

The Restoration of a Sinning Saint

Scripture: Matthew 26:58, 69–75

Code: 2391

INTRODUCTION

What is the single greatest gift God could ever give? The obvious answer is forgiveness of sin. There could be no salvation, no relationship to God, and no entrance into heaven for us unless our sins were forgiven. We would know no usefulness to the Lord, nor relief from the guilt of sin without forgiveness of sin.

Such was the experience of Peter. The depth of his sin gave God opportunity to reveal the extent of His forgiveness. Peter, who fell so deeply, was soon restored to become the leading spokesman and great leader of the early church. His is a hopeful record—a thrilling and encouraging story for all who are sinners saved by God's grace.

To better understand Matthew 26:58, 69-75 we need to see the background of Peter's denial woven through the tapestry of the arrest and trial of Christ. His denial did not happen spontaneously. To discover why it happened let's look back at the sequence of events that led to his denials.

LESSON

I. THE SINNER'S BOAST (vv. 31-33)

Matthew 26:30 tells us that the Lord and the eleven disciples had sung a hymn in the upper room and then went out to the Mount of Olives. Judas had already gone off to work out the details of his betrayal of Christ.

A. The Prediction of the Disciples' Defection (vv. 31-32)

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up again, I will go before you into Galilee."

After predicting the defection of the disciples, Jesus then predicts His own resurrection and His regathering of the scattered disciples. They would forsake Him at the moment of His greatest trial, which was the struggle He endured throughout His arrest, trials, and crucifixion. But that was not to be the end of the story, because He would rise from the grave and regather the disciples.

B. The Display of Peter's Self-Confidence (v. 33)

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

Rather loudly and vehemently Peter protested the Lord's prediction of the disciples' defection. Because of his love for Christ, he thought he was invincible. He couldn't accept Jesus' prediction. He thought he was spiritually mature—that his priorities were cast in concrete, thus making him invulnerable to the onslaughts of Satan, the world, and the flesh. He couldn't imagine any circumstance that would cause him to defect and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't think there could be any pressure that great. So boastfully he told the Lord that He was wrong. It takes a big ego to contradict the word of the living God, and Peter had one.

II. THE SINNER'S DEFIANCE (vv. 34-35)

A. Christ's Prediction of Peter's Denials (v. 34)

"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee that this night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me

thrice."

Jesus made an even stronger prediction, and this time He directed it at Peter. He told him that not only would he defect, but that he would go one step further and actually deny Him three times.

B. Peter's Protest over Christ's Prediction (v. 35)

"Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."

When the Lord predicted Peter's denial in verse 34, Matthew used a strong Greek verb that means "to deny completely." Peter couldn't accept that. Mark 14:31 says Peter vehemently protested Christ's prediction. When Peter said he was willing to die, he was speaking very courageously. But such a boast was in defiance of Christ's word.

III. THE SINNER'S INDIFFERENCE (vv. 36-41)

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very depressed. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep; and he saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We know Peter's spirit was willing, and all the other disciples affirmed they also were willing to die for the Lord. But their flesh wasn't able to let them do it. They should have been praying, but smug, boastful, self-confident disciples don't pray because they don't need to. They felt invincible and invulnerable, so what was there to pray about? Instead of being alert to the coming hour of darkness, they simply went to sleep. They had made their vow. They thought they'd remain faithful to Jesus based on their emotions and affection for Him, and their verbal commitment.

IV. THE SINNER'S IMPULSIVENESS (vv. 51-52)

A. Peter's Act of Violence (v. 51)

"Behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear."

The first person Peter attacked was Malchus, the servant of the high priest. Peter probably tried to cut off his head and missed, cutting off his ear instead. That wasn't what Jesus wanted. Peter had forgotten the times Jesus said He must go to Jerusalem, be taken captive, lay down His life, and rise again (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). Peter also protested that initial prediction. That's when the Lord rebuked him for letting Satan speak through him (v. 23).

B. Christ's Appeal for Non-Violence (vv. 52-54)

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Peter was out of sync with God's plan. He displayed courage, but it was misguided. He was so defiant against what the Lord said and so zealous of his own plan that he acted impulsively, completely at odds with the plan of God. He wanted to show Jesus and the disciples that he was as courageous as he claimed to be.

