

Message #113

Luke 22:54-62

Mr. Miles told me a story of an episode that happened in his ministry one time. A family had encouraged him to stop over so one day he was driving in the area and decided to stop by and say hello. He said he went to the door and rang the doorbell and one of the children came to the door and opened it and invited him in. Now the family was a Christian family in his church but he never sensed the husband was really walking close to God. As Mr. Miles stepped into the home, I am sure the father thought it was one of the friends of the children so he never bothered to even look up. As a result, Mr. Miles walked in on him as he was doing something that he would not do at church. Mr. Miles said when the man saw him his face turned beet red and he was ashamed.

When Jesus Christ returns to Rapture His church, I John 2:28 says that some will face Him in confidence and some will face Him in shame. One group will have lived their lives for the Lord and the other will have lived their lives for themselves.

It will be quite a moment when our eyes hit His eyes. Thank God He gives us time to make adjustments and changes. If a believer fails but will purpose to confess it and turn from it and put it behind him, he can become a great servant of God. God does not shelve His people who fail if they face things squarely and deal with things honestly. **That point is very clear from the life of the Apostle Peter.**

Peter was one of only twelve handpicked Apostles selected by Jesus Christ – Luke 5:1-11.
Peter was one of the three closest Apostles to Jesus Christ (Peter, James, John) – Luke 9:28; 22:8.
Peter was given special assignments from Jesus Christ – Luke 22:8.
Peter would eventually become one of the great leaders and pillars of the church – Gal. 2:9.

Without question the Apostle Peter became a great man of God. But as with all men, he was not a perfect man. There was an episode that occurred in his life that really brought him low. That episode turned his life around and it is an episode that Luke puts in his gospel.

Luke wanted God's people to realize this:

WHEN A MATURE BELIEVER SINS AND FAILS JESUS CHRIST, AND IS COMPLETELY ASHAMED OF HIMSELF AND FACES IT, HE WILL BE GREATLY USED BY GOD.

That is exactly what happened to Peter. Now this is a very important passage of Scripture. It gives us a tremendous glimpse as to how one fails and how to resolve it when one does fail.

There are eight critical observations we want to make from this text:

OBSERVATION #1 – Peter was removed from a close proximity to Jesus Christ. **22:54**

Jesus Christ was arrested that night after Judas identified Him. When Jesus Christ was taken from the Mt. of Olives to the house of the High Priest, Peter followed at a distance.

Christ was actually taken to the home of Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57), but Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law, was the first to see Christ (John 8:13).

Now the point is that Peter was following at a “distance.” That word indicates Peter kept a good distance between himself and Jesus Christ. Apparently, with the exception of Peter and John, all the other disciples fled (Mark 14:50). John followed and stayed relatively close to Jesus Christ (John 18:15-16), but Peter kept his distance.

Now just a few hours earlier, Peter had promised Jesus Christ that he would follow Him anywhere, including into prison and death (Luke 22:33). But when it came time to actually follow Christ, Peter backed off.

There is a spiritual principle to glean from this. **When we remove ourselves from close fellowship with Jesus Christ and from close fellowship with the church of God, it is just a matter of time until we will fall.**

Peter's failure started when he geographically distanced himself from the Lord, and our failure will start when we spiritually distance ourselves from the Lord.

When a believer begins to distance himself from close fellowship with the Lord and from those who are faithful to the Lord, sin and failure will follow. It will only be a matter of time.

H. A. Ironside said he observed that those who regularly came to church to feed on God's word were much more stable than those who didn't.

Frankly, it has been my observation that generally speaking, those who have the greatest struggles, failures and setbacks are those least involved. They get out of fellowship with God and with God's people and down they go.

OBSERVATION #2 – Peter was sitting among the enemies of Jesus Christ. **22:55**

Not only has Peter distanced himself from Jesus Christ, but now he is actually sitting among those who are the enemies of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word “among” actually reads “in the middle or midst” (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 285). Peter is sitting right in the middle of enemies of Jesus Christ.

Now according to Scripture, Peter had two reasons for sitting with this group:

Reason #1 - Peter wanted comfort. Mark 14:54; John 18:18 - he wanted the comfort of a warm fire.

It is interesting that Peter initially was standing by the fire (John 18:18), but then he was sitting with them by the fire (Luke 22:55; Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54).

Reason #2 - Peter was curious. Matt. 26:58

Peter was curious about what would happen.

Peter was cold and curious and he wanted to be comfortable so he got in with the wrong crowd.

Comfortability and curiosity are still two reasons why people get in with the wrong crowd. This is one reason why believers will often closely associate with unbelievers. Standing for what is right is not comfortable and if you stand for what is right, you will be treated in a cold way.

There is a pseudo-form of worldly comfort that unbelievers seem to have. There is a curiosity that can lure in a believer. When a believer gives into this, the end result will not be happy.

Many a believer has abandoned a great testimony for the Lord because of this. Demas lost his testimony because he wanted the comforts of the world and was curious about what the world could give him.

