

SECTION 70

JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER

(Parallels: Mark 14:54, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62;
John 18:15-18, 25-27)

TEXT: 26:58, 69-75

58 But Peter followed him afar off, unto the court of the high priest, and entered in, and sat with the officers, to see the end.

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69 Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. 70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. 73 And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also are *one* of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. 74 Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. 75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Peter was introduced into the courtyard because another disciple was known to the high priest (John 18:15f.). Which disciple do you think could really be an acquaintance of Jesus' archenemy and gain entrance for himself and Peter too without arousing suspicion?
- b. How could Peter be *inside* the palace of the high priest and yet be sitting *outside*, as Matthew affirms?
- c. On what principles may the supposed contradictions between the four Gospels' accounts of Peter's denials be resolved?
- d. Would you say that Peter was on trial as much as Jesus? What similarities between the two trials do you see? What differences?
- e. Do you think Peter really *had* to answer everyone's questions, when none of them were authorized to quiz him so? On what principle? Should he not simply have kept people at their distance, held his tongue or brushed past them as if he had not heard?

- f. (1) How did Peter's speech expose him as a disciple of Jesus?
(2) How did his many denials actually expose him too?
- g. Why did Peter now go out and weep bitterly?
- h. How would Jesus' exhortation to "watch and pray that you enter not into temptation" have helped Peter avoid this debacle?
- i. Have you ever denied the Lord or your relationship to Him when people were trying to press you for a commitment? Did you ever do it by silence?
- j. Are there common things like the crow of a cock in our lives today that recall us to our duty?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Following Jesus at a safe distance, Simon Peter got as far as the courtyard of the high priest's residence, and so did another disciple. However, because this latter was known to the high priest, he went on into the courtyard along with Jesus, while Peter halted outside at the door. So the disciple known to the high priest stepped out and spoke to the maid on duty at the door, and brought Peter right into the courtyard too.

Now the servants and other subordinates had kindled a charcoal fire in the center of the courtyard, because it was cold. They were standing round it, warming themselves. Peter too was standing with them, keeping himself warm. They sat down around it, so Peter, to see how it would end for Jesus, crouched down among them, warming himself at the fire.

While Peter was sitting downstairs in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest—the maidservant who kept the door—came by and saw Peter warming himself as he sat turned toward the firelight. She came up close to him and, looking at him closely, declared, "You are not another of this man's disciples too, are you? You too were with that Jesus, the Galilean from Nazareth!"

But he denied it before them all, "I am not. Lady, I do not know Him. I neither know nor understand what you are talking about!" He arose and went out into the gateway, [and a cock crowed].

There another girl saw him and began telling the bystanders, "This fellow is one of them. He was with Jesus of Nazareth." A little later someone else saw him standing there warming himself and challenged him, "You are too one of his disciples!"

He continued to deny it a second time, adding an oath, "Man, I am not! I do not know the man!"

About an hour later the bystanders went up to Peter and insisted, "Unquestionably, you are too one of them, because you are a Galilean: your accent gives you away!" One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of Malchus whose ear Peter had sliced off, spoke up, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

Again Peter denied it, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" He began to call down curses on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about."

He had no sooner said this when the rooster crowed a second time. The Lord turned and looked searchingly at Peter. Then Peter remembered the prediction the Lord had made to him, "Before the rooster crows twice today, you will disown me three times." He then went outside and broke down, weeping bitterly.

SUMMARY

Peter and John followed the arresting party as far as the high priest's residence. John, because of his acquaintance with the high priest, gained admittance for himself and Peter too. Peter, however, because of his brogue, was recognized as a disciple of the Man now on trial, and so drew attention to himself. Various people tried to get him to admit his belonging to Jesus' following, but he steadfastly denied all connection. At last, Peter heard the cock that Jesus had predicted. A heart-searching gaze from Jesus brought Peter to his senses, sending him out, shaken and penitent, to weep the bitter tears of the guilty.