V. THE SINNER'S COLLAPSE (vv. 58, 69-74)

John 18:12 tells us that before the soldiers took Jesus to the high priest, they took Him to Annas, a

former high priest. John 18:19-24 describes the scene before Annas, whereas Matthew doesn't refer to it. In verse 57 Matthew says the soldiers brought Jesus to Caiaphas.

Does John 18:12 contradict Matthew 26:57?

No. The high priest lived in a palatial home in the city of Jerusalem somewhere near the Temple. In those days it was common for families to share the same home. That was no doubt the case with Annas and Caiaphas. Annas had served previously as the high priest, but he was deposed by the Romans because he was amassing too much power. As such he became a threat to them. One of those who replaced him was Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas. So it was natural for Annas and Caiaphas to occupy the same home since they were related. Thus when Jesus was led to the home of Caiaphas, where the Sanhedrin was assembling, it was also the home of Annas. There is no conflict. That Jesus was led away to Caiaphas is consistent with His being led away to Annas. No doubt Annas occupied one wing of the house and Caiaphas the other.

Homes in those days were constructed in such a way that they did not face the street. The only thing visible from the street other than the walls of the house was a great gate, which was typical of palatial homes owned by wealthy people. The high priests had become wealthy through the corruption they had organized in the Temple. The gate of the house opened up into a corridor that led to a huge courtyard. The house surrounded the courtyard, and all the rooms on all floors looked out into the courtyard.

One section of this house belonged to Annas; the other belonged to Caiaphas. When Jesus was led to the home of Caiaphas, He was taken to Annas's wing first. Later on He was transferred to the part of the house occupied by Caiaphas. So when Matthew says, "They that laid hold of Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled" (Matt. 26:57), he was referring to the very place where Jesus would face Annas.

Jesus faced Annas first, and then He was taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin for the second phase of the three-part Jewish trial. The third phase occurred just after dawn as the Sanhedrin attempted to legalize their illegal decision of the previous night.

Peter's denials all occurred in the courtyard of the high priest's house. John 18:25-27 indicates that his first denial occurred while Jesus was with Annas.

A. The Context of Peter's Denials (v. 58)

1. He followed at a distance (v. 58a)

"Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's court."

Although all the disciples fled when Jesus was taken prisoner, Peter couldn't stay away. He was pulled along by his love for the Lord. But he followed Christ at a distance. Peter wasn't brave enough to get close.

a) John's connections Peter wasn't alone. According to John 18:15, another disciple accompanied him. Most likely this other disciple was John, and he was known to the high priest. We don't know the circumstances of that relationship, but it would explain what gave Peter and John entrance into the high priest's house. John and Peter were getting in over their heads following the Lord—at least we're sure Peter was. We can't be sure about what happened to John. Scripture says nothing about what happened after he went into the house, but we do know he didn't deny the Lord. By himself, Peter couldn't get in the house because he didn't know anyone who could invite him. Apparently John rectified the situation by talking the girl who watched the door into letting Peter in (John 18:16). In a sense John unwittingly contributed to Peter's denial of Christ. After this scene John disappears from the narrative of the text. Our focus is on Peter. John's part was to gain access for Peter, and in that way he was a part of the unfolding prediction of Christ. b) The lesson's purpose Why would Christ predict that Peter would deny Him and then plan out the events so he could? Because Christ wanted to teach us all profound lessons about spiritual unpreparedness and the restoration of sinning saints.

They are the kinds of lessons we should rejoice to learn.

2. He exposed himself to sin (v. 58b)

"[Peter] went in, and sat with the guards, to see the end."

Peter sat with the temple police (Gk., hup[ma]eret[ma]es). No doubt the Roman soldiers had already returned to Fort Antonius. They had done their duty by capturing Jesus and taking Him to the place of trial.

According to verse 58, Peter wanted to see the outcome of Christ's trial. But he should have known what the outcome would be; the Lord had told him enough times previously. He simply didn't listen very well. Peter couldn't walk away and not know what happened to Christ. His love for the Lord may have been weak, but it was real. So he entered the lions' den and totally ignored Christ's prediction of his denials.

