

Title:     **A GREAT SINNER AND HIS GREAT SAVIOR**  
Text:     Luke 22:54-62  
Subject:  *Peter's Fall and Recovery*  
Date:     Sunday Evening — April 9, 2006  
Tape #    Y-93a

Introduction:

Because it is describe in great detail by God the Holy Spirit in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it is obvious that Peter's fall and his recovery by the Lord Jesus Christ is a matter of great importance, and one that we need to have repeatedly impressed upon our hearts and minds. May God the Holy Spirit be our Teacher as we go over the inspired history of this sad event. Here is the tremendously instructive record of **A GREAT SINNER AND HIS GREAT SAVIOR**.

(Luke 22:54-62) "Then took they him, and led *him*, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. (55) And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. (56) But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. (57) And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. (58) And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. (59) And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen. (60) And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. (61) And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. (62) And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Truly this Book is the inspired Word of God. Were it nothing but an uninspired book of religion written by men, the gospel writers would never have told us that Peter, one of the Lord's apostles denied his Master three times. What are we to learn from this sad, yet encouraging event, in the life of God's servant, the apostle Peter?

**DECLINING STEPS**

First, we should observe that Peter's great fall was preceded by gradually declining steps. His great sin was preceded by lesser evils. The steps of his demise are clearly identified out by the inspired historians, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

- First, Peter displayed **terrible pride and self-confidence**. Though all the other disciples might deny the Savior, Peter boasted that he would never do so. He openly boasted that he was ready to go with the Lord Jesus both to prison and to death!
- Then, when the Lord Jesus told him to watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, Peter was **found sleeping**.
- Third, Peter was **vacillating and indecisive**. — When Judas, the chief priests, and soldiers came to arrest the Son of God, Peter immediately fought for his Master bravely. — Then, he ran away. — Then, he returned. — Then, we see him following the Savior; but "*Peter followed afar off*."
- Next we see this man who was the object of God's everlasting love and boundless, immutable grace, **mingling with his Savior's enemies**. — He went into the high priest's house and sat down among his servants, warming himself by their fire, hoping to hide himself among them, hoping that he would not be identified as one of the Lord's disciples by his enemies. — There he sat, among godless, reprobate men, committing the most wicked deeds ever performed by men, hearing the filth gushing

from their hearts, as they cast accusation after accusation against the Lord of glory, and he wanted to be identified not as a follower of Christ, but as one of them!

- Finally, Peter was **overwhelmed with fear** and denied the Lord Jesus three times.

Let us ever beware of the little foxes that spoil the vine (Song 2:15).

(Song of Songs 2:15) "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes."

What a sweet and tender precept this is! How very needful! Foxes are here used to represent the subtle, less open, less known sins and corruptions lurking in us, like those cunning creatures, hide in silence, waiting to catch their prey.

Foxes are also representative of cunning, false prophets, hiding themselves among God's saints (Lam. 5:18; Ezek. 13:4).

(Lamentations 5:18) "Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it."

(Ezekiel 13:4) "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts."

Satan never more cunning and, perhaps, never more effectually deceives men, than when he transforms himself into an angel of light and makes his ministers ministers of righteousness.

The vines the foxes would destroy are the Lord's people, believers, having tender grapes. What more tender than a tender conscience? What can be more easily wounded?

- Let us ever look to Christ, the Lord of the vineyard, for grace to be on the look out against these destructive enemies to our souls' welfare.
- Let us ever be keenly aware of the fact that our greatest watchfulness and most fervent prayers, without his watchful eye and gracious protection, can never protect us from these shrewd, cunning foxes.
- Let us never cease to ask our Savior to take these foxes, and destroy them before us.

"Lord, I would say, keep me from every enemy which doth evil in thy sanctuary, and preserve alive, in flourishing circumstances, all those tender graces of thy Spirit bestowed upon me, that I may bring forth fruit to the praise of thy holy name, and may flourish and spread abroad as the cedar in Lebanon." — Robert Hawker

- Let us never cease to give thanks for the sweet assurance that though the foxes would destroy the vine, if they could, they never shall, because the Lord Jesus himself keeps his vine!

