Peter's Denial

("Are you one of His Disciples?")

John 18:12-27
10-12-2025

Introduction: John 13:36-38
Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

What would you say, if your life would be terminated, if you claimed to be a disciple of Christ?
**** If your life was threatened, would you deny Jesus Christ in order to live?***

Peter's Fear of losing his life, led to his denial of Christ.
Observe the downward progression of Peter's denial:

I. Peter Stood <u>WITHOUT</u> (v.16)
(He who promised to go with Christ even to death, is now Following at a Distance)

II. Peter Stood <u>WITH THEM</u> (v.18)
(He who promised to go with Christ even to death, is now Mingling with the Devil's Crowd)

III. Peter Stood & <u>WARMED HIMSELF</u> (v.25)
(He who promised to go with Christ even to death, is now Warming Himself by the Devil's Fire)

Conclusion: **Peter WEPT BITTERLY** (Luke 22:62)

See: Matthew 26:31-56
*Don't make the same mistakes Peter did! Three big mistakes:

A. <u>PROUD SELF-CONFIDENCE</u> (v. 33-35)
(Never say, "I will never. . .")
B. <u>PRAYERLESSNESS</u> (v. 36-46)
(Never sleep when you should pray)
C. <u>PRESUMPTION</u> (v. 47-55)
(Never do for Christ what He did not tell you to do)
The Bottom-line was that Peter denied the Lord due to FEAR
*Overcome fear with faith! (Prov. 29:25; Mt. 8:26)

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Introduction: vv.12-15

v. 12
They **"took Jesus, and bound Him" –** Because "His hour had now come" for His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus, therefore, allowed Himself to be taken. They would not be able to have power over the great "I AM" (v. 6) otherwise.

v. 14
"One man should die for the people" – Caiaphas said this during the time of Lazarus' resurrection. He spoke this utterance without even understanding the full impact and meaning of his own statement.

SEE: John 11:48-53

v. 15
"Another disciple" = Evidently, the Apostle John, who in humility does not refer to himself by name throughout this Gospel (rather, he refers to himself as "another disciple" or the "disciple whom Jesus loved," etc.).

Promises Peter made before his denial:

Mark 14:29
But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

Mark 14:31
But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Luke 22:33
And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

Matthew 26:33
Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

John 13:36-38
Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. [37] Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. [38] Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

What would you say, if your life would be terminated, if you claimed to be a disciple of Christ?
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v. 15

John here follows Jesus more close than <u>Peter</u> did. He becomes an eyewitness of Christ's trials.

v. 16

Mark's gospel says: "And Peter followed Him <u>afar off</u>."

Peter, no doubt with his heart thumping, a bead of nervous sweat on his brow, and his head bowed down and perhaps covered by his cloak to conceal his identity, stands outside the courtroom where His Lord was interrogated.

He who gave his word to go "<u>*with*</u>" Jesus even to death is now <u>outside</u> (*"without"*) (at a distance).

v. 17

Peter, being the most prominent disciple (the most outspoken and charismatic one of the bunch) would be hard to miss. Once a person met Peter, they probably would never forget him.

"Are not thou?" (cp. V. 25 – **"You are not, are you?"** - The question is asked using the negative so as to offer Peter an easier way to use the negative in his response. The question is framed so as to anticipate a negative answer. [The last question expects a positive answer – v. 26.]

v.17 - "I am not"

Not only did Peter deny the Lord with the words "I am not" but he according to the other Gospel writers goes a step further and emphatically denies Christ. And with each denial Peter gets more specific and serious:

Mt.26:70-74

"I know not what thou sayest" (v. 70)

"I do not know the man" (v. 72)

"Then began he to curse and to swear saying, I know not the man" (v. 74)

II. Peter Stood <u>WITH THEM</u> (v.18)

(He who promised to go with Christ even to death, is now Mingling with the Devil's Crowd)

Peter, so as to look as inconspicuous as possible, blends in with the crowd, mingles with them (hoping to get lost in the crowd so that no one would single him out).

v. 19

Jesus is questioned about:

--His disciples
--His doctrine

They are looking for some dirt so as to justify their judgment against Him. They wanted to find Him guilty based on His associations and/or His teaching.