As Peter sat by the fire the Lord was inside before Annas. Perhaps Peter was even able to see Him. A fire was burning that night because it was a cool night. Many members of the Sanhedrin would have been bustling about as they began to gather for their part in the trial. In addition, house servants and dignitaries that made up the coterie of people surrounding the high priest would have also been present.

The time was near 1 [sc]A.M., and the trial would last about two hours. It is in that two-hour span that Peter would hit rock bottom. So Peter sat with the soldiers warming himself, trying to lose himself in the crowd. He wanted to stay close enough to find out what was going to happen to Christ, but not so close that he would be exposed.

B. The Circumstances of Peter's Denials (vv. 69-74)

1. The first occasion (vv. 69-70)

a) A slave girl's accusation (v. 69)"Peter sat outside in the court, and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee."Mark 14:66 says she was "one of the maids of the high priest." John 18:17 says she was "the maid that kept the door." Mark 14:67 says she indentified the Lord as "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus' skeptics loved to refer to Him as a Nazarene or Galilean because they were terms of derision. The proud citizens of Jerusalem looked down on people from Galilee. This doorkeeper might have gained her information about Peter because she knew John, whom she knew as a follower of Jesus. She followed Peter and announced her discovery, perhaps to impress the guards sitting around the fire.This scene in the courtyard is very natural--it is a crowd scene. What we read in the narrative is only a portion of the dialogue that probably occurred. For example, the maid said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee" (Matt. 26:69). But we can be certain she couldn't say that without capturing the attention of the soldiers and other people first. To make her point she probably identified Peter as one of the followers of Jesus in two or three different ways, which is confirmed in the different gospel accounts of this scene. So when we see slight variations in what she said from one gospel to another we shouldn't be surprised.b) Peter's denial (v. 70)"He denied it before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."Peter did not address his denial to the maiden, but to all those near the fire. Mark 14:68 records Peter as saying, "I know not [Him]." In John 18:17 Peter says, "I am not." He probably said, "I am not. I don't know Him. You don't know what you're saying." That would have been a natural response. We don't want to become overprotective of the exactness of each book, otherwise we'll invent contradictions that aren't there. Each author picked each detail as the Holy Spirit led him. All four gospels put together give us a more complete picture. The scene was natural--Peter denied knowing Christ with several statements, perhaps with even more than are recorded.(1) His faulty preparationThe question we must answer is how could Peter deny Christ, especially after saying he was ready to die for Him? Peter was Christ's main man--the leader of the Twelve. He had been given the keys to the Kingdom by the King Himself. Peter was a privileged man. He had witnessed Christ's miraculous power, and had been given the same power to heal diseases (Matt. 10:8). He was not some new convert or simply a personal acquaintance of Christ. So why did Peter deny Him?

Dropping Our Guard

I believe Peter was prepared for a big test. If the Lord suddenly sent for him and said, "Come into My trial and speak on My behalf," Peter may have stood by the Lord and felt invincible, like he did in the garden (John 18:10). He may have been ready for the opportunity to be a speaker for the Lord. But he wasn't prepared for the little, unexpected test. I'm afraid we're all like that. We prepare well for our Bible study or to communicate Christ in certain situations. We may be able to anticipate future challenging situations and prepare ourselves to meet them. But while we're prepared for those situations, we often are suddenly hit with a situation we never expected. That knocks us off our guard and we deny Christ. Peter was prepared for the big test; it was the little one that trapped him. Since the Lord wasn't at his side, he became afraid and denied having had any relationship with Jesus at all.

Peter's response is reminiscent of Elijah's. After slaughtering four hundred and fifty false priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:40), Elijah fled from Jezebel once he heard about her threat to kill him (1 Kings 19:2-3). How could he go from such heights of victory to such depths of defeat? Peter had reached similar heights. He had just come out of the upper room where he had seen Jesus close out the Old Covenant and initiate the New Covenant. He had heard Jesus promise them things never before heard by any human being, nor any human since. He had seen the Lord knock down a thousand people with a word from His mouth. He just had seen Jesus restore a severed ear. On top of all that, Peter had briefly walked on water (Matt. 14:29) and seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44).

