

**Mark 14:66-72 (NKJV)**

**<sup>66</sup> Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.**

**<sup>67</sup> And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."**

**<sup>68</sup> 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.**

**<sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them."**

**<sup>70</sup> 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*."**

**<sup>71</sup> Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"**

**<sup>72</sup> 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.**

Have you ever failed the Lord? Have you ever failed Him in a way that you thought you could not be forgiven? Have you ever failed Him in a way that you felt you couldn't go to Him for forgiveness? Have you failed Him in a way that you thought you lost any chance of fellowship with God's people? Have you failed Him in a way that you knew any chance of a leadership position was gone. Have you ever thought you have done irreparable damage to the reputation of Christ? And in any of these failings, the greatest self condemnation came in the fact that **you knew better, but you did it anyway.**

I don't know about you, but I know I have. If you haven't, maybe your rooster simply hasn't crowed yet. Maybe you are not aware of the gravity of your failures. But none the less, our sermon this morning is for those of us who have colossally failed the Lord. It is one of the most encouraging passages in the Bible. Most of you probably know what I mean. I thank God for Peter's failure. I thank God that the Holy Spirit included this in the things that were brought to remembrance when men were writing down the Gospels. Because, you see, **if Peter can repent**, if Peter can be forgiven, if Peter can be restored to fellowship, if Peter can be given a position of leadership, there is hope for us.

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The courtyard that Peter was sitting in was the courtyard shared between Caiaphas and Anna's palaces. So Peter did not need to move between events. This removes an apparent contradiction in the texts.

Peter got into the courtyard based on the contacts of another one of the disciples, probably John. It is likely that John and Peter are both there. But the other disciple isn't mentioned again.

Now, Peter is sitting here. Just a few hours earlier He was sharing with Jesus the Passover meal. It was a very intimate meeting. Christ shared a lot of teaching. But the betrayal was predicted. That was a shock. Then he saw Christ in severe agony. He can't stay awake. Then all of a sudden the mob was there to take Christ. Peter reacted by swinging the sword. Christ put Malchus's ear back on. And Peter is rebuked for using his sword.

Peter had done **all he could do** for Christ. Peter had done his fleshly best. And Jesus had rebuked him for it. Now Peter is secretly following Christ. Christ wouldn't let Peter do it Peter's way. Christ rejected the best, most loyal, most valiant of Peter's fleshly way of doing things. And look what has happened. Everything that Jesus had risked his life for, all the things he sacrificed for, all his hopes and dreams are now on trial in a nearby room. And the verdict is certain. Peter is looking at the death of his dreams and the death of his friend.

**Have you ever tried to accomplish something you think God wants done, but you did it your way?** This often happens when people try to minister for Christ. Countless churches have been led by men with ambitions that they think are spiritual, but they are really fleshly. These people build their programs by the strength of their will, but they fail to consider God's instructions for how to do this thing. They don't really know what is important to God. And ultimately they fail. Even their successes are failures. This is what happens when flesh follows Christ.

Peter is sitting in such a place. He sees failure where he expected success. He sits in humiliation where he thought he would be praised. He thought he was the greatest but he found out he wasn't great at all. I am sure that every one of us has sat in this spot. This is **the fall** that comes after pride. So Peter is in a bad spot. And he doesn't understand. He doesn't understand how it could have come to this. After all, wasn't he doing everything the best he could.

I remember in Youth For Christ I learned about an evangelistic event that a lot of other chapters were using. A company would do an **in-school** assembly with a nice moral message. Then the students would be invited to an **after school** assembly where the gospel would be presented. I was never convinced that the gospel presentation was very good, but I decided to try it since everyone else spoke so highly of it.

So I arranged the **in school** assembly. And there was a technical malfunction that caused the presentation to completely fail. There were 300 students in an auditorium with nothing to do and it was my fault. It was awful. I was trying to do a good thing. And now I look like an utter fool. I got the point. At least I think I did. I never tried something like that again. The only message I represented from that point out is the Gospel.

Sitting there in this state of mind, a servant girl of the high priest notices him. Here is “greatest” Peter in an interaction with a lowly servant girl. And how does he hold up?

<sup>67</sup> **And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."**

All this girl is saying is that Peter was a disciple. Which he obviously was. After having tried to look out for Christ in Peter’s flesh, now Peter resorts to looking after Peter in the flesh.

<sup>68</sup> **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 looks at this girl and tells her a flat out lie. I don’t know what you are talking about.

The word for deny here is the opposite to the word confess. Scripture tells us that we are to confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. We are to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ. Here Peter does the direct opposite. He denies the Lord.

Had the servant girl been alone, maybe Peter’s denial may not have been so dramatic. But since he was in crowd of unfriendlies, Peter is very blatant and expressive in His denial.

Then the first rooster crowed. Nothing happened. This crow served as no warning to Peter. It is like all those warnings we get that we can see in retrospect, but we don’t see them at the time. We can see them now as warning signs that we are going in the wrong direction, but we couldn’t see them when they happened.

