

## The Denial Of The Saviour By His Own Disciple.

Text: Matt 26:40-41

Suggested Hymns:

56, 173, 146, 328, 170

1) A brief overview of the text

2) Peter's grievous sin

3) Peter's sincere repentance

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 22:54–62, ***54 Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance.***

***55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him." 57 But he denied Him, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." 58 And after a little while another saw him and said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"***

***59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly. (NKJV)***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus having been taken captive, was at once dragged before the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Church. There He was tried, if a trial it can be called. And while the trial was in progress, the story related in our text took place. It tells us of — *The Denial of the Saviour by His Own Disciple*. This is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. A Brief Overview Of The Text.

There are certain sins that only Christians can commit, like denying Christ. Unbelievers cannot deny Christ. When they say, *“I don’t know the man!”* they are merely telling the truth. But when a Christian denies his Lord, he is endangering his own faith and salvation.

It had been only a few hours since Jesus had told His disciples, *“All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night.”*<sup>1</sup> In this context “stumble” also means “be offended” and “fall away.” Speaking for himself, Peter boldly declared, *“Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* To which Jesus responded, *“Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* Another word for “deny” is “disown.”

But Peter vehemently objected, *“Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”* At this point Peter did not presume to act as spokesman for the others, but the Gospel of Matthew tells us, *“And so said all the disciples.”* And it was true that ten of the Eleven disciples would one day die a martyr’s death, but they were not ready for that just yet.

After fleeing from the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter and John followed Jesus and the men who had arrested Him to the palace of the high priest. John, who was known to the high priest, was even permitted to enter the courtyard, but Peter was not.

It was John who talked to the girl on duty at the door and persuaded her to let Peter in. Both Peter and John were deeply concerned about what was going to happen to Jesus. We are not told what John did during Jesus’ trial, but we are told about Peter.

Was Judas nearby? We learn from Matthew 27:3 that Judas saw Jesus condemned.

Peter immediately sat down among the guards who had started a charcoal fire to warm themselves. A dangerous place this was, in the midst of Christ’s enemies. He had barely done so when the servant girl, perhaps having second thoughts about letting him in, took a close look at Peter.

In the presence of the guards, she asked, *“You are not also one of this Man’s disciples, are you?”*<sup>2</sup> and then she continued for all to hear, *“You also*

*were with Jesus of Nazareth.*”<sup>3</sup> Her words clearly echoed the contempt of her superiors for Jesus.

Just a few hours before, Peter had assured Jesus, **“Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”** But it took no more than the words of a servant girl to bring about his fall. Thoroughly frightened, Peter retreated to the entryway, the covered passage leading to the street, thinking that he would be safe there.

It was at this point that the rooster crowed the first time. Peter, however, did not notice. There is no safe place for a sinner. Soon a number of people approached Peter again. Our text<sup>4</sup> tells us that there was a man among them; Matthew<sup>5</sup> includes another servant girl. Mark reports the words of the girl who had approached Peter before: **“This is one of them.”** Again Peter denied it.

His fear blanked out the memory of what Jesus had told him in the upper room. Anything to save his skin! John’s gospel says it was at this point that Jesus was transferred from the hearing before Annas to the hearing before Caiaphas. This made it possible for Peter to go back into the courtyard and to get lost among the crowd.

The next episode took place about an hour later. This gave Peter sufficient time to overhear much of what took place in Jesus’ trial. The servant girls and some of the guards were not satisfied with Peter’s answer. In the meantime they had been discussing Peter — a precautionary measure.

Again they approached Peter. Among them was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden. He asked Peter, **“Did I not see you in the garden with Him?”**<sup>6</sup> And the others immediately added what they considered convincing evidence: **“Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.”**<sup>7</sup>

Peter for the third time denied any connection with Jesus. He denied even knowing the Man. He called Jesus a “Man,” whom he had previously confessed as **“the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**<sup>8</sup>

To make it sound believable, Peter called down upon himself all manner of curses and even swore an oath that he was not telling a lie. It was at this moment that the rooster crowed for the second time. Then, our text tells us **“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter”** It was then that Peter remembered.

The pain was dreadful. It would have been unbearable if at the same time he had not been assured by the Lord's look that Jesus had never stopped caring. Mocked, derided, and suffering more than we can ever imagine, the Lord turned to Peter in his hour of utmost need.