(2) His faulty confidence Peter is a living illustration of the following principle: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). His confidence became his undoing. A little doormaid was able to fell the chief of the Twelve. Gone were his heroic protestations to Jesus. Gone was his courage. Jesus had snatched a sword from his hand and now a girl has snatched his character from his heart. He was revealed as an arrogant coward, unable to confess his heavenly Lord, cringing in denial. He was afraid of being arrested. His instinct for self-preservation took over and he denied what he knew to be true.

Revealing Character

Our involuntary responses reveal our character, not our planned responses. Your character isn't manifested by what you are prepared to do, but by what you're not prepared for and how you react to it. To some extent we can plan for certain experiences we know might be trying. But it's the experiences that catch us off guard that reveal our weaknesses and show us what we really are. Peter was caught off guard. He wasn't prepared for his test. His involuntary reaction revealed his character to be weak and sinful. A new character flaw it wasn't, issuing from a strong ego, an unwillingness to listen to the word of the Lord, a failure to pray, a tendency to act on impulse, and a disregard for the plan of God. Peter was on his own, and on his own he was weak, just like anyone else.

2. The second occasion (vv. 71-72)

a) Peter's disappearance (v. 71a) "When he was gone out into the porch." Luke 22:58 says that "after a little while" he went out to the porch. After denying the Lord by the fire, Peter couldn't leave immediately or it would look like he was lying. So he hung around for a little while. But then he moved away from the fire inconspicuously. Verse 71 says he went into the porch, which was the corridor that led out to the gate of the house. It's quite possible that Peter was attempting to leave, but I don't think so. In that courtyard were two places to keep warm on a cold night--by the fire or in the corridor away from the wind. So Peter went to the corridor to keep warm, but also to hide

because it would be darker there. He wouldn't be exposed to either the moonlight or firelight. Mark 14:68 says, "He went out into the porch; and the cock crowed." He denied the Lord once, and now the cock has crowed once. After two more denials the cock would crow a second time. He was right on schedule.b) Another slave girl's accusation (v. 71b) "Another maid [Gk., all[ma]e, another girl of the same kind] saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Again Peter was exposed. He couldn't avoid it. Matthew tells us the maid was another servant girl. Luke 22:58 indicates at this time a man also confronted him. Again, we get a more complete picture when we examine all the gospels. While Peter stood in that corridor, a man confirmed what the servant girl said. So in the scene of Peter's second denial, both a girl and a man confront him. And the crowd must have been drawn into it because Matthew 26:71 says the girl identified Peter "unto them that were there."c) Peter's denial (v. 72) "Again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man." Peter was angry, embarrassed, frustrated, afraid, and confused. He had been trapped again. Now his denials were becoming more vehement. This time he told two lies: he lied when he claimed he didn't know Jesus, and he lied by taking an oath to his truthfulness. Taking an oath is swearing to the truth. The ultimate oath was to swear by the living God, which is what the high priest wanted Jesus to do in verse 63: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Peter made an oath--a personal pledge of truthfulness before God that he did not know Jesus. Peter's second denial demonstrates his lack of trust in God. Why couldn't he speak the truth and commit himself to the care of the Lord? Because he didn't have spiritual strength. He was weak. Although he was the recipient of great spiritual privileges and experiences, he wasn't invincible. People who think they are invulnerable to disaster because they know so much about the Bible and have experienced the blessings of God are actually the most vulnerable. And that was true of Peter.