<sup>69</sup> **And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them."**

<sup>70</sup> **But he denied it again.**

Luke also tells us of the second denial- <sup>58</sup> **And after a little while another saw him and said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"**

So the servant girl must have mentioned this to men at the fire and they then, also questioned Peter. And Peter gives another flat out denial. This time it is not as dramatic, but it is very emphatic.

Notice that Peter is not yet suffering guilt or shame. Often that is how it is. We are in the thick of sin, but we are nonchalant about it. We don't see it as a big deal. In fact we may see it as a nothing. God isn't stopping us. God isn't punishing us. So it must not be a big deal. But if the Holy Spirit is in us, the rooster is going to crow in a way that gets our attention. He always does.

Isn't it interesting that Judas was referred to as one of the 12 in order to show how guilty he was of His betrayal of Christ. Here the onlookers refer to Christ as "one of them" and it emphasized how guilty Peter was of his denial of Christ.

**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*."**

<sup>71</sup> **Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"**

<sup>72</sup> **A second time *the* rooster crowed.**

Luke tells us:

<sup>59</sup> **Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean."**

<sup>60</sup> **But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.**

Each of the disciples reported this their own way. But it is easy to see it is a piece of real life.

This time Peter is hemmed in. These people are convinced that they had seen Peter with Christ. These guys aren't going to be as easy to dissuade. They are confident that Peter is a disciple. And they are going to keep badgering him until he admits that he is. Peter knows now that he is in trouble.

Jesus was from Galilee and so was Peter. Peter's accent betrays him. He can't deny that he was a Galilean. And he can't tell people who are sure of themselves that they do not know what they saw. But he is about to try.

We are told that Peter began to curse and swear. Based on what we see as the biblical definitions we can see that what we think of when we hear curse and swear is not what these guys were doing. I will quote from John MacArthur here. **The verb to curse (from the Greek word *anathematizō*, from which the English word “anathematize” is derived) indicates that Peter pronounced a curse of divine judgment on his own head if he were lying. The verb to swear (a form of *omnuō*) refers to a solemn pledge of truthfulness. What began as a knee-jerk reaction to the inquiry of a servant girl had escalated into a premeditated tirade of dogmatic deceit and disloyalty, punctuated with cursing and swearing, that echoed throughout the courtyard.**

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Mark 9-16.

When we think of cursing and swearing we usually think of a bunch of four letter words. We can get very dogmatic about those words. But from what I have seen the emphasis in scripture is not so much in **which words we choose** but the **content of what we are saying**. Here Peter was placing a curse upon himself if he was lying. And he was lying. It is a good thing God forgives us even these sins. And he was pledging to God his truthfulness. Both the cursing and swearing involved speech before God. They were appealing to God’s judgment in order to be believed. This is precisely the kind of cursing and swearing that Christ had forbidden. Jesus had told the disciples not to swear. But let your yes be yes and no be no. Peter was forgetting his teaching rapidly.

I guess this might be a good time to say that we need to **define the words** that scripture uses before we can accurately apply them. It is easy to completely miss the mark on an application when we get our definitions wrong.

I have never really considered that what Peter did here was doubly damning. Not only was he denying that he knew Christ, but he was calling upon God to judge him if he were not telling the truth. Can you imagine how this would have impacted Peter when the truth dawned on him? He did something worthy of damnation, and then he had called down God’s judgment upon himself in doing it. How easy it would have been to think all is lost. How could Christ possibly forgive him with what he had just done? How easy to think that he is beyond forgiveness. This is going to be make or break time for Peter. Satan is going to sift Peter like wheat, and Peter just handed the devil the perfect tool. Guilt. Honest to goodness, no way to deny, hideous sin. Peter is either going to learn the glorious wonderful amazing awesome depths of God’s grace and how to apply it in his life. Or he will join Judas in condemnation and hopelessness.

But this story is not over yet.

**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.**

Now it hits Peter. The Holy Spirit scores a hit. Peter gets it. He understands the depths of his depravity in a way only failure will teach us. It is easy to accept depravity in theory. It is **something different** to feel it in your own agony. I really like that line. It is so understated. And when he thought about it, He wept. Isn't that the story of our lives? When we thought about what we did and why we did what we did, we wept. We didn't weep when we did it. We had all kinds of reasons that seemed reasonable to us. But when we thought about it, we wept. Oh that we would save ourselves so much trouble. Oh that we would **think about it first**. Oh that we would avoid the things that are going to lead to our weeping. We often know what they are. Oh, we might not see the hurt coming our way. But we hear God's warning. We read His loving admonition or command. We know what He wants. But **we want what we want**. And only after doing it and thinking about it do we weep. Know that if **God forbids it** and **you do it** there is going to be weeping. Ask any believer who married a non believer. Ask any believing spouse that has cheated on their spouse. Ask any kid who has rebelled his way out from under his or her parent's authority. And when he thought about it, he wept.

And what we see next is what really drives the message home. We are told this in Luke.