Annas probably "hoped to get a confession that these men were being prepared for revolutionary activity" (against the Roman government) (Wycliffe Comm., p. 1115).

v. 20

Christ was bold and outspoken regarding His message. He took His message to the streets. He was an open book, to be read by all. And multitudes heard His preaching.

"Jesus was careful to say nothing about His disciples. Think of it: while Peter was in the courtyard denying his Lord, Jesus was on trial protecting Peter" (Wiersbe, p. 375).

v. 22

The High Priest was nothing compared to Jesus, but they didn't know who Jesus really was (had they known, "they wold not have crucified the Lord of glory").

v. 23

"Why smitest thou Me?" – The world is no friend to Jesus. Instigated by Satan, supported by popular opinion, and motivated by a love for darkness, the world (given the chance) will strike out in word and/or action against the Son of God.

III. Peter Stood & <u>WARMED HIMSELF</u> (v.25)
(He who promised to go with Christ even to death, is now Warming Himself by the Devil's Fire)

v. 26
It would be difficult for this man to forget the one who cut off his relative's ear; yet despite the inescapable trap, Peter still brazenly, flat-out denies that he had anything to do with Jesus.

Each time Peter denied the Lord, the rooster—like an annoying alarm clock—would sound off and remind Peter of his lying denial.

Conclusion: **Peter WEPT BITTERLY** (Luke 22:62 - *"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.")*

When Peter had denied the Lord for the third time, "*the Lord turned and looked upon Peter"* (Lk. 22:61).

Peter and Jesus locked eyes, and this triggered Peter's remembrance of Christ's words about a *"thrice"* denial.

Can you imagine the gripping emotion the Lord felt as He turned to look at Peter as he even swore that he didn't know who Jesus was!

How does the Lord feel in His heart about your life and testimony? Do you bring grief or joy to His heart?

"The look must have penetrated the disciple's very soul, burning deep into his heart and conscience the evil of his sin. Seeing his Lord standing there with His hands bound and His face covered with spit and bruises was more than Peter could bear" (MacArthur, p. 218).

Luke 22:62

"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." - He wept because he knew the Lord knew what he had done. He, because of fear and intimidation, had lied about his relationship to Christ. The tears, however, reveal that Peter really loved Christ. Therefore, Peter will not be in the list of the doomed whose life was characterized as being *"fearful"* (Rev. 21:8).

Jesus had said: *"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."* (Mt. 10:32, 33).

Peter would be *"converted"* from His fear (Lk. 22:32) and become one of the mightiest preachers for Christ (Acts 4:13).

See: Matthew 26:31-56

***Don't make the same mistakes Peter did!**

Three big mistakes:

A. PROUD SELF-CONFIDENCE (v. 33-35)
(Never say, "I will never. . .")
V. 33
Impulsive, impetuous Peter pipes up with proud self-confidence, ***"Though all [men] shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."***

Peter had a knack for putting his foot in his mouth (cp. Mt. 16:22-23).

"All [men]" - i.e. all the other disciples; Peter somehow thought he had something they didn't have.

--Maybe he thought he had more <u>love</u> for Christ than they did; or more <u>boldness</u> & <u>courage</u> or more <u>dedication</u>.

Peter obviously viewed himself as spiritually superior to others.

Be careful never to think this way. Think humbly about yourself (Phil. 2:3 - *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."*).

Right now "ask God to forgive you for your feelings of superiority" or you are headed for a nose dive (ILLUS: the minister, boy scout, and computer expert on board a small plane that was going down).