In that hour Peter not only remembered the Lord's prediction of his denial but also His promise: ***“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”***<sup>9</sup>

This episode, so shameful to Peter, recorded in Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit's way of using what happened to Peter to strengthen us to watch and pray and, if we fall, to return to our gracious, forgiving Lord and Saviour. To make that possible, our Saviour suffered.

Jesus had said, ***“I am He.”***<sup>10</sup> Peter said, ***“I am not.”***<sup>11</sup> Indeed a tragic account, but one that would never have been recorded if Jesus had not truly been what He is, our Saviour and Redeemer. He was willing to bring to repentance Peter who had fallen so deeply. And after His resurrection He even restored Peter to his position as apostle and then used him mightily in the work of God's kingdom. If Jesus was willing and able to do it for Peter, He is willing to do it for us.

## 2. Peter's Grievous Sin

Who was Peter? He was a disciple, ardent and zealous. Because of his beautiful confession, he was called Petros which means rock. We read in Matthew 16:16–18, ***“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”***<sup>16</sup> ***“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”***<sup>17</sup> ***“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”***

Peter experienced great love of Jesus. He was permitted to be an eye-witness of the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. We read in Matthew 17:1–3, ***“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;”***<sup>1</sup> ***“and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became***

as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Christ prayed for Peter. We read in Luke 22:31–32, <sup>31</sup> *And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”*

Christ also warned Peter. We read in Matthew 26:34, <sup>34</sup> *Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”*

In spite of all — Peter denies his Lord.

Note the climax in Peter’s denial of Christ. First, it is a simple denial. Then it is a denial confirmed by an oath, and finally it becomes a denial confirmed by an oath and reinforced by a curse.

The significance of Peter’s sin was that he rejected his God. Thus he rejects redemption, and finally he rejects salvation.

The first cause of Peter’s sin was that he trusted in himself. He trusted in his own strength. The second cause of his sin is that he did not avoid evil associates. The third cause of his sin is that he did not heed not the warnings of the Lord.

Let apply this lesson to ourselves. Are we any better than Peter? Are we courageous in our confession of Christ before others, especially before Christ’s enemies?

Remember that silence at times is denial. Have we ever denied the Lord in our hearts? When doubts arise as to forgiveness, when evil thoughts and desires arise in our hearts, when in adversity we fail to put our trust in the Saviour, do we not then deny Him?

Peter’s fall is a warning to us. Presumption. Fear of man. From fear to denial is but one step. Let us heed the warnings of God’s Word.

### 3. Peter’s Sincere Repentance

Our text says, <sup>61</sup> *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then 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.*

When the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents, they were promised life if they would look up to the bronze serpent erected by Moses. We read in Numbers 21:8–9, <sup>8</sup> *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”* <sup>9</sup> *So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.*

They received life for a look. Likewise Peter. After his shameful denial the Lord passed by; Jesus looked at Peter; their gaze met, and Peter remembered the words of the Lord: *“Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”*

Peter went out and wept bitterly. In that look Peter found life. He repented.

Remember that repentance consists of, firstly, contrition. Peter remembered his sin. He was overcome by a godly sorrow. There was proof of his sorrow for he wept bitterly.

Secondly, repentance consists of faith. Faith in the love of the Master, a love that even after the terrible fall would not reject Peter.

Peter was not brought to repentance by any act of his own. It was the voice of warning, of which Peter was reminded by the crowing of the rooster, that brought him to repentance. It was the look of Jesus that met Peter’s gaze, a look that spoke louder than words, that assured Peter of the Lord’s love in spite of his sin.

Peter’s repentance is an example for us. If you have fallen, — and you have, — there is still hope. Repent, that is, acknowledge your sin with a contrite heart. But that is not sufficient. Think of Judas.

You need to look to Christ with the eyes of faith. See Jesus who was raised up on Calvary for your sake, look up to Him, and in that look you will find life.

For there you will see the depth of love of Jesus as the hymnist writes,<sup>12</sup>

O depth of love in which, past finding,  
My sins through Christ’s blood disappear!  
This is for wounds the safest binding,

There is no condemnation here;  
For Jesus' blood through earth and skies  
For ever 'Mercy, mercy!' cries. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and  
minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 26:31

<sup>2</sup> John 18:17

<sup>3</sup> Mark 14:67

<sup>4</sup> Luke 22:58

<sup>5</sup> Matt 26:71

<sup>6</sup> John 18:26

<sup>7</sup> Mark 14:70

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 16:16

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:32

<sup>10</sup> John 18:5

<sup>11</sup> John 18:17

<sup>12</sup> Hymn 328 v 3