**Luke 22:54-62 (NKJV)**

<sup>61</sup> **And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."**

<sup>62</sup> **So Peter went out and wept bitterly.**

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Evidently Jesus was in a spot temporarily where Peter and Christ could see each other. At this very opportune moment Jesus looks at Peter.

There are several things to notice. First, our failures and rebellions and disobediences are always **done in Christ's presence**. It isn't like he will find out one day. It isn't like the humans that surround us. Christ knows **right now**.

When Christ saw Peter, Peter knew Christ knew what Peter had done.

Second, the word for looked is the same word that was used when Christ initially looked at Peter. It was a positive word, a relational look, a loving look. But in this instance it would also be a hurt look. Christ had to take what Peter did personally as a human.

Can you imagine **your next comment to God** if you had been Jesus here. Yes God, just what I needed. I really needed my best friend to deny he even knows me. Don't I have enough on my plate? Would we complain bitterly? Wouldn't we savor that grudge? That is us. But that wasn't Christ. Christ held on to the big picture, even in the midst of the worst relational pains. Here is a great lesson for us to follow. Even when **trial falls on trial**, God will pull us through. He is there and He has good intentions for us that He is sure to carry out. I remember calling out to God at one point in my life, Lord I don't need this. But I have lived long enough to know that, yes I did. I didn't know how I was going to make it through that trial, but God did.

But Christ looked lovingly at Peter. And at the moment, that would have even increased Peter's pain. **Christ did not break off communion with Peter** even though it was Peter's sin, along with ours, that broke off Christ's communion with His Father. How loving our Lord is to us.

Peter had a lot more pain to experience. Christ was going to be gone for 3 days. And during that time Peter's sin was going to punish him. That is the nature of sin. It punishes. Imagine what Peter was going to go through. He didn't know what the repercussions of what he did were going to be. Regret had to loom large in his mind every waking hour. Do we know how that feels?

And didn't Christ say **Matthew 10:32-33**

<sup>32</sup> **"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**

Think about this. Was this true? Was Peter now doomed because he had denied Christ. There is no denying the fact the Peter denied Christ. And here is a passage that condemns that action. This had to weigh heavy in Peter's thoughts.

We need to be very careful how we use scripture. We have to avoid the error of Job's friends who used the fact of God's holiness to condemn Job with the truth they knew of God. We need to remember that there is more to God than His Justice and His wrath. There is always His grace. And the fact that we have done a sin does not mean that sin defines us. Paul explains the difference.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do**

**not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

Just because we are guilty of committing a sin doesn't mean we are condemned for that sin. If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Sin is condemned, and those who love sin and are committed to it will be condemned as well. But those who repent can be forgiven of any sin, no matter how damning it might look. We have got to remember that for ourselves and we have got to apply that to everyone we minister to.

Now we simply can't stick to our text this morning. We can't do that any more than twilight can hold back the coming sunrise.

We need to move to hope. We need to see the grace of God in the face of our sin.

We know that Peter did not keep himself in isolation. That is a very good start. He went to be with the 11. In John 20:2-10 it was Peter and John who raced to the empty tomb and it was Peter who first saw the risen Christ. I Cor 15:5 He was with the disciples in the upper room. He went to Galilee to wait for the Lord. And it was there that Jesus did his restoration to the hurting disciple.

As [John 21:15-17](#) recounts,

**So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."**

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Mark 9-16.

Isn't this wonderful? Isn't it absolutely amazing? Isn't it just like God? Jesus restores Peter to the ministry of feeding the sheep.

He doesn't make him pay.

He doesn't rub it in his face.



He simply asks the relevant question. Do you love me? No matter what you said or did in the past, how about now. Do you love me? I don't want to go into this text too deeply, but I just want to show that Peter got **more than forgiveness** for his terrible failure. **He got restoration.** Oh, how he failed Christ would never be erased in Peter's mind. He would always have this monument to the failure of flesh. He would always have a reminder of **what he was.** He would always have that monument to grace in his history. He may wish forever that he did not, but he does. And it will make him a better minister. **Those who need grace most can dispense it best. God's best ministers are the ones who have most experienced their own need of grace.**

Oh what a joy this can be to us.

Let me re-ask the initial questions.

Have you ever failed the Lord? Have you ever failed Him in a way that you thought you could not be forgiven? Have you ever failed Him in a way that you felt you couldn't go to Him for forgiveness? Have you failed Him in a way that you thought you lost any chance of fellowship with God's people. Have you failed Him in a way that you knew any chance of a leadership position was gone. Have you ever thought you have done irreparable damage to the reputation of Christ? And the greatest condemnation came in the fact that you knew better, but you did it anyway.

Peter did all of this. And Christ forgave him and restored him. And Peter serves as an example to what Christ will do to repentant sinners. I think this story exist to remind us of the grace of God. It is there to encourage us in that, no matter what we have done, we can be forgiven. And we can be restored. Praise God for His amazing grace.

Sing Grace that is greater than all our sin.