

## Following Afar Off

Luke 22: 54-62

Peter is likely the disciple that the average Christian can relate to the most. He was a man who had a profound zeal for serving the Lord, but many times his flesh got in the way.

Tonight we have read the account of the darkest moment of Peter's life. We all know how the Lord had warned him of the coming denial and that Peter refused to accept the fact that he could possibly do such a thing. I know that we don't like to admit it, but if we aren't very careful we will find ourselves in a similar situation. We probably have already been there at some point in time.

You might argue that you would never commit such a thing. To that I would respond: greater men than we have fallen and we are no more spiritual or better prepared. We must guard our lives every day or we too could find ourselves having compromised our faith and denying the Lord. Let's take a few moments and consider the chain of events that surround: [The Compromise of Peter](#).

**I. The Prelude of His Denial** – As we begin tonight, may I submit to you that these events did not just happen arbitrarily? There were clear warning signs that Peter was about to make a big mistake. These warning signs will always be a prelude to compromise and failure. If we can learn to identify and avoid them, we can overcome.

**A. Peter's Disposition** (31-33) – *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.* This is something that has been brewing in the life of Peter for sometime. In fact we can probably see the beginnings of it some months before as Peter rebuked the Lord when He revealed that He was to be crucified.

- But as of late Peter has been showing definite signs of spiritual weakness. The Lord had told him of the impending sifting, and rather than preparing for the attack of the enemy, Peter confirms that he is ready to die with the Lord. It is as if Peter is still in denial that the things that the Lord had revealed unto them would actually come to pass.
- Just prior to the account we read tonight, Peter spent his time in the Garden of Gethsemane asleep rather than praying as Jesus had asked him to do. Clearly Peter is in a state of spiritual weakness. He has refused to focus on the reality at hand.
- I can assure you that our times of failure will almost always come at those moments when we are weak spiritually, those times when we have failed to pray and seek the strength and wisdom of God. We have a tendency of putting things off. We simply don't like to deal with

things even though we know it is necessary. If we are to overcome we must be strong in the Lord.

**B. Peter's Distance** (54) – Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. As Jesus was being led away, Peter followed at a distance. He is no longer by the Lord's side with courage. He has fallen back and is looking on from a distance.

- This is likely the most telling sign that a fall is about to happen. Times of trouble and doubt are not the time to follow at a distance. It is evident that Peter had backslidden away from the Lord. We are getting dangerously close to compromise and failure when we begin to follow at a distance.
- I have never known anyone to be strong in their faith when they were in a backslidden state. You cannot live a Christ honoring life if you are not walking with Him! If you are not as close to the Lord today as you have been in the past then you are following at a distance.
- How is it with you this evening? Was there a time in your life where you had a stronger desire to serve the Lord? Was there a time when you couldn't make it through the day without prayer and fellowship with Him? If so, then you are following at a distance. You are living in the prelude of denial and compromise. If things are changed, you will likely find yourself warming by the fire of denial, and it may be much sooner than you think.

## **I. The Prelude of His Denial**

**II. The Progression of His Denial** – The warning signs were evident and now the compromise that will lead to his denial progresses at an alarming rate. Once again this is also typical of our failures as well. Notice:

**A. His Continued Association** (55) – And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. Peter has gone from following afar off to sitting down among the Lord's accusers. At this point he had forgotten about the Lord and has found himself a seat among those who will call for the Lord's crucifixion.

- This was no brief association to gather information. Peter continued after he was accused of being one who followed Jesus. After an hour he is still trying to make his case with them that he had nothing to do with this man.
- It is easy for us to look at Peter's life and become critical, but we too have made the same mistakes. We must learn from the life of Peter and seek to improve our walk with God.

- There is a profound lesson that we all need to heed in this passage. When we begin to follow at a distance, we will soon find ourselves standing among the world, and then it won't be long until we have become comfortable and found a seat. [Ps.1:1 – 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.](#)

- “But preacher I would never do that!” Have you considered Lot? His journey toward failure began when he pitched his tent toward Sodom. What about David? Rather than fighting in the army of the Lord, he found a seat upon the rooftop that cost him more than he wanted to pay. We are called to be a separate people. It is dangerous when we get comfortable among the world. Watch the company you keep.

**B. His Careless Attitude** (57, 58b, 60) – Here we find the actual denials of Peter. Three times he denied that he ever knew the Lord. He is seated among the accusers and he seems to have an arrogance about him. Peter seems to think that he is well able to handle this situation. He has denied the Lord and yet he remains there in his self confidence.

