

Jesus' Remarkable Conduct In Saving Fallen Peter By His Silent Look.

Text: Luke 22:61-62

1) How Peter Fell

Suggested Hymns:

2) How Jesus Saved Peter By A Look

822, 345, 317, 320, 68

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 22:61–62, ***61 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." 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The incident in the story of our Lord's holy Passion recorded in our text occurred in the court of the high priest's palace in the city of Jerusalem.

After His capture in Gethsemane Jesus was led to Annas first, the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was the high priest that year.¹

From the Gospel of John we learn that the trial during the night was preceded by a judicial examination under Annas. The captors had orders to bring Jesus to Annas who, most likely, lived in the same house or at least the same enclosure, of his son-in-law Caiaphas.²

Annas bore the title of high priest even after he was no longer high priest. He was most certainly a man of tremendous influence among the Sadducees and in the Sanhedrin. He was of one mind with his son-in-law Caiaphas concerning Jesus, and thus was designated as the man into whose hands Jesus was to be delivered if he was captured on this night raid.

Naturally also it took a little time to assemble the Sanhedrin with its membership of 71 men in the middle of the night. The moment news of the capture arrived messengers flew through the dark streets to gather at least a quorum of the High Court.

The leaders felt that they dared not wait until morning but must secure action at once. The legal restrictions forbidding trials at night were ignored, and the Sanhedrin was summoned.

When the motley crowd, with Jesus in the midst, arrived at the palace of the high priest, the gate was opened, and all walked into the court. From the courtyard Jesus was taken into one of the rooms of Annas for a preliminary hearing and afterwards across the courtyard to Caiaphas' hall where the members of the Sanhedrin had meanwhile assembled.

While Jesus was led across the courtyard the remarkable incident occurred which has been recorded in our text.

Jesus looked at Peter and by His look, without saying a word, restored this fallen disciple who had denied his Master three times.

Let us consider *Jesus' Remarkable Conduct In Saving Fallen Peter By His Silent Look*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How Peter Fell.

When Jesus was taken captive in Gethsemane, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Only two of them gathered enough courage to follow the band of men as they led Jesus away. One was Peter and another whose name is not mentioned, but who must have been John.

John was personally acquainted with the high priest and his men. He found no difficulty in gaining entry and walked right in through the gate with the band. But Peter had kept quite a distance behind the crowd for fear lest he might be arrested for striking the high priest's servant, and when the gate was shut, he lingered outside.

John knew that he was there and spoke to the girl watching the door to let him in. Shyly Peter came in, walked into the court, and mingled with the servants who had made a coal fire in the middle of the yard and were warming themselves.

Peter's object in coming here was to find out what would become of his Master Jesus. He had kept his eyes open and watched the lighted rooms, but did not dare to enter the house. As the chill crept over him, he walked up to the fire and stretched out his hands to warm them.

No sooner had he done so, when a servant girl, the doorkeeper, who had already eyed him with suspicion when she let him in, came up, looked into his face, and declared that he was a follower of Jesus. She pointed him out to the men, and put the question to him: ***“You are not also one of this Man’s disciples, are you?”***³

And what was the effect of this sudden revelation upon Peter? At once he forgot all about his Master and he denied before them all, saying, ***“I am not.”***

In his agitation and excitement he, probably, did not hear the shrill sound of the rooster crowing in the stillness of night after the first denial. He left the fire and nervously walked into the porch, as Matthew and Mark inform us, that is, into the passage which led to the outer gate.

Perhaps he wanted to make for the door and to leave this dangerous place. But he was interrupted by another woman who stopped him and said to those who were there: ***“This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.”***⁴ Now Peter became frightened. With an oath he declared: ***“I do not know the Man!”***

So alarmingly had he fallen already that he contaminated his lips with a false oath. To show them that there was no foundation to their suspicion, he braced up boldly and walked back to the fire where he sat down and mixed in with the enemies of Christ and spoke to them as if he was one of their number. He was not molested for about an hour.

At length they approached him again. Peter had been doing all he could to deceive them and to make them believe he was not a disciple of Jesus.

Now a man stood up before him and said: ***“Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.”***⁵ Peter had spoken freely and his Galilean accent had betrayed him. To add to his discomfort, one of the servants of the high priest, being a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off, challenged him and said: ***“Did I not see you in the garden with Him?”***⁶

Now all seemed to be lost to Peter. He was hemmed in on all sides. He felt himself detected. And what does he do? He began to curse and swear, saying, ***“I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”***⁷

By cursing and swearing Peter wanted to convince the men, for such language the disciples of Christ never used. How terrible! How deeply had Peter fallen!

In an incredibly short time this prominent disciple of Christ had been turned into a child of the devil! And now, after this third denial, the shrill crowing of the rooster was heard for the second time. Peter noticed it.

But scarcely would he have paid any attention to the crowing of the rooster and to its peculiar meaning for him, if, almost at the same moment, something had not occurred to check his downward course, to open his eyes for him, and to let him realise the dreadful abyss into which he had plunged.

2. How Jesus Saved Peter By A Look.

We are told in our text, *“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.”*

Scarcely had the terrible words escaped Peter’s lips by which, amid cursing and swearing, he denied his allegiance to Christ, when the door opened and Jesus was led across the courtyard to that part of the building where the members of the Sanhedrin were assembled.

