

# Peter's Denial

*Mark*

By Sybrand De Swardt

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**Bible Text:** Mark 14:26-31, 66-72  
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Pastor Ty Blackburn: This morning we have the blessing of having Sybrand De Swardt come and minister the word of God to us. Sybrand is pastor of Linwood Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa where he serves alongside Dr. Wayne Mack, and he is also the Director of Strengthening Ministries Training Institute in South Africa, an organization that trains biblical counselors. Sybrand has completed his MA in biblical counseling from the Masters University and he is a certified ACBC counselor, has taught extensively on counseling related issues at SMTI as well as done a lot of counseling. He's married for 10 years to Beth, his wife. Children: Carol-Marie and Thomas-Wayne. He and Beth are dear friends, just wonderful brother and sister. We treasure their friendship and we say that as a church, that you're really family and it's such a blessing to have our brother come and share with us. This week we had the opportunity to begin together our first seminar in our Doctor of Ministry program. We are both pursuing a Doctor of Ministry in biblical counseling, so we drove up last week, we spent the drive up all week together and then driving back and just our hearts are full from what we learned and just the wonderful fellowship of loving Jesus and loving his word. We are so glad to have you share God's word with us today, brother. Thank you.

Pastor Sybrand De Swardt: Thank you, Ty, and good morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 14 and we will be reading from verse 66 as we consider Peter denies Jesus, the denial of Jesus, and my purpose this morning for doing this is both an encouragement and a warning for us as believers as we consider someone great among us that fought in the trenches with us and how do we deal with that.

66 As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." 68 But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. 69 The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." 71 But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" 72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered

how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

An incredible passage. Today we are going to consider a believer, Peter, one of us, not just one of us but someone great, the best of us and certainly the most privileged among us. He was called by Christ. He spent three years walking with the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a leader of the apostles. When it comes to ministry, he was at the top. He loved Christ. He was taught by Christ. He was given the keys to the kingdom. He was granted miraculous powers to go out, heal the sick and cast out demons. He was a confessional believer. He said, "To whom shall we go, Lord? You and you alone have the words of eternal life. You are Christ, the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet it is Peter who lands – listen carefully – himself into the arena of sin. He has gone through the gate of temptation and he's standing in the arena of sin. He's denying the very Lord he confessed.

When we consider Peter and when we consider him throughout the Gospels, we see that he was a very self-confident man. This was something he believed was a virtue but it was his downfall, and if we should summarize and define self-confidence, if we go to the average dictionary, it would say it's a feeling of trust in one's own ability, qualities and judgment. I believe that the biblical definition of self-confidence is a bit wider and we could say that self-confidence according to Scripture is a way of thinking of yourself with abilities and qualities that should be maintained; it is judging the world around you in a specific way so that you would come to the conclusion that you can certainly overcome without God's help; you interpret and you conclude circumstances and you come to the conclusion, "I can follow Christ without Christ's help." That is confidence, self-confidence and, yes, there is certainly a feeling involved with this self-confidence, one's abilities, one's qualities and one's own judgment, but I believe that it's more than that. I believe self-confidence has got to do with desires, and we will see in this passage that Peter was an emotional man and he was the one who struck part of the ear of the high priest's servant, he acted compulsively. It's telling us there was something he was desiring at that moment that set him up to deny the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mentioned earlier that Peter brought himself into this situation. It didn't just come upon him from nowhere. There were heart processes going on in Peter's life as he looked at his context and even his theology, that is, yes, he believed it but it hasn't really served as a foundation in his life. So as we think about this issue of self-confidence, we have to try and put it in a theological place. Where do we go in the Bible to take self-confidence, where do we put it? Well, self-confidence is a sin. It's not a virtue. I hope that doesn't shock you because our children at schools, at your schools here and ours, they are told that they are wonderful and they have all the resources in them to be great. That's the world we are living in.

So where do we put, where do we place this brick, where do we put it in? Well, we have to put it with the doctrine of radical depravity. Every single human being is depraved or corrupt or sinful, fallen by nature, and self-confidence is a fruit of fallen human nature. Relying upon Christ and being confident in Christ, that's where God is taking us. He's not taking us to self-confidence, he is taking us to rely upon Christ, yet Peter finds himself in

a situation where he is relying upon himself. Now we don't have to sort that out before we become believers, God will sort it out in the process of sanctification and he is going to bring us into circumstances where we will see we have been relying upon ourselves, we will fall and then he will teach us to rely upon him in all circumstances. So all of us are involved in this process. It's a contradiction for a Christian to be self-confident. A Christian is a person that is confident in Christ and what Christ has done and what God is saying about us. We are confident of Jesus Christ, the Mediator who took the hands of a holy God and sinful man and brought the two together. Not only that, he brought us to the Father and then he speaks good on our behalf, and now at this very moment, he is interceding for us according to the will of God with wounds present in the Father's presence as he is our Advocate. Our confidence should be in the person of Christ and not ourselves.