"Though I should die with thee" - I am willing to be a martyr for You! *"I am ready to go with thee, both to <u>prison</u> and to <u>death</u>"* (Lk. 22:33).

"Yet I will not" - an emphatic double negative. The word *"not"* translates <u>two</u> Greek words for "not" (*oi ma*).

Peter speaks as emphatically as possible.

We should never say "never" when it comes to trusting in ourselves.

Rather say, "If God is willing..." "By God's grace..." "With His enabling power..."

Martin Luther said: "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, if the right Man were not on our side, the Man of God's own choosing."
We truly do not realize the evil and deception of our own hearts (Jer. 17:9).

At times, we are so smug, so sure, so bold, so enthused, so brave, etc. that we say things that we end up later eating.

Don't put confidence in yourself or in your plans, but in God and in His will.

James 4:13-16 - *"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boasting: all such rejoicing is evil."*

B. PRAYERLESSNESS (v. 36-46)
(Never sleep when you should pray)

"Sorrowful" - to grieve over the separation which was about to take place (Mt. 27:46).
"Heavy" - to be distressed because of the weight of the sin He would bear for the world (I Pet. 2:24).

"Watch" - stay awake so as to pray

V. 40
"Asleep" - Due to the intense pressures of the hour, the disciples gave in to the suggestion of the devil to sleep their problems away rather than pray their problems away.

V. 41
"Watch and pray" - stay awake and alert so as to pray.

"That ye enter not into temptation" - daily prayer is the only secret to overcoming the strong solicitations to evil that will come our way.

"Deliver us from evil" needs to be our daily prayer (Mt. 6:13).

Note: Proud self-confidence will always result in prayerlessness.

There is a time for sleep and there is a time for prayer. This was no time for sleep. The biggest trial Peter would ever face was minutes away!

"The spirit" - a believer's inner regenerated spirit, which is the aspect of man (which separates him from the animal realm) which alone is eager (***"willing"***) to commune with God.

"The flesh is weak" - Our bodies and old nature succumb and seek to gratify the impulses of the carnal body.

This war of "spirit versus flesh" is a real one (Gal. 5:17) which can only be won by the spirit if you daily feed the spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to control you.

Whenever the Spirit prods you to do something, do it. This is the secret to the Spirit-filled life.

V. 43
"Asleep again" - They woke up momentarily only to fall back into slumber.

C. PRESUMPTION (v. 47-55; John 18:10)
(Never do for Christ what He did not tell you to do)

V. 51
"One of them" - John specifically identified this *"one"* as *"Simon Peter"*, who *"having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus"* (Jn. 18:10).

The 10 disciples actually asked Jesus, *"Lord, shall we smite with the sword?"* (Lk. 22:49), but Peter didn't even wait for an answer. He just hacked away! (Lk. 22:50; Jn. 18:10).

"Smote off his ear" - Just as quickly as it came off, Jesus put it back on again! *"And He touched his ear, and healed him"* (Lk. 22:51).

V. 52
"They that take the sword shall perish with the sword" - The principle of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7) is implied. (cp. *'He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword..."* - Rev. 13:10).

V. 53
Proud self-confidence will always lead to prayerlessness, which will inevitably lead to presumption.

Jesus is saying to Peter, "I don't need you to defend me."

Peter may have meant well, but good intentions don't "cut the mustard" with God.

"Twelve legions of angels" - A Roman legion varied from 3000 to 6000; hence, 12 legions would be 36,000 to 72,000 angels. Jesus, who created the angels (Col. 1:16) could have called on any number of powerful angelic creatures (*"the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands"* - Rev. 5:11).

Any sword Peter had (Lk. 22:36-38) was to be used for self-defense (perhaps) but not to fight for Jesus.

Presumption is the sin of assumption based on "gut feeling" rather than Biblical precept and principle.

"Presumption" is basically caused by an over-confident, egotistical, big-headedness, which results in the audacity to do your own will, rather than the will of your superior.