3. The third occasion (vv. 73-74a)

a) Peter's delay (v. 73a) "After a while." Both Matthew 26:73 and Mark 14:70 indicate that after his second denial Peter still hung around for a while, perhaps moving into the courtyard again. Luke 22:59 says he milled around for an hour after the second denial. Two hours have passed. The first two denials took place in the first hour, and now another hour has gone by. Peter couldn't quite bring himself to leave. No doubt by now he had drifted near to the room in Caiaphas's wing of the house where Jesus' trial was being held. By this time the Sanhedrin and soldiers probably were spitting on Jesus' face and slapping Him (Matt. 26:67). Peter was nearby, able to see through the doorways and windows at what was happening. He couldn't leave. Perhaps the screams of blasphemy and the beating Jesus was enduring held him there.b) The crowd's accusation (v. 73b) "Came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee." Peter's Galilean accent was readily distinguishable (Mark 14:70). Those who heard Peter speak confronted him about it. According to John 18:26 a spokesman in this group of people was a relative of Malchus, the high priest's servant whose ear Peter had cut off.c) Peter's denial (v. 74a) "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." Peter began to curse (Gk., katanathematiz[ma]o). It's a strong word pronouncing death upon yourself if you're lying. It's like saying, "May God kill me and damn me if I'm not speaking the truth." That is taking the Lord's name in vain in the most serious way imaginable. Verse 74 also says Peter swore (Gk., omnu[ma]o), which was a pledge of truthfulness. So on the positive side he pledged his truthfulness; on the negative side he called down the damning power of God on his own head if he wasn't telling the truth. Peter was so far from reality at that point that He lost all fear of God. He began with a single lie. Then to cover that up he lied twice. And now to cover that up he let loose with a flurry of curses. Verse 74 says he began to curse, which means he didn't do it once, but continuously. Perhaps the crowd continued to accuse him and that's why he continued to curse and swear. Our dear Lord was rejected by the world, sold by one of His disciples, and now denied again and again by the leader of His own group. Isaiah 53:3 aptly calls Him a man of sorrows.

C. The Acknowledgment of Peter's Denials (v. 74b)

"Immediately the cock crowed."

That was the second time the cock crowed. The Lord's prediction came to pass. Luke 22:61 says that at the split second the cock crowed "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Peter must have been able to see the Lord. Perhaps he was standing outside the window looking into the trial when the cock crowed. Or perhaps the trial had ended and Jesus was being led away when He passed by Peter at the moment Peter denied Him for the third time. That look must have burned Peter's soul, causing the most excruciating pain he had ever experienced. Peter now understood he could never mistrust what Christ said. Burned indelibly in his heart was the evil of his sin. He would never forget what he had done. Yet I'm sure there was a measure of compassion and mercy in Jesus' look despite how much Peter's denials must have hurt Him, for soon Peter would be restored.

The collapse of Peter is frozen like a still picture, crystalized in stark imagery in a moment of time as the eyes of Peter met those of His Lord. How Peter could ever sink to such depth? He was spiritually self-confident--he thought he was invulnerable to danger. His insubordination, prayerlessness, and independence led to compromise. Whenever you think you can handle any situation, that's when you can be sure you'll experience some situations you can't handle. That's where Peter was. During the darkest hour in human history, when hell was operating at full tilt, Peter was no match for the forces of the enemy and his demons. It wouldn't have been inconceivable at this point for Peter to go and hang himself like Judas. But he didn't.

VI. THE SINNER'S REMORSE (v. 75)

Despite all that Peter denied, the key to this message is his repentance. The true Peter is seen not in his denial, but in his repentance. We don't wonder if Judas was a true believer because we know how his story ended--He hanged himself. Judas was not repentant. Peter didn't hang himself; he wept bitterly and then came back to be restored. Therein lies the difference between people like Judas and people like Peter. Both will sin, but one is repentant and will be restored while the other one is unrepentant and will be damned. Why is one repentant and not the other? Luke 22:31-32 is the key: Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Do you know why Peter's faith didn't totally fail? Because the Lord prayed for him. The reason we stay saved is not the result of something we've done, but of the sustaining power of the Lord to keep us saved. Jesus didn't keep Judas saved because he never was saved.

A. He Remembered (v. 75a)

"Peter remembered the words of Jesus, who said unto him, Before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice."

B. He Left (v. 75b)

"He went out."

I'm glad none of the gospel writers tell us where Peter went or what he said--that was a private moment of repentance as Peter came to grips with his sin. It was a time for him to be alone with His Lord, whom he had so grossly offended.

C. He Wept (v. 75c)

"He wept bitterly."

Matthew used a very strong expression in the Greek text (eklausen pikr[ma]os) which means, "to sob loudly."

We can learn a great lesson from Peter's experience. It wasn't until he saw the face of Jesus and remembered His words that he repented. Peter's sin didn't make him repent; his Savior made him repent. Here's the important principle: it's not our sins that make us weep and repent; it's seeing how we've offended our Savior that makes us repent. We always need to fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2). Peter's sin didn't do anything positive for Peter--he would have kept sinning. But when he

saw Jesus and he remembered His words, his repentance was born out of a recognition of whom he sinned against. My objective in ministry is not to focus on encouraging you to turn from sin, but to lift up our God of glory. It is only when you see the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory that you can understand the heinous nature of sin.

