

## Sunday Morning Message

March 5, 2023

Title – *The Denial of Peter*

Text – John 18:12 – 27 (Parallel Passages - Matthew 26:57 – 27:10; Mark 14:43 – 15:1; Luke 22:47 – 71)

Congregational Reading – John 18:25 - 28

### Introduction

In our last message from John's gospel, we discussed Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane from John 18:1 – 11. You may recall that we preached two messages from that passage, one on Sunday morning and one in the evening, which was focused on the principles that we could learn from Jesus' prayer in the Garden.

Today, we will continue discussing the events that took place after Jesus was arrested. Our focus is primarily from John's gospel for this study, but to better understand all that happened that night into the following day, we will give a quick timeline of events.

### Timeline of Events:

1. Jesus Arrested (Matthew 26:47 – 56; Mark 14:43 – 52; Luke 22:47 – 53; John 18:2 – 11)

The actual arrest was dealt with last time, so today we will see what happens after the Lord was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

2. Jesus Is Brought Before Annas (John 18:12 – 14, 19 - 23)

Annas seems to be the real power behind the nation of Israel. Caiaphas was the official high priest, and he was the one that was recognized by the Roman authorities; but Annas was the one who had the political clout with the Sanhedrin and the people.

3. Jesus Is Brought Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57, 59 – 68; Mark 14:53, 55 – 65; Luke 22:54, 63 - 65; John 18:24)
4. Peter's Denials (Matthew 26:58, 69 – 75; Mark 14:54, 66 – 72; Luke 22:55 – 62; John 18:15 – 18, 25 – 27)

5. Jesus Condemned by the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:1 - 2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66 – 71)
6. Suicide of Judas (Matthew 27: 3 – 10)

Timeline of events that will follow Jesus' appearance before the high priests, and the Sanhedrin:

7. Jesus First Appearance Before Pilate (Matthew 27:11 – 14; Mark 15:2 – 5; Luke 23:1 – 5; John 18:28 – 38)
8. Jesus Appears Before Herod (Luke 23:6 – 12)
9. Jesus Second Appearance Before Pilate and Release of Barabbas (Matthew 27:15 – 26; Mark 15:6 – 15; Luke 23:13 – 25; John 18:39 – 40)
10. Jesus Mocked and Beaten and Final Sentence Pronounced (Matthew 27:27 – 31; Mark 15:16 – 19; John 19:1 – 16)
11. Journey to Golgotha (Matthew 27:32 – 34; Mark 15:20 – 23; Luke 23:26 – 32; John 19:17)
12. The Crucifixion (Matthew 27:35 – 44; Mark 15:24 – 32; Luke 23:33 – 43; John 19:18 – 27)
13. The Last Hours (Matthew 27:45 – 50; Mark 15:33 – 37; Luke 23:44 – 46; John 19:28 – 37)
14. Miraculous Occurrences at the Cross (Matthew 27:51 – 56; Mark 15:38 – 41; Luke 23:47 – 49)
15. Jesus' Burial (Matthew 27:57 – 61; Mark 15:42 – 47; Luke 23:50 – 56; John 19:38 – 42)
16. Pilate Seals the Tomb (Matthew 27:62 – 66)

The specific text that we will be dealing with today discusses Jesus being brought before Annas and Caiaphas, but our focus for this message will be on Peter's denial of the Lord.

**Read again vs. 12 - 27**

Peter's denials are happening while Jesus is before Annas and Caiaphas

Compare what Mark's gospel said about the denial:

*"But he began **to curse and to swear**, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the **second time the cock crew**. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow **twice**, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept."* - (Mark 14:71-72)

*"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**."* (Luke 22:60-62)

Our goal in this message is not to beat up on Peter here for his failure. Peter was a great leader among the apostles, and then later after being filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, after the Lord's ascension back into Heaven, Peter would become an even greater leader.

It was Peter who attempted to defend the Lord and protect Him in the Garden with his sword by cutting off Malchus' ear (John 18:10 – 11).