NOTES

Many note discrepancies among the versions of this incident our Gospels furnish. However, Alford (I,282ff.) rightly argued that simple differences are not a threat to faith but positive support for it, in that these

furnish one of the clearest instances of the *entire independency of the four Gospels of one another* . . . (1) supposing the four accounts to be entirely independent of one another, we are not bound to require accordance, nor would there in all probability be any such accordance, in the recognitions of Peter by different persons. These may have been many on each occasion of denial, and independent narrators may have fixed on different ones

among them. (2) No reader . . . will require that the actual words spoken by Peter should in each case be identically reported . . . the substantiative fact of a denial remains the same whether *ouk oïda ti légeis*, *ouk oïda autòn*, or *ouk eimi* are reported to have been Peter's answer. (3) I do not see that we are obliged to limit the narrative to three sentences from Peter's mouth, each expressing a denial, and no more. On three occasions during the night he was recognized,—on three occasions he was a denier of his Lord: such a statement may well embrace reiterated expressions of recognition, and reiterated and importunate denials, on each occasion. . . . In narratives which have sprung from such truthful independent accounts, they [the readers] must be prepared sometimes (as e.g. in the details of the day of the Resurrection) for discrepancies which, at our distance, we cannot satisfactorily arrange: now and then we may, as in this instance, be able to do so with something like verisimilitude:—in some cases, not at all. But whether we can thus arrange them or not, being thoroughly persuaded of the holy truthfulness of the Evangelists, and of the divine guidance under which they wrote, our faith is in no way shaken by such discrepancies. We value them rather, as testimonies to independence: and are sure, that if for one moment we could be put in complete possession of all the details as they happened, each account would find its justification, and the reasons of all the variations would appear.

The accusations and Peter's negations are the sort of conversation that is real: not calm, neat and orderly, but ragged, repeated and bunched into successive rounds or groups of attacks and denials. Each probably said what our Gospels report, without the Evangelists' believing that any one said neither more nor less than the brief phrases cited. The Evangelist that quotes more includes the report of him who cites less, while he who quotes less does not deny the fuller report. Some are talking about Peter, while others accuse him directly. Sometimes he answers the one; sometimes the others, each group of denials being considered one total event.

THE DOWNWARD, PROGRESSIVE ROAD OF SIN: PETER IN THE LIONS' DEN

For a believer who unquestionably loves the Lord, Peter's denials furnish us a New Testament case history of an unexcelled opportunity:

to stand up for Christ in an unsympathetic environment. But it is highly instructive, being also the narration of what can go wrong for anyone. His strangeness to that environment turned everyone's attention on him, thus giving him an audience. Could he not simply identify himself as one who sincerely loved Jesus, even though completely stunned that He had not fulfilled his expectations? Surely these palace servants could understand this and, at worst, scorn Peter's folly, imprison him for a few days or, at best, even commiserate him who frankly admitted this. Then what went wrong?

THE BOLD IMPRUDENCE OF FERVENT LOVE

26:58 But Peter followed him afar off, unto the court of the high priest, and entered in, and sat with the officers, to see the end. The PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY summarizes the sequence of events. (Cf. parallel Gospel texts.) *The court of the high priest*, see on 26:57, 69. In *following afar off* Peter shows a mixture of love for Jesus and fearfulness of being implicated too. So far from an informed, holy boldness, this attitude reflects his unbelief in Jesus' doctrine of the cross and his perplexity at seeing Jesus defeated. *The officers* are the Temple police, not Roman soldiers who, no longer needed, would have returned to their quarters in the Castle Antonia. (See on 26:47.) When the other disciples forsook Jesus and fled, they kept going. Peter, at the risk of his personal safety, *followed*.

Why was Peter there? Earlier, Peter had shown the spirit of a fighter, capable of plotting a daring rescue. Meanwhile, however, he had been stunned to witness Jesus willingly led away as a lamb to the slaughter, strictly forbidding him to use the sword. All this notwithstanding, Peter was absolutely unwilling to desert Him. A less docile Judas could hope for divine intervention or some violent escape, but it is at least doubtful that Peter saw himself as a spy who must prudently retain his identity secret at all costs to reconnoiter and renew the struggle later. His stated purpose for being there was *to see the end*.

To see the end means that Peter's denials occurred contemporaneously with Jesus' hearings before Annas and Caiaphas. Sadly, while Jesus was courageously facing hate-filled accusations with masterful poise, Peter was shamefully cracking under hostile pressure. *To see the end* is not idle curiosity but ardent love for his dear friend Jesus and intense anxiety to learn the outcome of his trials. All the enemies' challenges were unable to drive him out or break down his bold front

and make him confess. At all costs he was determined to stay inside that palace and learn the trial's outcome.

