heard him use a bad word again!
11. Peter lied – “Woman, I know him not” (Luke 22:57). “Man, I am not” (22:58). “Man, I know not what thou sayest” (22:60).
12. Sadly, Peter cursed. And sadly, Peter denied the Lord three times.
13. Later, after our Lord’s resurrection, Peter’s public restoration took place on the shores of Galilee. Our Lord asked Peter three times, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” (John 21).
14. I have heard many explanations as to why our Lord asked Peter the same question three times. Maybe it was because Peter denied our Lord three times (John 21:17).
15. Peter denied the Lord. And then Peter repented with bitter tears (22:61, 62).

III. BITTER TEARS (22:61, 62)

1. Whenever I think of bitter tears (22:62), I think of that old hymn:
*I’ve wasted many precious years,
 Now I’m coming home;
 I now repent with bitter tears,
 Lord, I’m coming home.* – William J. Kirkpatrick
2. Peter repented with bitter tears (22:62). All four Gospels record Peter’s denial of Christ. And Matthew and Mark tell us that Peter wept.
3. But in Luke’s account we see something that the other Gospel writers leave out. “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” (Luke 22:61).
4. Matthew, Mark, and John connect Peter’s repentance with his hearing the cock crow – “the cock crew...And Peter remembered the word of the Lord,

how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Luke 22:60b, 61).

5. But Luke – and only Luke – tells us there were actually two causes co-operating to bring about Peter’s sudden repentance – “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” (22:61).
6. It was undoubtedly the Lord’s look, along with the sound of the cock crowing, that brought great conviction to Peter’s heart.
7. That look must have broken Peter’s heart. He recognized his sin. True repentance means seeing sin the way God sees sin.
8. I’m afraid, even in many churches, people do not view sin as something horrible, and detestable, and vile.
9. We need to examine ourselves in the light of God’s Word. First Corinthians 11:28 says, “But let a man examine himself.”
10. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.
11. Job said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5, 6).
12. The prophet Isaiah said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).
13. When he was on his deathbed, Pastor A. J. Gordon, asked his friends and family members to leave him alone for a while. Later on, after he died, some of them said that they overheard him confessing his sins in such extravagant terms that they thought he may have been delirious.
14. They all knew that A.J. Gordon was a godly man.
15. King David prayed, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psalm 26:2).
16. Our Lord just turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered (Luke 22:61).
17. Peter realized what he had done; he saw his terrible failure; he saw the depth into which he had fallen, and he “went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62).

CONCLUSION:

1. I was reading an old sermon yesterday. It was preached many years ago in Texas by Pastor W.A. Criswell. The message was about Peter’s tears of repentance.

2. In his sermon, Pastor Criswell referred to revival meetings he preached a week earlier in Oklahoma City. A professional photographer was taking various photographs one night, and when the invitation was given he was up on the platform getting ready to take pictures of the hundred people who came forward, many of them coming to accept the Lord as their Savior.
3. The photographer raised his camera to take a picture of that group who were coming to get saved, and as he held his camera up for just a moment, he burst into tears.
4. And he sat his camera down on that platform, and bowed his head on the platform, and began to sob like a little child. He never did take his picture.
5. And one of the preachers went over to him and put his arm around him, and then they went back to an area where people were praying.
6. And that photographer got saved that night.