To presume is to assume or take for granted you can do something even though you have no authority or Bible to back you up.

People often take liberties that aren't theirs; overstep boundaries they should not; intrude into areas they are forbidden; surge ahead like gangbusters down a path they should not be on!

Principle for Christians: Don't react, but act based on solid Bible truth. *Don't do anything you don't have full confidence in doing (Rom. 14:23).

If we would simply do what we are told rather than being innovative and "adding" to His Word through man-made "traditions," man-made creeds and self-induced visions and dreams, Christendom would not be filled with the confusion we see today among various religions.

"Peter rushed ahead and trusted the arm of the flesh. Had Jesus not healed the ear of Malchus, there probably would have been four crosses at Calvary!" (Wiersbe, p. 98).

To act presumptuously is to act independently of God's will and orders.

People who acted presumptuously:

1) Sarah in giving Hagar to Abraham to obtain a son
2) Moses at Egypt (Ex. 2:11-15)
3) False prophets (Dt. 18:20 - *"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die."*)
4) King Saul (I Sam. 15:22)
5) Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1 - *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.")*
6) Samson (Jud. 14:9)
7) Uzzah (II Sam. 6:6, 7)
8) The old unnamed prophet (I Ki. 13)
9) Josiah - a king who got involved in a battle that wasn't his (II Chron. 35:20-25)

Many presume that it is okay to:
1) Abort an unborn child
2) Date an unsaved boy or girl
3) Divorce one's spouse
4) Move to another location without considering God's will
5) Pursue the pastorate when God did not call
   --EX: women preachers (I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 2:12)
   --EX: novice Christians (I Tim. 3:6)
6) That their works/religion etc. will get them into God's Kingdom

Sometimes the "Ooops, I shouldn't have done that" is too late!

Matt.26:56: *"Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled."*

Peter talked when he should have listened,
slept when he should have prayed,
and fought when he should have trusted.

The Bottom-line was that Peter denied the Lord due to FEAR
How can we overcome fear?
*Overcome fear with **faith**! (Prov. 29:25; Mt. 8:26)
Proverbs 29:25 - The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.
Matthew 8:26 - And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

(Faith = trust, reliance, confidence in God)

1) Faith in the love of God (I Jn. 4:16-19)

1 John 4:17-19 - Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. [19] We love him, because he first loved us.

Knowing God's love for us removes all fear.

2) Faith in the companionship of God

a) Remember, God is your Father (Rom. 8:15).

b) Remember, God fights our battles - Psalm 27:1 - "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"
(1)Like He did for Israel - Deut. 20:3-5
(2)Like He did for Joshua - Josh. 8:1; 10:8
(3)Like He did for David - I Sam. 17:47; Ps. 23:4
(4)Like He did for Jehosaphat - II Chron. 20:1-30

c. Remember, God will never leave you nor forsake you.
SEE Hebrews 13:5-6
Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. [6] So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

EX: Disciples at sea (Mt. 8:26)
Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10)

See Matthew 10:24-35

24 The disciple is not above [his] master, nor the servant above his lord.
25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more [shall they call] them of his household?
26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.
27 What I tell you in darkness, [that] speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, [that] preach ye upon the housetops.
28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.
30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.
34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against

It is easy for us to criticize Peter for his denial of Christ.

But stop for a minute and compare his situation with yours.

--He didn't have the baptism of the Spirit (until Pentecost - Acts 2) . . . you have the Spirit

--He had faithfully left all to follow Christ for 3-1/2 years (and would for the rest of his life). . . what have you left for Christ?

-His life was on the line; Golgotha could just as easily have had four crosses on it that afternoon instead of three. . . Have you ever been threatened or beaten for your faith?

We have it so much easier and yet our lives so often do not publicly profess Christ. We are often silent in our witness; cowardly in our stand for truth; timid in our defense of right; quiet in sharing the Gospel.

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [17] For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.