SATAN'S SIFTING OF SIMON

26:69 Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. The *court* in question is not the hearing chamber where Jesus was being tried, but an open courtyard. Thus, Peter was *sitting without in the court*, because the high priest's palace itself surrounded this central, open-air courtyard. So, he was both *within the palace but also outside*, i.e., not in one of its rooms. In reporting that "Peter was below in the courtyard," (Mark (14:66) suggests that the courtyard in the heart of the palace was on a lower level than the chamber where Jesus' hearings were taking place. Because it was early morning in Jerusalem's higher elevation in early spring, these rugged men felt the chill of the night air in the stone courtyard open to the sky and kindled a cheering fire while they waited the hearings' outcome. While John calls it a charcoal fire (John 18:18), during the process of burning more highly combustible material to ignite the charcoal, more light was given off by the fire. (Cf. Luke 22:56, *tò phôs*.) That John pictured Peter as standing while the Synoptics record his *sitting* only more graphically depicts Peter as moving gradually into place, first standing then sitting near the fire.

Sitting means more than near the warmth of the fire. For Peter's deliberately *sitting* among them implies the nonchalance of a man who, like them, is against the Nazarene and on the side of the high priest. *Sitting* also betrays his sense of false security. Unquestionably, concern for Jesus drew him here, but he was seriously blind to the high risk of being in this company so spiritually unprepared.

That a *maid* "who kept the door" (John 18:17) and other servants were on duty in the high priest's palace so late that night indicates the extraordinary events that were occurring. The girls would not only be involved in serving food but even keeping the door. (Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* VI,2,1; Acts 12:13.) The portress apparently did not ask Peter her embarrassing question immediately as he entered, but later when she too left the door area and approached the fire where she could see Peter's face more clearly in the firelight (Mark 14:66f.; Luke 22:56). That a person known to be a *disciple* (John 18:15) recommended Peter's entrance may have suggested Peter's connections

to her. Lenski (*Matthew*, 1070) suggests that she was moved by self-importance, wanting these men to realize "that she knew something they did not know. Here they were talking about Jesus and about what had just taken place and yet did not know that right in their own midst sat one of Jesus' own disciples."

Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. Because it was a known disciple who got Peter in, *Thou also* links Peter with discipleship. She insinuates a conclusion: "You are not one of this man's disciples too, are you?" (John 18:17). For Peter, this maid's inquisition is mitigated only in form, since her words expected a negative answer, a factor that facilitated his denial. However, she motivates her inquisitiveness by an incriminating, if yet unproven, observation: "You too were with Jesus." Even so, there is yet no criticism implied in her oblique allusion to John's discipleship. So, why should Peter be so anxious to deny his own? Hendriksen (*John*, 393) sees her as maliciously ironic, because in her heart she already knew the answer to her question. Whether malicious or not, beneath her words lurked a terrible threat to Peter's security and he must answer.

1. VAGUE NEGATION

26:70 **But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest**, stammering, "I am not. Lady, I do not know Him. I neither know nor understand what you are talking about" (Mark 14:68; Luke 22:57; John 18:17)! Her unexpected disclosure, made in the presence of people (*émprosthen pànton*) among whom Peter considered himself relatively safe, caught him by surprise. In his panic his first impulse is self-preservation. He timidly denied even knowing Jesus, much less a follower. After faking complete ignorance and neutrality on the question, he eased away from the fire and walked to the forecourt or gateway, as if he had other business that required his presence elsewhere (Mark 14:68).

Mark reports the crow of a cock here (Mark 14:68). Although there are some manuscripts that do not contain this nor its later reference (Mark 14:72, see *A Textual Commentary*, 115f.), however, if it really crowed at this point, it would seem that Peter did not hear it, else he would have been conscience-struck sooner. Mark is not merely indicating the time, but the fulfillment of Jesus' word as he reported it (Mark 14:30). See note on 26:74.

