

55. Jesus Was Denied by Peter

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why the religious leaders broke many of their own laws in order to have an excuse to put Jesus to death. Meanwhile, other things were happening in the courtyard of the high priest at the same time. In our topic today, we are going to see that Peter denied Jesus three times that night.

Jesus had warned Peter, earlier that night, that Satan had desired to sift and test Peter. Luke 22:31-34 says, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’” In these verses, we see that Peter had boldly said he was ready to go with Jesus to prison, or even die with Jesus. These words show that Peter was depending on his own strength that night and thought that he could stand firm. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to pray. Instead, they went to sleep. Mark 14:37-38 says, “Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.’” Peter was not spiritually prepared when testing came later that night.

Then, John 18:10-11 says, “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?’” Here, we see that Peter was ready to defend Jesus in his own strength. Luke 22:50-51 says, “And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, ‘Permit even this.’ And He touched his ear and healed him.” Mark 14:50 says, “Then they all forsook Him and fled.” However, Mark 14:54 says, “But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.” Here, we see that Peter was now sitting with those who were serving the religious leaders who were there to condemn Jesus to death that night.

Mark 14:66-68 says, “Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.’ But he denied it, saying, ‘I neither know nor understand what you are saying.’ And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.” Peter gives us a real illustration of why we fail and commit sin when we depend on our own strength. Peter was sure he could stand for Jesus. He failed to pray when Jesus reminded him of the need to pray to have victory over temptation. He tried to protect Jesus in his own strength. He forsook Jesus and fled. He then followed Jesus from a distance. Now, he was sitting in the courtyard of the high priest and warming himself by the fire with others. While he was sitting by the fire, we see that one of the servant girls of the high priest came near where Peter was sitting.

The servant girl saw Peter sitting there warming himself by the fire. Peter was not thinking about any of the things Jesus had said to him earlier that evening as he sat and warmed himself by the fire. Instead, he was probably very conscious of the fact that the people sitting around him were a part of the group that had Jesus on trial in front of him at that very moment. The servant girl just said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.” Everyone there in the courtyard that night had probably seen Jesus at different times as He taught in the temple. Peter and the other disciples were usually nearby when Jesus was teaching. Anyone who had seen Jesus several times would also recognize the disciples as people who had been with Jesus. Peter was depending on his own strength. When we depend on our own strength, we will be driven by our own fear instead of being led by the love of Christ. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” Peter spoke out of fear and answered, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.”

Peter spoke these words to the servant girl because of his inner fear. He did not even think about what Jesus had said earlier. Then, he got up from the group sitting around the fire and went out into the porch. At the very moment he was going out on the porch, we see that a rooster crowed. In Mark 14:30, Jesus had told Peter, “Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that today, *even* this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’” Jesus said that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice. Here, we see that the first time came after the first denial of Peter. In this way, God was giving Peter a reminder of what Jesus had told him earlier. However, because of his fear, Peter probably did not even think about the earlier warning.

Mark 14:69-70 says, “And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, ‘This is *one* of them.’ But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, ‘Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*.’” Here, we see that it was probably the same servant girl who told the others that Peter was one of the followers of Jesus. This time, the servant girl spoke to those who were standing there, and said, “This is *one* of them.” Her words may indicate that those gathered there had begun talking about the disciples of Jesus. The words of the servant girl indicate that she was just making a statement to the others about Peter. We see that he immediately denied that he was a follower of Jesus. Here, we see an example of what happens when we become controlled by fear. Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Today, Christians still face that same inner struggle when they depend on their own strength and act out of fear instead of being led by the love of Christ.

However, Peter began to get more comfortable around this group of people who had Jesus on trial, and he began to talk with the people around him. Then, one of the people who heard at least one of the denials of Peter said, “Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*.” Here, we see that Peter’s own words and accent showed that he was from Galilee, not Jerusalem. One of those standing there recognized, from the way that Peter spoke his words, that he was from the area of Galilee. This person said he could tell that Peter was from Galilee, because his speech made it clear he was from that region of the country. Here, we see that some people

can recognize many things about us just from the way we talk.

Mark 14:71-72 says, “Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this Man of whom you speak!’ A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’ And when he thought about it, he wept.” The words “curse” and “swear” are both strong words. The word “curse” means *to say that God can bring His severest penalty on me if I am not telling the truth*. The word is translated “oath” in Acts 23:12, where we read, “And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.” The word “swear” means *to promise or to take an oath as a witness*. Jesus had said, just a few days earlier, in Matthew 23:20-22, “Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.” Jesus had said earlier, in Matthew 5:34, “But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne.”

Peter used these two words and then said, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!” Here, we see that Peter was inviting the judgment of God if he was not telling the truth. Just then, the rooster crowed the second time. Luke 22:60-62 says, “But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.” Here, we see that the rooster started crowing the second time as Peter was still speaking. At the same time, Jesus began looking at Peter and kept looking until Peter noticed that Jesus was looking at him. Suddenly, Peter remembered the words of Jesus earlier that night.

In the same way, when we are being driven by our own fears, instead of being led by the love of Christ, we will often sin before we even remember what Jesus taught about sin. In contrast, when we are being led by the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” This is why it is very important, as Christians, to learn to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit moment-by-moment. That is the key in order to experience victory over temptation. In our own strength, we will fail. Peter thought about the fact that he had failed and denied the Lord and immediately went out and wept bitterly. We also feel guilt when we depend on our own strength, because we see how our sins affect ourselves and others.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit so they can enjoy victory moment-by-moment in their lives. Otherwise, in their own strength, they will also fail. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children, by your example, what it means to walk in the Spirit.