**The Betrayal**

Have you ever thought about how Peter and the disciples felt when they betrayed Jesus? Sorrow, anger, embarrassment, regret? And how Jesus must have felt when they all abandoned Him.

Jesus has just finished the Passover meal, now let’s look at what happens next. In **Matthew 26:31-33,** **Then Jesus said to them,** **“You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ 32But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” 33But Peter replied to Him, “*Even* if they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away!”  35Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” All the disciples said the same thing as well.**

Peter sits up tall, pokes his chest out and tells Jesus and everyone, “I will not. Not me! I would never deny you.” You can hear the pride in Peter’s voice as he boastfully tells Jesus this. But Jesus has to throw a wet banket on Peter’s fire and tells him in **Matthew 26:34,Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”** Peter is probably thinking to himself, “Why are we talking about this anyway. We just celebrated the Passover.” Things are looking good, but Jesus knows trials are on the way, and they hit without warning.

In their first trial the Bible tells us, Jesus is going to be betrayed and arrested; and you see Peter in all his bravo pulls out a sword and cuts off the slave’s ear, Peter thinks he is saving Jesus; but we read in **Luke 22:51**, that Jesus touched the slaves ear and heals him. Peter’s demonstration of self-willed bravery is unnecessary and absurd. Jesus in all His glory can call legions of angels to take care of this. But, He won’t, the Lord sternly tells Peter to put his sword away. At this rebuttal, Peter seems to lose some of his confidence, his boastfulness, his courage. He thought he was protecting Jesus, but this capture has taken place for a reason. **John 18:11 states, the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?** Peter is now seeing there is more to this capture and this is the start of a heartbreaking journey for him and Jesus.

As the night progresses and Jesus is arrested, Peter wants to see what is going to happen to Jesus, so Peter decides to follow. Now, their first stop with Jesus is at Annas’s home and while Peter is trying to find out something a servant girl comes up. In **Matthew 26:69-70, Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a slave woman came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” 70But he denied *it* before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.”**Perhaps Peter is feeling anxious and sick because someone noticed him and he didn’t think before he blurted out, “I don’t know this Jesus.” All he can think of is escaping, but it’s not that easy. **In Matthew 26:71-72 we read, When he had gone out to the gateway, another *slave woman* saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72And again he denied *it*, with an oath: “I do not know the man.”** Peter kept wanting to get a closer look, determined to stay near the Lord, so he goes deeper into the courtyard, but now the feeling of getting caught yet again, makes his stomach drop. Scared and not knowing what these people will do, Peter wants them to know he does not know Jesus, so he is more animate this time and denies with an oath. The oath Peter swears with is made to “the God of truth,” he made a solemn appeal to the Omniscient God, the searcher of hearts. Basically, Peter is telling God; he was never with Jesus or a disciple of His. He vehemently refused to acknowledge his relationship with his friend and Lord. He did not have the courage now to publicly confess Jesus. Let me ask you, “Do you have the courage to confess Jesus publicly?” Angry, embarrassed, trapped and frightened Peter for a second time denies the Lord Jesus.

But Peter has one last chance to make things right, but he fails the test again. Let’s look in **Matthew 26:73-74,A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “You really are *one* of them as well, since even the way you talk gives you away.” 74Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed.** The word curse is a strong word that involved death upon oneself at the hand of God if you are lying. Can you imagine what Peter has gone through? Getting caught, lying, betraying the Lord, sin is something that can take you far from what is right and honorable.

You know what, let’s take a look at Peter for a minute. He has been called by Christ, lived with Christ, learned from Christ and witnessed many miracles performed by Christ. He was a mature disciple of Christ for three years, leader of the 12 disciples, yet this intimate friend of Jesus vowed he would die before he forsook Christ. Those words he uttered earlier, were probably heart felt, but they were empty, boastful, vain words as Peter is faced with a trial and they are thrown back at Peter as he hangs his head and puts his face in his hands and he denies Jesus. Peter weeps bitterly. Sorrow sets deep within him. He weeps uncontrollable. He says repeatedly, “What have I done?” “What have I done?”