26:71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. About an hour before the third denial (Luke 22:59), or about two o'clock, Peter went out into *the porch* (*tòn pulôna*; cf. *tò proaùllion*, Mark 14:68), the gateway or arched passageway leading from the central courtyard to the street. Peter has no time to shake the fear brought on by the first challenge. *Another maid*: Matthew and Mark describe the second accuser as a girl, whereas Luke unquestionably mentions a different man (Luke 22:58; *héteros* . . . *ánthrope*). This apparent discrepancy may be resolved by seeing the crowd at Caiaphas' palace as large. There are now at least two girls, the original portress (Mark has the article: *he paidiske*, "the girl mentioned before," Mark 14:66) and one other (Matthew: *alle*). It is not clear whether the second denials occurred at the porch leading to the gate or at the fire. Perhaps the pressure began at the porch when the doormaid initiated this second attack by exposing Peter to another girl and a man standing around in the entranceway (Mark 14:69). Peter, to avoid it, retreated back to the fire only to find himself the center of attention at the fire where the others took up the chase (John 18:25). Thus, his return to the fire was not the dogged courage of love but the risky solution of the desperate.

This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. Peter could not ignore the girl's approach, because her accusations continued to splatter around among men. It is noteworthy that neither Matthew nor Mark affirm that Peter answered the *maid* directly, but merely report that "he denied" to the bystanders, and only Luke quotes Peter as addressing the man, without denying that the maid had instigated this second exposure. While several people accuse him, this second denial is made all at the same general time as the result of this psychological build-up of pressure from various points. Would not hasty departure in this uneasy situation now confirm their suspicions? Again, he must answer.

2. CLEAR DENIAL SUPPORTED BY A FALSE OATH

26:72 And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. (Note Mark's imperfect tense: *erneïto*; Luke 22:58; John 18:25.) "He kept denying," evidence of a number of phrases not recorded. The tragedy when he lied (cf. 16:16; John 6:68f.) was worsened when he backed it up with an oath. This is perjury. Deeply shaken, Peter unnecessarily exaggerates, because many of Jesus' enemies knew Him

all too well, yet were not His disciples. How could anyone, so obviously Galilean as this Peter, live in Galilee, without at least *knowing the man*?! The man protests overmuch, if he is really indifferent to the Nazarene or about his own reputation. Further, what was Peter doing *among the high priest's servants*, if he could not admit to them his reason for being there? His very denials give him away.

26:73 And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. Luke (22:59) notes the passage of time as "about an hour later," a fact that gives more reality to this scene:

1. It indicates how long it was taking the authorities to find an adequate basis upon which to establish a basis for the death sentence for Jesus. (See John 18:19ff.; 26:59ff.)
2. It lulled Peter into a false security that feared no more inquisitions.
3. It gave bystanders time to mull over Peter's strange nervousness and his regional dialect and uncover further proof of his falseness.

Just when Peter thought his ordeal over, some men who had been discussing Peter, confront him directly, *Of a truth thou art one of them*. Peter's lying had not accomplished anything. Rather, now firmer than ever, this conviction of his true loyalties had a two-fold basis:

1. His dialectical pronunciation was typically Galilean, as opposed to the linguistic refinement of the cultured in the capital: "*Your accent gives you away!*" (Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59). Alford, (I, 285, citing Westein) noted that the Galileans could not pronounce the guttural sounds properly and made other changes in Hebrew words.
2. His face was virtually recognized by a relative of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter had sliced off: "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" (John 18:26). Not just embarrassing, this almost positive recognition is really dangerous.

3. LYING UNDER OATH AND SELF-CURSING

26:74 Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. Unable to escape the damning evidence of his own dialect—the more he said, the more he proved their point—, and pressured by this dangerous witness to his sword-swinging in the garden, Peter felt he must now employ the most serious device conceivable to convince these unfriendly, suspicious hearers. In his

frustration and desperation, he began vehemently *to curse and to swear*. Simon Peter was no profane man. His sense of the sacred must not be sullied by misconception on our part. *He began to curse*, i.e. to call God's wrath down upon himself, if what he was saying were untrue; *and to swear*, i.e. invoke God as witness of the truthfulness of his affirmations. His sin lay not in the act of cursing or swearing, because as proven before (see notes on 26:63), neither is sin and both may be absolutely right and necessary. Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 936) rightly contrasts Christ's oath (26:63F.) and Peter's (26:72, 74): "the former confirms the truth; the latter sanctions the lie!" So, his loss of the sacred, his sin, consisted in *invoking God's approval upon what he knew was not true*.

I know not the man. Paradoxically, this is his first true statement. Had Peter truly *known* Jesus, he would not have worried about Jesus' final destiny, because he would have believed His every prediction of victory as the unshakable word of God. Instead, in his frantic self-defense he has almost completely forgotten the Lord whose honor he would defend.