The voices were hushed in the courtyard when the prisoner was led across, and nothing was heard but the shrill crowing of the rooster. Peter, standing in the light of the fire, excitedly looked in the direction where men with torches were hurrying someone across the yard. His eye met the eye of Jesus, and for a short moment Jesus’ look was riveted on him.

O what a look! What an effect this one short look had upon Peter! It spoke more than volumes. It penetrated into the innermost depth of his soul. It pierced him. It revealed to him the enormity of the sin which he had just committed.

It brought to his memory all that Jesus had said to him a short time ago, *“Where I am going you cannot follow Me now”⁸* and how Jesus had declared in Mark 14:30, *“Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”*

There was, doubtless, a sadness in that look of Jesus, a sadness which appealed to Peter’s heart and made him think, *‘Oh what have I done! How*

shamefully I have denied my Lord! How wicked I have been! How could I forget myself so far as to curse and to swear!'

But there was love and tender compassion in that look of Jesus. Peter felt that the Lord had not rejected him, and that He was willing to forgive him the terrible sin which he had committed, and that Jesus yearned and longed for Peter's salvation and would not see him eternally lost.

Doubtless, Peter remembered now what Jesus had said, as we read in Luke 22:31-32, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*"

It was this simple glance of Jesus which saved Peter. He came to his senses. Not another word did he have with the enemies of Christ. We are told: "*So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*"

The story of Peter's denial suggests some important lessons. We may learn from them what a deceitful and desperately wicked thing the human heart is, and how easily even the best of Christians may fall.

When a prominent church member commits a great wrong, a sin which is glaring even in the eyes of the world, he is generally stamped a hypocrite by the unbelieving children of the world, and slurs are cast upon Christians in general, insinuating that, more or less, they are all hypocrites wearing a pious face and doing wrong in secret.

Had Peter been a hypocrite before he denied his Master? Was he not as sincere a disciple as could be found? Can we doubt that he really meant it when he declared: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" or when only a few hours before his denial he expressed his willingness to go into death with Christ?

When, therefore, a prominent church member falls in sin, no greater injustice can be done to Christians in general than to hold them in contempt for their personal piety, to doubt their sincerity, and to term them hypocrites.

And if you see that one of your fellow-Christians has fallen, you should be careful not to exalt yourself like the Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.¹⁰ Do not say, "*Such a thing could not*

happen to me.” Where would you be, if God did not hold you with His merciful hand? Is there a sin of which your heart, sinful, corrupted, and depraved as it is by nature, is not capable of?

The Word of God says in Galatians 6:1, ¹ ***Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted,*** and in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ¹² ***Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.***

From the story of Peter’s denial we may learn, furthermore, what a dangerous thing it is for Christians to intermingle with the enemies of the Lord and how easily they may be led to deny their Master, if they go to such places where they should not be seen.

Peter meant well. He went among the men who had taken Jesus captive to see the end, to find out what they were going to do with his dear Master. But he should have heeded Jesus’ warning; for Jesus had told him distinctly, ***“Where I am going you cannot follow Me now.”***

You may mean well when you visit the places of the ungodly, you may go there from sheer curiosity, or to convince yourself of the wrong, and not think of denying Christ. But before you are aware of it, you will be saying or doing something in their company which amounts to nothing less than a denial of your divine Lord.

We read in Psalm 1:1, ¹ ***Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.***

But the most important lesson of this story is, that there is salvation even for the greatest of sinners. What a series of terrible sins had Peter committed in one breath, as it were, lying, cursing and swearing, and using blasphemous words. Yet Jesus did not cast him away. He did not ignore this fallen disciple. He turned and looked at Peter. What a merciful Saviour!

Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. To this day His heart is filled with the same compassion which He exhibited in the case of Peter, with the same desire to restore the erring and the fallen; ***“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”***¹¹

When we have fallen in sin, when we have broken the covenant which we made with our God in Baptism, when we have shamefully denied and forsaken our Lord and our God, when we have stepped over from the narrow way that leads to eternal life to the broad way that leads to eternal perdition, even then the Good Shepherd follows us into the haunts of sin, and yearns and longs to receive us back, and is willing to forgive us the greatest and most terrible sins.

O sinner, do not let Jesus seek you in vain. Repent of your sins, as Peter did when he went out and wept bitterly. Do not give way to despair, as Judas did, but accept in a true faith the forgiveness which Jesus extends to you; for to you He says, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*¹² Yes, *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*¹³

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,

Jesus sinners doth receive;
O may all this saying ponder
Who in sin’s delusions live,
And from God and heaven wander.
This alone sure hope can give:
Jesus sinners doth receive. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 18:13

² R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John*, Columbus Ohio:Wartburg Press, 1945, p1190

³ John 18:17

⁴ Matthew 26:71

⁵ Mark 14:70

⁶ John 18:26

⁷ Mark 14:71

⁸ John 13:36

⁹ John 6:69

¹⁰ Luke 18:9

¹¹ Luke 19:10

¹² Matthew 11:28

¹³ 1 John 1:7