In the agony of his repentance, Peter made his life right with the Lord. He was like Isaiah, who cried out to God, "I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). And like Isaiah, Peter was purified.

VII. THE SINNER'S RESTORATION (John 21:15-17)

John 21 describes a scene in Galilee. Peter had gone fishing with several of the disciples, shortly before the Lord appeared following His resurrection (vv. 3-4). Beginning in verse 15 Jesus asks Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me?" In verses 16-17 He repeats that question two more times. In each case Peter answers by saying, "Thou knowest that I love thee." Why do you think the Lord gave him three opportunities? It's obvious--the Lord was restoring him. For each occasion of denial, Jesus allowed Peter to reaffirm his love. The Lord accepted Peter's testimony, and He restored Peter by saying, "Feed my lambs.... feed my sheep.... feed my sheep" (vv. 15-17). The Lord put Peter back on his feet and back in ministry. After that Peter became the great proclaimer of the gospel in the early church.

CONCLUSION

What a hopeful story! God is in the business of giving grace to sinners and restoring the fallen. He picks up even the person who has denied Him and shown himself to be weak, and puts him in a place of strength. I'm glad we have a God of forgiveness, aren't you?

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the single greatest gift God could give us? Explain.
2. Explain Peter's boast (Matt. 26:33).
3. Why did the disciples fall asleep instead of praying (Matt. 26:40-41)?
4. Explain Peter's impulsiveness (Matt. 26:51).
5. Does John 18:12 contradict Matthew 26:57? Explain.
6. Explain how John inadvertently contributed to Peter's denials of Christ.
7. What did Peter do after gaining access to the courtyard of the high priest (Matt. 26:58)? What was he trying to do?
8. Who confronted Peter first? How did that person know Peter was a follower of Christ?
9. Why do we find different variations of what the servant girl said to Peter in the different gospel accounts of that scene?
10. Why did Peter deny Christ? Explain.
11. What principle is illustrated by Peter's denials of Christ?
12. What kind of response reveals a person's character? Explain.
13. Why did Peter leave the fire in the courtyard and move to the corridor?
14. What made Peter's second denial different from his first one (Matt. 26:72)?
15. Describe Peter's third denial (Matt. 26:74).
16. According to Luke 22:61, what happened the instant the cock crowed for the second time? Explain the significance of this event.
17. Why was Peter repentant? Why was Judas unrepentant?
18. What made Peter repent? Explain.
19. Why did the Lord give Peter three opportunities to affirm his love?

Pondering the Principles

1. As a Christian, God has given you the greatest gift He could possibly give you, and that is

forgiveness of your sins through the death of Christ on the cross. Thank Him right now for what His forgiveness means to you. Thank Him for what He is doing in your life today. Finally thank Him for the things He will do in your life, and the fact that you will be with Him in heaven one day.

2. Analyze your spiritual preparedness. Are you like Peter, prepared for the big tests but unprepared for the small ones? Based on what you have learned from this lesson, what can you do to be better prepared for those small tests? Review the section on revealing character (see p. 7). Our involuntary responses reveal our true character and its weaknesses. In Peter's case, what led to his failure in the small tests? How might you turn those weaknesses of Peter's character into strengths in your character? Commit yourself to building your spiritual character. As you do you will find your involuntary responses revealing your strengths and not your weaknesses.

3. Peter's repentance was born out of his recognition of Christ, and his understanding that he sinned against Him. When you sin, what makes you repent? Do you repent out of sorrow for having sinned against Christ, or is it the result of knowing that as a believer you should repent of sin? Can the latter be true repentance if it isn't motivated by the former? Look up the following verses: Isaiah 6:5; Daniel 9:5-7; Micah 7:9; Luke 15:17-20. What do each of those verse teach about the motivation for repentance? Read Psalm 51 and then meditate on these verses that reveal David's repentant heart. Memorize these verses that are most meaningful to you. Use them to help motivate true repentance from your heart each time the Lord convicts you of your sin.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).