- You may be dealing with a particular situation and you have developed the same careless attitude as Peter. You may already be in over your head and you just haven't realized it. Listen, we can't handle sin. The longer we stay around it and expose ourselves to it, the more likely we are to submit to and engage in it. The only way we can handle the sins of the flesh is to flee from it. You can't handle it yourself; it will defeat you every time! [1Cor. 10:13 – There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.](#) We can't continue in an environment of sin and expect to walk away untouched!

**C. His Callous Affirmation** (60) – [And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.](#) Peter had emphatically denied that he knew the Lord, the One who had called him out of a life of sin and unto a work for Him. He had denied the One he proclaimed was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In his moment of weakness, Peter compromised and denied his association with the Lord. Mark's gospel reveals that Peter even cursed and swore that he did not know the man.

- This is where our spiritual weakness and compromise will lead us. It will bring us to the place that we ultimately deny the Lord. “Wait a minute preacher, I've never denied the Lord.” Maybe you haven't with your mouth, but what about with your actions. Every time we willfully engage in sin, we are in essence denying the Lord and the blood that was shed for our sin.

## **I. The Prelude of His Denial**

## **II. The Progression of His Denial**

**III. The Conclusion of His Denial (61-62)** – These last two verses reveal the conclusion of Peter's denial. It isn't a pretty scene. Sin never is; it always leads to heartache and despair. We find that:

**A. His Failure was Revealed (61a)** – *And the Lord turned and looked on Peter.* Can you begin to imagine how the Lord must've felt? Peter was one of the inner circle, one of the closest to Jesus. I know that the Lord knew that Peter would deny Him, but I'm sure that it hurt Him anyway. This was a look of hurt and disappointment. I also believe it was a look of conviction. Jesus wanted Peter to know that He was aware of His sin.

- We may think we have gotten away with our sin, but Jesus is aware of every thing we do. We don't sin in a bubble or a vacuum. Our sins are seen and they always bear consequences. There have been times in my life that I know my Lord has looked upon me with hurt and disappointment. I certainly didn't enjoy those times and I don't want to repeat them.

**B. His Failure was Relived (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.* Peter immediately remembered how the Lord had told him of his denial. He remembered how the Lord had asked him to pray and yet he had slept. I am sure that Peter relived that moment over and over again. He would've loved to have been able to have another opportunity, but what was done was done.

- Our Lord is faithful to forgive us if we will confess our sins. Peter received forgiveness and God used him mightily. If God will forgive us, we too must learn to forgive ourselves. The sad part is that sin often leaves scars that remain for the rest of our lives. Sin often takes us down a road that we must deal with for the rest of our lives.

- Had Peter only heeded what the Lord had said, he may have avoided some of this despair. We too need to listen to the Word and will of God for our lives. When we are determined to have it our way, we must be willing to deal with the consequences of our decisions.

**C. His Failure was Regretted (62)** – *And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* Peter didn't just shed an emotional tear, he wept bitterly, sobbing violently and uncontrollably. He realized the magnitude of his failure. At a time when he should've remained close to the Lord, supporting Him in prayer, Peter had found a seat among those who sought his life and denied Him. When he began to deal with his failure, it brought great sorrow and grief.

- This will always be the case. A child of God cannot sin and get by with it. We cannot sin and enjoy it. If our lives send the message that we don't know Jesus, we can expect to have our hearts broken in conviction.
- There are many today who have walked away from the Lord and decided to have it their way regardless of what they know is right. I can assure you that they will end up regretting their sin and failures. There can be no pleasure for the Christian when they are out of the will of God. They may try and tell you that all is well, but deep down they are miserable.
- What Peter did was wrong. He should have never denied the Lord. He should have never found himself in a position where that would be possible, but he did. As bad as his sin was, he was able to receive forgiveness. The fact that he was convicted confirms his relationship with the Lord. [Heb.12:6 – For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.](#) I'm not encouraging sin, but I rejoice that I can feel the conviction of the Lord and the need for repentance.

This has been a difficult passage to deal with. I'm sure that we have all been like Peter at some point and to some degree. I wonder tonight, where are you with the Lord? Has His loving, yet chastening gaze pierced your heart? Are there some things that you need to bring before Him? Are you following at a distance and progressing toward a fall? If so why not come tonight and get things right so that you may avoid failure?