OBSERVATION #3 – Peter denies the Lord for the first time. **22:56-57**

As Peter was sitting around the fire, a servant girl saw him and said, “This man was with him too.” Now the text says the servant girl saw him and was “looking intently at him.” The aorist participle means from a point of time prior to her saying anything, she fixed her gaze upon Peter. She was staring at him probably from the moment he got near the fire (*Ibid.*, p. 67).

Now Mark informs us that this servant girl was one who worked for the High Priest (Mark 14:66). So when she stared at Peter, she said, “this man himself was with Him,” she is not the average girl.

Well Peter was shocked by that and he denied it saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” Now the word Luke uses for this girl in **verse 56** (*paidiskh*) is one that means she was a very young girl (*Ibid.*, p. 333). The word that Peter uses in calling her “woman” (*gunai*) speaks of a full grown woman (*Ibid.*, p. 96). So in the heat and emotion of the moment, Peter seems to give this girl more leverage that she should have. He is emotionally squirming.

That word “deny” used here in **verse 57** and again in **verse 61** is a word that is strong. It is a word that means Peter refused to acknowledge the fact that he was in any way connected to Jesus Christ. He disowned Jesus Christ and said he did not know Him.

Dr. Richard Lenski pointed out something important, “It only took a menial maid to fell the chief of the twelve.”

OBSERVATION #4 – Peter denies the Lord for the second time. **22:58**

A little later another person saw Peter. The pronoun “another” means another of a different kind. This was not a girl or a woman. This was a man. He looked at Peter and he said you are one of them too. Peter said, “Man, I am not.”

OBSERVATION #5 – Peter denies the Lord for the third time. **22:59-60a**

About another hour passed by the fire and a third man spotted Peter. Now this guy was a little more dangerous because according to John, he was a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter cut off (John 18:26).

When this man spotted Peter, he pointed out that Peter was a Galilean who had been with Jesus Christ. So three eye witnesses testify that Peter was one of those who had been with Jesus Christ and he denied it each time.

According to **verse 60**, Peter said, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about.”

So here is the Apostle Peter sitting around a fire with the worst enemies of Jesus Christ and he is publicly and verbally denying Jesus Christ in front of every one of them.

When one gets fellowshipping with people of the world, one can end up not even admitting they have any relationship with Jesus Christ.

Before we start casting stones at Peter, let’s see something here that most overlook. It is true Peter failed, but it is also true that he took a big risk in following Jesus Christ to the fire.

W. H. Griffith Thomas said, “It is easy to scorn another’s failure when we ourselves take no risks for Christ.”

Peter was willing to risk things to at least be near the Lord, the other disciples were not willing to do that.

OBSERVATION #6 – Peter heard the rooster crow as he was denying the Lord the third time. **22:60b**

As Peter was denying the Lord, the rooster crowed. That is exactly what Jesus Christ told Peter would happen (22:34).

OBSERVATION #7 – Jesus Christ the Lord looks at Peter. **22:61**

This is one touching moment. Jesus Christ is in front of evil religious and political leaders, who are going to condemn Him, and Jesus takes the time to look at Peter and Peter saw it.

When Peter saw the Lord look at him, he remembered exactly what Jesus had said to him—he would deny Him three times before the rooster crows (22:34).

Undoubtedly the most humiliating moment for an unfaithful believer will be the moment the eyes of Jesus Christ meet the eyes of the individual. That will be a moment when the believer will be totally embarrassed and ashamed and he will remember the word of God that warned him and the Spirit of God that convicted him to get away from the godless sin.

It will be a very sad moment as it was for Peter.

OBSERVATION #8 – Peter went out and wept bitterly. **22:62**

There are two critical actions here that show this is very real.

Action #1 - Peter got out of there.

Peter realized I cannot be around these people, this is no good. He got out of there. The Greek is emphatic on this point.

Action #2 - Peter wept over his failure.

The words mean Peter was loudly weeping and lamenting. He was in great emotional pain and turmoil. Where is the glamour of the world now? Where is the comfort the world has to offer now? Where is the fulfillment in the curiosity?

In Christ's greatest hour of need, Judas had betrayed Him, the disciples had abandoned Him and Peter had denied and disowned Him.

No one forced this response of Peter. He is not in a church service where some minister is trying to get him to go forward or raise a hand. He is alone before God doing honest business with God. He is broken over his failure and sin and he is ashamed of it and he is weeping because of it.

Three parting thoughts:

1) One who persists in denying Jesus Christ will be totally ashamed when he sees Jesus Christ.

If a believer refuses to stand up for Jesus Christ and continues to live a worldly life, the day his eyes meet Jesus Christ will be a day of shame.

2) Jesus Christ still loved Peter, who failed him.

Peter will end up being greatly used by God. Even when a faithful believer has a moment of failure, he is still loved by the Lord.

3) Peter did fail but he faced it honestly and privately.

Peter turned from it and he went on to become one of the strongest leaders for God the church has ever seen.