

## Driven to Denial

Mark 14: 66-72

The long night of pain and suffering for Jesus had begun, and the difficulty continued to mount. He suffered in agony, praying under a heavy burden in the Garden of Gethsemane. After His prayer had ended, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, led a multitude, sent by the Sanhedrin, to arrest Jesus. He had been betrayed by one of His own, sold out for thirty pieces of silver.

Now Jesus stands before His accusers in the home of the high priest. We have considered the mock trial and the scandalous accusations brought against Him. It is during the great injustice of the trial that Jesus suffered another blow. This one must have hurt deeply because it was very personal. As Jesus stood before His accusers, Peter stood close enough to hear the words that were spoken, and yet he does not come to Jesus' defense. In fact, Peter denied any association with the Lord. He would not deny Jesus just once, but three consecutive times that night.

As we look at the tragic [details](#) within this passage, I want to consider: [Driven to Denial](#). As we do, I pray we will examine our own hearts and commit to standing for the Lord.

**I. The Prelude to his Denial** – As we begin to examine the devastating denial of Peter, we need to take a moment to consider what led to this point. The warning Peter received and ignored will be present for those who face similar situations today. Consider:

**A. Peter's Defiance** (29-31) – [But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.](#) <sup>[30]</sup> [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.](#) <sup>[31]</sup> [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.](#) Prior to entering the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had warned the disciples of His impending arrest, and their reaction to the danger. He declared they would all abandon Him that very night. Rather than heeding the word of the Lord and praying for strength and courage, Peter adamantly denied that he would do such a thing. In fact, he declared he would remain faithful if all others forsook Jesus, even to the point of death. We know that Peter missed a chance to pray and obtain spiritual strength in the Garden. It is evident that Peter is in a state of spiritual weakness.

- There are important lessons we must learn from Peter's struggles. Our moments of failure typically come when we are weak and distant spiritually. We must ensure we walk in close fellowship with the Lord, drawing wisdom from His Word, and walking in the guidance of the Spirit.

**B. Peter's Distance** (54a) – *And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest:*

Here we discover another concerning detail regarding Peter's spiritual condition. Although he continued to follow Jesus, he does so from a distance. He is not walking with the Lord, near to Him.

- I realize we cannot imagine the horror, fear, and discouragement Peter felt at this moment. I do not want to merely throw stones at Peter and accuse him without merit. Likely we would have responded in a similar way or worse. However, this will always be one of the most telling signs that a fall is likely to happen. When we begin to follow our Lord at a distance, we are perilously close to compromise and failure. If you are following at a distance, you are already dealing with the prelude of failure and denial. Now is the time to recognize your distance and regain fellowship with the Lord.

**II. The Particulars of his Denial** – The passage provides particular details that contributed to Peter's denial. These actions will always lead to devastation and despair. Notice:

**A. His Location** (54b, 66) – *and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*<sup>[66]</sup> *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest.* Having made his way to the home of the high priest, Peter has yet to get to Jesus. He is found sitting with the servants of the priest, warming himself by the fire. As he gained a bit of courage, he moved closer, but he still remained without, beneath the palace in the presence of the maids and servants. He is sitting among the Lord's accusers, rather than standing with Jesus during His time of need.

- We may tend to be critical, but I have witnessed this much too often. In fact, I have found myself in a similar situation at times. When we are content to abandon fellowship with the Lord, and find ourselves seated among the world, we are nearing a fall. The longer we remain among the world, the more comfortable we become with our new surroundings! We may argue we would never do such a thing, but greater men than we have fallen in times of complacency. David was a man after God's own heart, and he allowed distance to create failure. We must guard our hearts while remaining close to the Lord and among those of like faith.

**B. His Rejection** (66-71) – These verses record the denials of Peter. Three times he was questioned regarding his association with Jesus, and each time he denied knowing the Lord. It's interesting to note the apparent arrogance of Peter at this time. Clearly, he knew he was in a hostile environment, and yet he remained there. Apparently, he felt as if he could handle the accusations he would face, and chose to remain in self-confident arrogance.