And straightway the cock crew about three o'clock Friday morning. Jesus' hearings continued through the night from his arrest apparently until this moment (Luke 22:61).

WHOSE CHICKEN WAS THIS?

If it be objected that the Jews did not keep roosters in the city, let it be answered that this particular rooster belonged to foreigners over whom the Jewish rules could not claim obedience. Nor would Sadducees feel bound by unwritten traditions that, without Mosaic sanction, forbid such fowls in the City. Were not Annas and Caiaphas chiefest among the Sadducees (Acts 5:17)?

Further, the two cock-crowings cannot be explained as the sound of the Roman buccina sounding the changing of the guard, because, whereas the 3 a.m. blast of the trumpet might be called *gallicinium* or "cock-crow," would the *midnight* trumpet also be termed thus? The two cock-crowings mentioned by Mark are only an hour or so apart (cf. Mark 14:48, 72 with Luke 22:58-60), hence not the sounding of the *gallicinium* which only occurred every three hours, i.e. at midnight and at 3 a.m. Peter heard a real rooster.

The Lord's power over Peter

26:75 **And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.** (See notes on 26:34.) That cock crowing meant nothing to anyone but Peter. His mind's eye vividly saw the earlier scene with his forgotten, rash promises and Jesus' sad, strenuously discarded predictions. Did he also remember Jesus' other word: "He who denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven" (10:33)? He broke down not only because of the cock-crowing, but, just as significantly, because, at that moment, "the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (Luke 22:61). Many see this moment as a transfer of Jesus from one chamber in the high priest's palace to another where He would be held until the morning session. Therefore, while Peter's attention was diverted by this new movement, Jesus could pause, turn and look meaningfully and understandably straight into his heart. Tolbert (*Good News From Matthew*, 231): "This is the moment when grace can begin its work—when a man is stripped of his arrogance and stands before God naked in his need."

Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said. Memory, that gift of God, pierced his self-deception, mistaken shame and terror, convincing and condemning him. It reminded him of Jesus' love and broke his heart, leaving him ashamed, self-condemned and agonizing over his dishonoring the lord he loved. Here is the point of the Scriptures and the Lord's Supper: to save us by vivid God-given reminders that can pierce our soul and bring us to repentance. (Cf. II Peter 1:12-15, 3:1.)

And he went out, and wept bitterly. While the others moved to their duties in the changed situation and Sanhedrinists went home for the night, Peter, blinded by tears, could stumble out the front gate together with them, hardly noticed. *He went out, and wept bitterly*, because he could no longer face himself. Unworthy even to be near Jesus, the perjured disciple has no further justification for being there. Where all the hostility of others could not tear him from his determination, one unspoken word, the eloquent, anguished look from the injured Master, broke him down completely. He is ashamed, because it has now dawned on him that he has just done that of which he believed himself completely incapable. He, Jesus' privileged apostle and dear friend, had really done this to Him! (Cf. Ps. 55:12ff.)

So why did Peter deny his relation to Jesus? Peter's failure is not merely the product of a unique combination of elements in his character and temperament which exposed him to be tempted in precisely this way, as if these temptations were meaningful only to Peter or those of a personality like his. Rather, are not these elements characteristic of all of us at one time or another?

1. Physically exhausted and shivering in the early-morning chill, Peter's thoughts ran to creature comforts (cf. Mark 14:54; John 18:18), rather than to the nearness of temptation and the spiritual battle to be fought. (Cf. 26:41.) His resistance and presence of mind to meet challenges were worn down by the emotional drain of excitement and sorrow of the preceding day. So far from spiritual preparedness, he was hardly ready physically for this battle.
2. Unjustified self-confidence: he presumptuously ignored warnings of this peril. A synonym of self-trust is faithlessness. He did not believe Christ's predictions either of his own failure or of Christ's victory without his own ill-conceived help. This amounts to rejection to Christ's revelations whereinsofar they clashed with Peter's views. Further, to arm himself against all trials he trusted his own emotional enthusiasm for Jesus, rather than an intelligent determination to do God's revealed will at all costs.
3. Rashness: he was deliberately sitting among Jesus' enemies, self-exposed to the very temptation against which he had been warned. He certainly was not thinking of denying Christ, yet like us in an unguarded moment, he was *simply not thinking*, but plunged into ill-considered activity.
4. The temptation's unexpectedness: he was distracted because his gaze was directed toward the trials and Jesus. He was neither watching nor praying to avoid temptation when he was suddenly confronted with the challenge.
5. Initial timidity that feared men rather than a holy boldness based on the fear of the Lord and a firm, correct knowledge of God's will. He feared reprisals and cost to himself. His confidence, that when God decides a thing victory is guaranteed, was severely shattered when he saw Christ arrested like a common criminal without defending Himself. His earlier boldness was now replaced by a wary, instinctive self-protectiveness which tempts a person to resort to *any means*, even falsehood as a way of avoiding trouble.
6. His sense of purpose and direction is damaged, for what could he actually do for Jesus here that would not be judged out of order