What started out as Peter wanting to stay near the Lord, secretly, and see what the mob were going to do with Jesus, he has had a spot light shown on him; drawing everyone’s attention. People start to recognize him. Peter wants to find some dark place to lay low; but Peter’s troubles are not over yet. Peter moves further in and sees something he wished wasn’t true. He sees what they are doing to Jesus and in **Mark 14:65**, Peter’s heart breaks, **And some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists and say to Him, “Prophesy!” Then the officers took custody of Him and slapped Him *in the face*.** Jesus has just been beaten, taunted and spit on. Peter’s worst nightmare is coming true. Jesus had told him earlier something like this was going to happen, but Peter didn’t believe it could happen, not like this! He asks himself “Why? I don’t understand.” Surely, they would not hurt Jesus. But the world hated Jesus and Peter found he was not prepared to face the ridicule and persecution that Jesus was facing. As Peter is trying to come to grips with what he sees, one of the most heart wrenching moments in Peter’s life happens next. Let’s look at. **Luke 22:61, And *then* the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.”** Can you imagine looking straight into Jesus’s face, right after you have denied Him. Not once, but three times! The look must have penetrated the disciple right down to his very soul, burning deep into his heart. Jesus’s unspoken words as He looks at Peter must have hung in the air, He might have said, “but Peter you said you would die for me.” With sorrow and regret so deep Peter hit’s his knees not wanting to look anymore. Telling himself how unfaithful and boastful he has been. Peter quickly found out he wasn’t nearly as bold and courageous as he proclaimed, and in fear he denied the one who loved Him. But Jesus knew what Peter was going to do. He knew the weakness Peter would have to faced that night. But that didn’t stop the pain caused by the denial. No one can disappoint and hurt us as deeply as those we love.

Scared, worried, words just can’t describe the feelings running through Peter’s mind. He asks himself, “Why did I even wake up this morning!” We have all said that a time or two! Peter thinks back for a minute and askes, “What could I have done different?”

Peter had taken steps toward his failure in the hours before Jesus’s arrest. Peter had feelings of self-confidence and devotion to Jesus. He considered himself incapable of disloyalty. Just hours before, Jesus and His three most trusted disciples, went into the garden to pray. But Peter didn’t take the first step to being strong, he didn’t pray when Jesus asked him to in the Garden. While Jesus was pouring His heart out to God about what He would face that night, He asked His most trusted disciples to come with Him and pray.

Prayer should be a believer’s first thought and defense. Jesus had earlier, just told Peter he would face a big trial. Both Jesus and Peter needed to pray hard. As Jesus was leaving to go pray, He asked them to Pray, but they chose to sleep instead. Trusting in their own understanding above the Lord’s. They did not realize what was fixing to happen. Spiritual warfare was something Peter was fixing to face. Jesus was telling them to get prayed up to face the danger. Don’t rely on yourself. But we cannot overcome the flesh by our own power, we must seek God in all things. We must cry out to God for His strength in order to resist the impulse to rebel. We must be prayerful with a single-minded determination to draw near God. Peter has failed in doing this.

Jesus was trying to tell Peter spiritual victory goes to those who are alert in prayer and depend on the Heavenly Father. All Peter could learn was self – confidence and unpreparedness. These are the way to a certain spiritual defeat. Now you ask, “How was Peter self-confident?” Peter was so confident he would not forsake Jesus or compromise His word that Peter boasted he would die first before he denied Christ. So, his first steps of sin were boasting. Now, boasting means with excessive pride about one’s ability, so I ask you, “Was Peter boasting to Jesus about what he would never do, deny Him?” Yes, he was. As we read later in the bible Peter learned his lesson. In 1 Peter 5:8 we read, be alert the devil is like a roaring lion seeking to devour you. In Peter’s weakness he is momentarily devoured when he denied Jesus because he wasn’t prayed up and underestimated his own weakness.

When Peter is struggling with his previous actions and Jesus is looking at him in the night, there is hope. Hope for Peter and also for you and me. If we look ahead, many horrible things are going to happen to Jesus, but on the third day Jesus is raised from the dead and walks the Earth for a short period of time. Let’s look at one of those moments, in **John 21:15-17 it tells us, Now 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.” 16He 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.” 17He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?”** Peter was hurt because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” Do you think the Lord askes three times has anything to do with the three denials Peter had previously done? And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep. Peter has learned the hard way what it means to love Jesus. Jesus knew that if Peter was to play the critical role in the early church, He needs to restore him. Peter needed to understand that although he had forsaken Christ, Christ had not forsaken him.

When Peter did something wrong and the Lord needed to rebuke him, Jesus would always use his former name Simon. Jesus asked Simon three times do you love me. Peter broken and humbled says, “Yes Lord, I love you.” Jesus accepted the Apostles failures and imperfections and graciously charged Peter with the care of His flock. God used Peter’s many failures, including the three denials of Christ, to turn Him from Simon a common man with a common name into Peter, the Rock. Peter is restored by Christ when Jesus tells him to tend His sheep.

When we sin, Jesus askes us the same question, “Do you love Me?” Our answer should be, “Forgive me for I have sinned against you Lord, then, yes I love you Lord.” Then Jesus can restore the repentative heart. You can have a restored relationship with God and can do great and mighty things for your Lord and Savior, just as Peter did.