Peter's Denial

Mark 14:66-72
October 25th, 2026
Pastor Francis Bezzam

66 And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest
came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also
were with the Nazarene, Jesus." 68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor
understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster
crowed. 69 And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders,
"This man is one of them." 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the
bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a
Galilean." 71 But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know
this man of whom you speak." 72 And immediately the rooster crowed a second
time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows
twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Are there times in your life when you are embarrassed about Jesus Christ?
As you live your life in this world, you may find yourself in the company of people who are not followers of Jesus, people who have an indifference, contempt or even animosity for Jesus. These people maybe in your own family, your friends, your co-workers, your circle of relationships and even strangers you meet.

What if you are in social situations where you have to make choices that would leave you a subject or ridicule or at the least "weird" in the eyes of others because you follow Jesus. Would you rather act in ways that would leave an impression on others that you have nothing to do with Jesus *or* would you gladly and humbly express you are indeed a disciple of Jesus?
What distinctive Christian testimony would you display to others by your life and your choices?

If you are a Christian or a follower of Jesus Christ, you belong to Jesus Christ. You are not your own. And if you belong to Jesus Christ, you do not belong to the world. Therefore, you must resolve once and for all whether you are going to be live everyday like the world or like the people of God. And the farther you are from the world's schema and pursue Christ, the more glory Jesus gets.

In our passage, we see Mark dedicates at least seven verses to Peter's denial while Jesus' trial in underway. It's a significant detail. We saw the last two weeks that Jesus was betrayed, arrested and condemned for blasphemy. All this, was of course, a sham and a travesty of justice for an innocent man. All the disciples have abandoned our Lord, but for some reason, Peter is in the area. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus saw Peter in the courtyard.

Peter is listed as the first in the roster of the disciples of Jesus in the first three Gospels. Jesus had handpicked Simon (Peter) as he was mending his net beside the sea of Galilee. Peter is the first in the top three of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. Peter had a sense of naïve boldness or brashness about him. Peter would sometimes ask good questions and at other times he would needlessly comment about things he had no idea about.

- For example, Peter would ask Jesus to explain a parable (Matthew 15:15). Asking questions and learning is what defines a good disciple of Jesus.
- As for his impulsive comments, Peter would be rebuked by our Lord a few times (Matthew 14:31, Mark 8:33, 14:37).

In spite of all his quirks and inadequacies, Jesus had a special affection and a big role for Peter in his kingdom. In Matthew chapter 16, Jesus renamed Simon as Peter and told him that upon this *rock* he will build his church. As some claim, the word *rock* does not refer to Peter. Why? Because the word 'rock' is feminine in gender. Jesus Christ is the 'cornerstone' or the 'rock' not Peter.

And here in our passage Peter denies Jesus, not one time, not twice but three times. And each time Peter fails to acknowledge Jesus, the stakes are raised higher. With each failure, Peter denies Jesus more. And yet, mysteriously, this is all part of God's prophetic plan for Peter and how Peter is sanctified and grows into maturity.

First denial:
66 And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest
came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also
were with the Nazarene, Jesus." 68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor
understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster
crowed.

Notice, verse 67 says the girl looked or gazed at Peter. She made a positive identification that this indeed was Peter. How this girl identified Peter, we don't

know but what we know is that she made a statement or assertion. She didn't ask a question if this was Peter. Peter is quick to react and deny any knowledge of what this girl was talking about. Peter surely heard the two words – Nazarene and Jesus. And he just ignores it. Peter's response is two-fold. Firstly, he says, I don't know. And secondly, he uses the word *epistemi* – this is where we get the word *epistemology.* Peter claims he has no knowledge of anything this girl says. This is a strange way of denial. Peter is obviously terrified that he is outed. And his natural reflex is to preserve himself from potential harm. So, he flatly denies by feigning ignorance. Peter's first denial of Jesus is by lying.

APPLICATION: Do you go to places where you shouldn't be? Your mind may be the first place to start guarding. Once you give access to thoughts that are far from God, soon you may go to places you shouldn't be. And there you may find out that the most un-likeliest of people identify you. What happens? You lose your Christian witness, integrity and your credibility. And at that point, it's too late to defend yourself.