### **INWARD CORRUPTION**

Here is another thing we all prefer not to think about, but something we should constantly remember. — None of us know what vile corruptions are hidden deep in our hearts and what horrible deeds we might commit in a moment, if the Lord did not keep us from acting according to what we are. — Like you and me, Peter knew he was a sinner. He confessed it. — "*Lord, depart from me. I am a sinful man.*" But like us, Peter had no idea how sinful he was. I am sure he never dreamed he could do the things he did in the high priest's house that night.

You and I need to be constantly aware of this fact. — There is no evil in the world that is not in us. And there is no evil thing we will not do in a heartbeat, if the Lord God leaves us to ourselves. Peter was a

great man, a great apostle, a great believer. He was faithful and courageous, a man who truly loved and trusted the Son of God; but he was just a man, a sinner saved by grace, nothing more.

Whether we know it or not, we carry within us a boundless capacity for evil. There is no enormity of sin into which we will not run, if we are not held from the evil that is in us by the hand of God's omnipotent grace. When we read the falls of Noah, Lot, and Peter, we only read what would befall ourselves, if the Lord did not prevent it. Let us never presume. Let us never indulge in high thoughts about our own strength, or look down upon others who have fallen. Spirit of God teach us to "*walk humbly with God.*"

### **NO EFFECTUAL MEANS**

Third, the story of Peter's fall teaches us that no means of grace will effectual serve our souls, unless the means is made effectual by God's Spirit. I would say nothing to minimize the use of outward means. God uses outward means. But the means are meaningless, without the blessing of God upon them and the work of his Spirit by them. Not only is that true, but it is equally important for us to understand that no past experience will secure our souls from present evil.

- Peter was an apostle of Christ. Yet, he fell.
- Peter had seen and performed great miracles. Yet, he fell.
- Peter once walked on water to the Savior. Yet, he fell.
- Peter had seen the transfigured Christ. Yet, he fell.
- Peter had just heard the greatest sermon ever preached (John 14-16). Yet he fell.
- Peter had been warned by the Master. Yet, he fell.
- Peter heard the cock crow, reminding him of the Savior's warning. Yet he fell, persisting in his downward course.

Amid all these distinguishing mercies, and forewarned as he was by Christ, he not only denied Christ, but persisted in the denial, though the first crowing of the cock told him of his treachery. Still, he went on in his wickedness, fully aware of what he was doing! How often we hear the Word of God, or read it, hearing the very voice of God, as Peter did when he heard the crowing of the cock in the early hour of the morning, and totally ignore his voice. We will never heed it, except the Lord graciously cause us to hear it, as he caused Peter to hear the second crowing of the cock.

- Peter was in the immediate presence of his Savior. Yet, he fell! — No means of grace is a means of grace, without the workings of God's grace upon us and in us!

The only thing that distinguishes us from others is the distinguishing grace of our God. The only righteousness we have is Christ. And the only thing that keeps us is the grace of God.

### **PETER'S RECOVERY**

Now, consider what we should learn from Peter's recovery. For one thing, we should learn that when we fall, we have no ability to recover ourselves. When Peter heard the rooster crow the first time, how alarmed he must have been. Yet, he went on his even greater wickedness. Even when he heard the second crowing, he was unaffected, until "*the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*"

What a look that must have been! The Lord turned to Peter. Peter did not turn to the Lord. He looked upon Peter, not in anger and disgust, but in mercy, love and grace! That look was a look of tenderness, compassion and faithfulness. With that look the Lord spoke silently, but effectually, to the heart of his fallen son. He seems to have said...

- *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."*
- *"Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you."*
- *"I give unto you eternal life; and you shall never perish."*
- *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."*
- *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions."*
- *"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee."*
- *"In me thy righteousness found."*
- *"I am thy strength."*
- *"I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."*
- *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*
- *"Return unto me, return unto me; and I will pardon."*
- *"Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself."*

### **OUR GREAT SAVIOR**

Let me finish with this last, great lesson. — What a great, gloriously, indescribably great Savior our dear Lord Jesus is!

- His love for us is great.
- His grace to us is great.
- His faithfulness is great.
- His forgiveness is great.
- His righteousness is great.
- His atonement is great.
- His keeping is great.
- And his restoration is great. — Peter had gone back to his nets and boats, sure that he was reprobate. But the Lord Jesus would not let him go (Mark 16:7; John 21:15-17).

(Mark 16:7) "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

(John 21:15-17) "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. (16) He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (17) He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

Amen.