

PETER DENIES THE LORD

TEXT: MARK 14:27-31, 66-72

Introduction:

1. In Mark 14:27-31, our Lord gave Peter a solemn warning. This was the big turning point in the life of Simon Peter.
2. Peter was often impulsive and impetuous.
3. As we approach our text this evening we are reminded that Peter had not been brought to the end of himself. He did not really understand his own weakness. He had not yet come to the place where he saw no good in the flesh at all. That is a very important lesson indeed!
4. Like many people (even believers), Peter was too full of himself. And then he messed up badly (just as our Lord had warned him).
5. There are Christians – genuinely saved, born again, etc. that are full of self. They are walking in the power of the flesh, not the power of the Holy Spirit. And this self-will, and self-love, and self-comfort, and self-consciousness weighs them down and keeps them from advancing and going forward with the Lord.
6. Much of what I am going to say tonight goes against what the world says. The public school system, worldly entertainment, modern psychology, and even much preaching today are all geared toward pleasing self.
7. Much of what I am going to say is contrary to what most of the popular preachers are teaching today. They are emphasizing “your feelings...and your self-esteem...and your needs...and your comfort and your happiness, etc.”
8. That was the problem with Peter – too much self.
9. But contrast Peter before the resurrection of Christ with Peter on the day of Pentecost! What a powerful preacher! He was filled with the Holy Spirit. And 3,000 souls were saved and baptized. My, what a baptismal service that must have been!
10. But let us remember that before God could fill Peter with the Holy Spirit; and before God could make a new man out of him – Peter had to weep bitterly (Mark 14:72; cf. Luke 22:62).
11. Sometimes we need to weep bitterly – over our carnality, our laziness, our slothfulness, our pride, our selfishness, our prayerlessness, etc.
12. Self has to leave before God can take over.

I. PETER LIVED FOR SELF

1. Peter denied our Lord three times (Mark 14:66-72).

2. Remember he started out as a man of absolute surrender. He said to our Lord in Mark 10:28, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.”
3. And it was true. He gave up his fishing business to follow Jesus.
4. Peter, along with the two brothers James and John, was in our Lord’s inner circle. Peter was a natural born leader.
5. Peter loved the Lord. Peter was surrendered to Christ. Peter walked on the water. He had great faith, and great devotion (cf. John 13:6-9).
6. At times, Peter had great spiritual discernment and keen spiritual insight (cf. Matt. 16:13-17). But despite all of this, there was something seriously lacking in Peter (cf. Matt. 16:21-23).
7. Only moments after our Lord commended Peter, our Lord had to rebuke him (Matt. 16:23).
8. Peter was too full of self; too self-willed. He “savored not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23).
9. Peter was saved, but Peter was still full of self. And unfortunately, many Christians are like that today (cf. Rev. 3:14-16).
10. We see later on in the Gospels, on more than one occasion, that among the disciples there was a questioning over whom should be the greatest, and there was Peter striving for first place.
11. If we are honest before God, we will admit that we all have that deep in our hearts. We try and suppress it, but like a wild beast it keeps coming back.
12. Let us always remember the words of John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).
13. Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul: “That in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).
14. Let us consider our Lord’s rebuke of Peter (Matt. 16:23). Next He says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matt. 16:24-26).
15. Jesus said to deny self, but Peter denied our Lord – three times in rapid succession (Mark 14:66-72). What a contrast!
16. Our Lord warned Peter (Luke 22:31, 32). But Peter, filled with self-confidence, blurted out, “Lord, I am ready to go with Thee...” (22:33).
17. Let us not think that Peter was being insincere or hypocritical. Peter was sincere, and Peter was honest. But Peter was too self-confident; Peter did not really know himself.

18. Too many Christians are operating in the flesh. So they pamper the flesh. They yield to the flesh. They need to give this up and die to self.
19. George Mueller was a great preacher who did great things for God. Someone once asked him how he accomplished so much. He said, "There was a day when George Mueller died."
20. Another great Gospel preacher was William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. The famous evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman happened to be in London one day and was able to go and see General Booth, who at that time was past 80 years of age. Dr. Chapman listened reverently as General Booth spoke of his many trials and conflicts as well as great victories. Then Dr. Chapman asked the old preacher if he would tell him the secret of his success. General Booth hesitated for a moment and then with tears streaming down his cheeks he said, "I will tell you the secret. God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth there was."
21. William Booth denied himself and followed Christ. Beloved, there is a great conflict going on in the hearts of men. We must deny self or we will wind up denying Christ. There are two great forces working in the hearts of men – the selfish, sinful, self-nature *or* it is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).
22. If you trace this out in the Bible you will see this all the way through. Lucifer was an angel of God but he was full of self and became "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9; cf. Isaiah 14:12-15).
23. Then Satan tempted Eve. Eve was full of self, and she wanted something God had already told her was off-limits. And so our first parents fell into all the wretchedness of sin, and it's been that way ever since. We their children have inherited their awful sin nature.

II. PETER REPENTED

1. All four Gospels record Peter's denial of Christ, but in Luke's account we see something Mark and the other Gospel writers leave out. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61).
2. That look must have broken Peter's heart. He recognized his sin. True repentance means seeing sin the way God sees sin.

3. I'm afraid, even in many churches, people do not view sin as something horrible, and detestable, and vile.
4. I have many old white shirts – some are dress shirts and some are tee shirts. They seem clean to me...until I see them side by side next to some brand new shirts. Then I realize how bad they look!
5. We need to look at ourselves in the light of God's Word. Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6).
6. The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).
7. Our Lord just looked at Peter, and Peter remembered (Luke 22:61).
8. Peter realized what he had done; he saw his terrible failure; he saw the depth into which he had fallen, and he "went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62; cf. Mark 14:72).

III. PETER WAS TRANSFORMED

1. After Peter wept bitterly, he was prepared for deliverance from self. His public restoration took place on the shores of Galilee, when our Lord asked him three times, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" (John 21). I have heard many explanations as to why our Lord asked Peter the same question three times. Maybe it was because Peter denied our Lord three times (John 21:17).
2. We often think of Peter's transformation taken place on the day of Pentecost, but our Lord was working on Peter for three years leading up to Pentecost.
3. Our Lord was watching over Peter, and teaching him, and guiding him, right up to the very end. And beloved, God is working on us the same way.
4. If you are saved, the Lord is working on you, and watching over you, and teaching you, and guiding you.
5. And if you are not saved, then you need to be. And you can be.
6. Peter was a very zealous and earnest and godly disciple of the Lord. But prior to Pentecost the power of the flesh was very strong. The self-life was hindering him and slowing him down.
7. Perhaps there are some here tonight who are saved but the flesh is following you around like some dark, depressing shadow, intruding and bothering and interfering.

8. Sometimes we feel like the apostle Paul, crying out: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24).
9. Recognizing the problem with self is the first step to victory. It just a look from our Lord to get Peter’s attention (Luke 22:61).

CONCLUSION:

1. Speaking to a large audience, the evangelist DL Moody held up a glass and asked, “How can I get the air out of this glass?”
2. One man shouted, “Suck it out with a pump!”
3. Moody replied, “That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass.”
4. After numerous other suggestions Moody smiled, picked up a pitcher of water, and filled the glass. “There,” he said, “all the air is now removed.”
5. He then went on to explain that victory in the Christian life is not accomplished by “sucking out a sin here and there,” but by being filled with the Holy Spirit.
6. DL Moody said, “I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God’s law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled.”