Second denial:
[69] And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." [70] But again he denied it.

This girl isn't taking no for an answer. So, what does she do? She enlists the help of others. What she now says is different from the first time. She says that Peter is one of *them* – meaning Peter is one of the disciples of Jesus. And for the *second* time, Peter denies it. Notice, the progression – *first* Peter denies he knows anything about Jesus of Nazareth. Then he denies that he is Jesus' disciple.

Given who Peter is, you would think by this time his conscience was screaming. But his fear has clouded his conscience. He ignores or excuses his conscience. Peter has one more opportunity to stop himself in his tracks. What will he do?

Third denial:
And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." [71] But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak."

Peter has some time between the second denial and the third time. But now, multiple witnesses attest to who Peter is. They out him by his accent. They call him a Galilean. Galileans spoke differently from those in Jerusalem.

REFLECTION: Do you see the irony of Peter's denial? All the witnesses here testify this was Peter. And yet Peter denies a third time. They haven't said anything about Jesus the third time but notice what Peter says. Verse 71 – "I do not know this man". They said, "you are one of them, a Galilean".

To contrast with Jesus' trial, not one witness agrees to the false accusations they made against Jesus. And yet Jesus endures the humiliation, the mockery and the fake trial in spite of a lack of credible witness. Do you see Jesus' spotless character and flawless integrity displayed? His foremost disciple may deny him, lie about him and fail him. But Jesus never fails. Jesus never changes. Jesus suffers for his people for no fault of his own.

Of course, Peter's failing and denial is fulfillment of Jesus' prediction. But it's not as if Jesus wants Peter to fail and stumble. Far from it.

- Surely Peter heard Jesus when he taught his disciples "*whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*" Mark 8:38. The Gospel of Matthew is even clearer about the cost of denying Jesus – "*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 10:32-33
- Jesus also prayed for Peter. In Luke 22:32 – "*I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail*".
- On the night of his betrayal, Jesus also told Peter to stay focused in prayer *three* times - "*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*" Mark 14:38. Prayer would have kept Peter from stumbling. You wonder why we are prone to stumbling? A lack of prayer.

So, Peter denies Jesus three times. Immediately, what Jesus had predicted comes true. Verse 72.

72 And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus looked at Peter. And the Lord *turned* and *looked* at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to

him, "*Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times*." And he went out and wept bitterly. Luke 22:61

What should we make of Peter's denial and his remorse? Surely, Peter is not like Judas and the Temple leaders who are complicit in plotting of the murder of Jesus.

1. Peter's denial is not permanent. Peter's contrition and being brokenhearted for his denial is a sign of the grace he needs and he will receive. But first Peter must walk through godly sorrow and shame which is necessary for restoration. Thomas Watson in his book on repentance writes that *shame* is an ingredient in repentance. Watson writes that "*blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been black with sin, grace makes the face red to lift up with blushing*".
   a. When the prophet Jeremiah called out the people of Israel for their sin, he said, "*Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush*" Jeremiah 8:12
   b. Ezra prayed for his people this way, "*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens*" Ezra 9:6
2. We don't explicitly see Peter repenting but after his resurrection, Jesus asks Peter, "*Simon, son of John do you love me more than these?*" John 21:15. For his *three* denials, Jesus asks Peter *three* times, "*Do you love me?"* Is Jesus the primary love of all loves in your life?
3. If someone like Peter has hope by being repentant, the most struggling believer has hope too. Peter went from cowardice to courageous and was used by God to bring many to Christ.

In conclusion, Peter's denial should be instructive to us that we ought to pray always. If you find yourselves straying, let godly sorrow for your sin lead you to true repentance. With repentance comes restoration.
Let's close by looking at the posture of a man who truly felt sorrow for his sin.

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like
other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a
week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not
even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a
sinner!' Luke 18:10-13

---------- Discipleship Questions----------

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Peter's Denial. Mark 14:66-72
HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What do you observe each time Peter denied Jesus? Why did Peter weep after the rooster cried out? Compare and contrast Peter's character with Jesus'?

2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

    - Do you believe sorrow for sin is necessary prior to repentance and restoration? Why or not?

    - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.
HANDS For personal reflection: What would you change to keep yourself from potential stumbling?