It was Peter who spoke up before all the other apostles and definitively identified Jesus as the Messiah:

*"13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in*

*heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

(Matthew 16:13-19)

When many of Jesus' disciples were leaving Him, Jesus asked the twelve if they would also leave Him, and it was Peter who spoke up and said that he was sure that Jesus was the Christ, and that Jesus alone was the source of eternal life:

*"67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."*

(John 6:67-69)

The intention of this message is not to see the failure of one man, but to learn from this one man's failure and learn from it so that we can avoid a similar failure in our selves. A careful examination of Peter's denial will reveal several steps that led to it. These are steps that we must avoid if we are going to remain faithful to the Lord.

**I. Peter Was Trusting in His Own Power** (Mark 14:27 – 31; Matthew 26:31 – 35; Luke 21:31 – 34)

*"27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."* (Mark 14:27-31)

Luke's gospel tells that Peter said:

*"33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."* (Luke 22:33)

Peter was sure that he had a strong enough character to be able to stand with Jesus when the going got tough. He was depending on his own strength. Later, after Pentecost, Peter will have a greater strength that will come when He is filled with the Holy Spirit.

We cannot fight the Lord's battles in our own strength. We need to fight in the power of the Holy Spirit:

*"38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)*

*"31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31)*

We need to fight God's battles with the full armor of God:

*"10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" (Ephesians 6:10-18)*

## **II. Peter Failed to Pray (Matthew 26:40; Mark 14:37; Luke 22:46)**

*"40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40-41)*

Peter's flesh was not strong enough to pass the test. He was tired physically and because he did not pray, he lacked the spiritual strength that he needed.

Illustrate – We saw these same two ingredients: overconfidence and a lack of prayer, way back in the Old Testament when the Israelites lost the battle at Ai causing the deaths of thirty-seven men. The people thought that Ai was just a small city and would be easily defeated. They also failed to pray and ask God about whether they should go up against Ai, and if so, when, and how. Had they prayed, God would have told them that they had a problem with sin in their own camp that needed to be taken care of first.

It seems that self-confidence and prayerlessness, which is really a declaration of our independence of God are both common ingredients in all our failures. God wants us to trust in Him and do things His way. We need to recognize our own limitations and trust Him wholly through prayer.

### **III. Peter Distanced Himself from the Lord**

Matthew and Mark both tell us that the disciples all forsook Jesus and fled when he was arrested. Our text tells us that Peter eventually followed the Lord after He was arrested, but Luke's gospel specified that "*Peter followed afar off*" (Luke 22:54). Peter was distancing himself from the Lord.

Peter got so far away from the Lord that He made himself comfortable with the Lord's enemies (see v. 18). In the Garden, Peter was "with Him" (v. 26), but here he is "with them (v. 18).

Illustrate - Dr. Gray used to say, "you are now, or you soon will be who you hang around."

People can tell when you are hanging around with Jesus:

*"13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)*

It is also evident when you have been distancing yourself from Him. You start acting like those who do not know Him.

You distance yourself from the Lord first in your heart, then in your actions.

You distance yourself when:

1. You stop reading the Word.
2. You do not spend time in prayer.
3. You stop hanging around God's people.
4. You no longer feel you must go to God's house. You start hitting and missing services until you eventually are not here at all.
5. You become very attracted to the world.

*"17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," (2 Corinthians 6:17)*

*"15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)*

*"1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:1-6)*

It is very interesting that Jesus warned Peter:

*"31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:" (Luke 22:31)*

Psalm One tells us that the ungodly are like the chaff of the wheat that blows away. Satan wanted to do that to Peter, but Jesus would not let him. Peter only fell so far, because the Lord was holding on to him.

That is the really good news from this story. Jesus was holding on to Peter, and though Peter was distancing himself from the Lord, the Lord would only let him get so far away.

*"27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one." (John 10:27-30)*

## Conclusion

Though Peter became discouraged and then distanced himself and eventually denied the Lord, He did not completely die spiritually, because the Lord would not let him. The Lord was holding on to Peter and He used this failure on Peter's part to teach him a great lesson. You cannot serve God in your own strength; you need to do it His way, and in His power. You need to be completely dependent upon Him.

Jesus will later completely restore Peter, and He tells him that Peter will in fact some day give his life for the Lord:

*"18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." (John 21:18-19)*

After Pentecost, Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost and went on to lead many to Christ. Tradition tells that he was crucified upside-down because he felt that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as the Lord. They tell us that his wife was also crucified.

Peter won the ultimate victory for the Lord and remained faithful, but only because he recognized that in himself, in his own strength, he could not do it. He had to completely trust in the Lord.