- Often we tend to feel we are more spiritual than we actually are. Many times we fail to see the inherent danger we face, and carelessly continue a path that will ultimately lead to compromise and despair. We develop a sense of self-righteous arrogance that believes we are mature enough spiritually to handle whatever comes our way. There are times when we are in over our heads before we realize the dangers associated with our current situation. The longer we remain exposed to sin and temptation, the more likely we are to succumb to the temptation and fail in sin. We must realize our dependence on the Lord, while seeking His strength. Apart from Him, defeat is certain!

**C. His Devastation** (71) – *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.* This reveals one of the most troubling details of Peter's denial. As the night progressed, he must have grown weary of being questioned regarding Jesus. Apparently, Peter began to realize the severity of the situation. He likely pondered the warning Jesus had given them prior to entering the Garden. No doubt, questions began to fill his mind. In a moment of desperation and fear, Peter did the unthinkable – he began to curse and swear, adamantly denying any association with Jesus. He was determined to convince his accusers that he had nothing to do with Jesus. Consider the thoughts of Dr. Alan Carr – *What Peter did was to take the name of the Lord in vain in the most serious way imaginable. When the Bible says that Peter began “to curse and swear”. It means that he invoked God as the ultimate witness to his denials of knowing Jesus. Peter may have said something like this: “May God Almighty damn me to Hell if I am lying! If what I am saying to you is a lie, may God Himself take my life right now.”*<sup>i</sup>

- We shudder to think of such denial, but this is where spiritual weakness and compromise lead. If we are not careful, we too can find ourselves in a place of utter denial. We may never vocally deny Jesus as Peter did, but I am certain we have all denied Him at some point with our actions. Each time we willfully engage in sin, we have denied the Lord. This is a dangerous place to be, one that always leads to devastation and regret.

**III. The Pain in his Denial** (72) – *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.* He we discover the consequences and pain of denial. Consider:

**A. The Remembrance** (72a) – *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.* Mark reveals an interesting detail that is not recorded in the other gospels. Jesus warned that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock would crow twice. Following the first denial, the cock crew. This should have served as a warning to Peter. He should have remembered the warning of Jesus.

Unfortunately, Peter failed to heed the warning. As he denied the Lord, the third and final time, the cock crew the second time. This stirred Peter's remembrance, and he began to deal with the gravity of his denial. He likely relived his denial over and over again in his mind.

- Warnings are of no value if left unheeded. We have the benefit of the Spirit to guide our hearts and warn us when we are close to sin and failure. When we experience the conviction of the Spirit, warning of impending failure, we must heed the warning. Unfortunately, many times we respond as Peter did, failing to heed the warning, and succumb to temptation and sin. Forgiveness and restoration are available in Christ, but often the consequences of sin remain.

**B. The Regret** (72b) – *And when he thought thereon, he wept.* Peter now has a much different attitude. There is no mention of his awareness of those around him. He is no longer concerned with the thoughts or accusations of others. He is deeply saddened at his actions and failure. Peter realized he had done exactly what he promised he would never do. This brought deep regret to Peter. No doubt he would love to have had another opportunity, wishing he could turn back time, but it was too late. His denial had taken place just as the Lord predicted.

- The Bible reveals that there is pleasure in sin, but it is only for a season. Eventually we all have to deal with the reality of our sin and failure. Those who are in Christ may indulge in sin, but eventually regret will come through conviction. The most miserable people are believers who have failed in sin and compromised their faith. There is no joy for the believer apart from fellowship with Christ.

- There can be no doubt that Peter's denial was costly, but his failure was not final. The Lord would deal with him again, offering restoration, and Peter would be used mightily in the future. If you have failed in sin, the consequences may remain, but there is forgiveness and restoration in Christ. [1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#)

**Conclusion:** This has been a sobering passage to consider. It reveals a tragic moment in the life of Peter. His failure was great, but it would not be final. He would never forget it, but God would restore him and use him to proclaim the Gospel. Peter would remain faithful unto the Lord, giving his life for the cause of Christ. If you have failed and come short, the Lord stands ready to restore you. If you are yet unsaved, He stands ready to cleanse and forgive. Come to Him with your need.

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<sup>i</sup> The Sermon Notebook - The Sermon Notebook – Mark.