by the Lord Himself? He wrongly assumed that serious temptations could be courageously met with swords, ingoring the subtler, more deadly trials of a servant-girl's question.

7. Evil companions may also be a factor. Granted, they were unsympathetic to Christ's cause, and their pressuring hurried him to sin. But the least they could have done was laugh at him in their unbelief or arrest him for a day or so; the most, let him keep his promise to die for Jesus. But they were the least significant element, because, looked at from the Lord's point of view, these servants were only trying to get Peter to say what he really and deeply believed.

What Peter did after this moral break-down, the Gospel writers omit. Their last words leave him a humbled, brokenhearted man who must struggle with his lostness, overwhelmed with shame and grief, until thrilled by the stirring news of the resurrection morning, "The Lord is risen!"

What is our lesson? Without the grace of Christ, how strong is the bravest man? Peter's humiliated self-confidence challenges the best of disciples among us: who would dare trust himself to believe that he *could not* do the most abominable deed (I Cor. 10:11-13)? Further, the gravest threat may not always come from a Christian's weak points, but from what he considers his strength. This Satan succeeds in twisting against the Christian himself. On the other hand, how great is the spiritual power of God's grace and forgiveness in believers! Consider Peter's restoration to become the great pillar of the Church. Peter's grief had led to life through repentance, because he listened to the appeals of his own smitten conscience (II Cor. 7:10). Judas' fall, on the other hand, was a deliberate choice matured in harmony with his mentality. Peter's was the accidental fall of a good man, a real disciple, truly touched by his sense of sin and of the Lord's rightness. This explains his rapid rehabilitation as opposed to Judas' suicide.

That Jesus could so accurately foresee the various forces that would produce Peter's breakdown and even the timing proves even more remarkably His divine knowledge. That He foresaw it *and let it happen anyway*, points to the deep respect God has for the human will. He let this sincere but rash believer go wrong to reveal his weakness to him, break his overconfidence and teach him dependence on Himself. But He never ceased to intercede for Peter. The same Jesus who forewarned Peter and interceded before God for him, whose look restored Peter's sense of guilt, later freely forgave and re-established him,

offers us mercy and pleads our case before God, however deep our sin (John 6:37; Rev. 22:17; Heb. 7:25). Should not this exalted concept of His graciousness stir our hearts to grateful worship?

We easily identify with the sins of the great Bible characters, such as David and Peter, *but can we repent with them?* With loyal hearts and deep devotion do we abhor sin and weep over it before God like they? Oh God, when I have debased your Name, played the fool and denied my discipleship, send me a Nathan, a rooster, anything, to call my wandering heart back to you! May I hear all the voices in Creation and in your Word that call me to repentance (Ps. 19: Rom. 1:20)!

FACT QUESTIONS

1. What elements led to Peter's denials?
2. Explain how Peter gained entrance to the courtyard of the high priest.
3. Mark states that Peter was "beneath in the palace," whereas Matthew affirms "without in the palace." Harmonize these expressions.
4. What was Peter's motive(s) for being there?
5. Why did Peter join the men seated there at the fire lit in the high priest's courtyard? What time of year was it? Would it have been cold enough for a fire?
6. Who first accused Peter?
7. Who accused him the second time?
8. How much time elapsed during Jesus' trials and, consequently, Peter's? About what time of night did the third denial occur?
9. What clues demolished Peter's anonymity in the eyes of the bystanders?
10. What method(s) did Peter use to defend his assertions?
11. Explain the proposition: "Peter was not a profane man, just lying." In what sense did he curse and swear?
12. How many cocks crowed that night? Prove your answer.
13. What did Peter remember when he heard the cock crow?
14. What elements do the Gospels furnish that permit us to discern time connections between the denials of Peter and the trials of Christ?