Radical depravity has affected every single part of our lives. Very often in the counseling room, people are just confused, where do we start dealing with our sin? Young men who struggle with pornography for years, temptations don't take no for an answer. People who have vain imaginations and thoughts that do not stop at night. Where do I start? We have to start with this truth, radical depravity. We've been affected in our thinking, we've been affected in our feelings, our desires are sinful, our natural beliefs, our personal beliefs and desires are sinful, and that is where we need to put self-confidence in. The brick goes into radical depravity.

Now, we have to understand this, that non-Christians trust and revel in their depravity. They are not in touch with their depravity, the extent to which sin has affected every aspect of their being. Nonbelievers are not in control of their depravity, in fact, their depravity is in control of them. You can go and read about that in Ephesians 2:1 through 3. On the other hand, Christians must be and should be in touch with their fallenness. At the end of his ministry, Paul writes, "This is a trustworthy statement that deserves full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost." He had a self-concept that was biblical. At this point, Peter has a self-concept that is unbiblical. He's confident and relying upon himself. And so Christians understand even though they are sinners, they have been saved from the power of sin, they know they've been given a new nature, they know that they are new creatures, they know that they have the ability and they have been saved to walk in the newness of life, yet they know the war because of depravity. We've been saved. We've been saved out of the kingdom of darkness. We've been brought into the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of light, and when we are in the kingdom of light, there is a war going on. We have been renewed, the inner man has been renewed but we are cased in a sinful body that will only be redeemed in the future or will only be saved in the future.

Christians know and understand that their newness of life is incarcerated, imprisoned in a sinful body. Paul writes about this in Romans 7:21, speaking about the things I want to do but then sin is at work. I'm not going to read the passage. I take it you know that passage. You know what I'm talking about, am I right? Can I just have a head nod? That's good. You have that. Romans 7:21 to 25, Paul talks about the struggle. "I want to serve Christ. I want to love him. I want to go after him but there is this flesh that just takes me into this

spiral that starts with a temptation and ends in the middle of the arena of sin." Paul also speaks about that in Galatians 5:16 through 24. If you walk in the flesh, that's going to happen. If you walk by the Spirit, that is what's going to happen. We are called to walk by the Spirit but we struggle with the flesh. Is that a struggle that you are familiar with? You should be because that's just living the Christian life.

So even though Christians have experienced the redemption of their souls, they are waiting for the redemption of their bodies and while we wait, there is a process of sanctification going on. So this sanctification happens on the inside. We are renewed day by day on the inside. We are transformed into the likeness of Christ and more and more our behavior shows that we are committed to the one that saved us and we actually start speaking, thinking, desiring, believing like Christ thought, desired, believed. It's the process of sanctification. Without sanctification, no one would see the Lord. So we find ourselves saying and this is a natural response, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death?" That's what the Bible teaches. We shouldn't be surprised when even the best among us are embroiled in a fight, and sometimes we lose that battle as Peter did that day. There is a war going on and you had better make sure you understand that war so that you may become more like Christ in the midst of it.

Now, our war takes place in a dangerous place. We live in a world that is dangerous. We have all kinds of pressures from the outside. We have a culture, we have our family of origin, they are not the cause of our problems, it was just the context in which we responded but we have our family of origin. We have other important people that play a role in the way that we view life and the way we think about it. We have an enemy called Satan that walks around. He wants to destroy us through us denying that the character of God is trustworthy. We are living in a dangerous place. For Peter that night, just think of it for a moment, he was in a courtyard of the high priest. He wasn't welcome there. They didn't want to let him in. It was through John, the Apostle John that he got into the courtyard. It was a new environment for Peter. It was a context, the context wasn't the cause of him denying Christ but it certainly had an impact on him. Have you ever seen a change of context? Well, we experienced that this week, didn't we? Driving up to Southern, I asked Ty, "What are you fearful of? What are you expecting?" And one of the greatest fears for me was just to open my mouth and speak something that's not going to be in line with it and just be a fool. Do you hear what I'm saying? The context can bring all kinds of temptations to us and we need to be on guard. New context or context where we are familiar can also be a place where temptation can be great.

So he also wants us to know about Judas that went off to betray the Lord. This is a close ally. There was the temple police, there was the servant of Caiaphas, there were Roman soldiers, and there was a servant girl. That was the context in which Peter is going to respond and the Lord is going to use that context to bring out to the surface what he's hiding in his heart. Isn't it amazing that God is honest about the great men? I'm so thankful about that. I read the patriarchs and I think, "Oh, you were a bunch of sinners, men." Then I just realize, yes it's true because you recognize that in them because you recognize it in yourself. God left it in the Scriptures for it to be real so that we know that we ourselves struggle with these things. We live in a dangerous world and when we come

in different context, we respond to that world. The power of sin resides in us even though we are saved. We respond to it.

So what I want to do this morning is mention a few things and I want you to trace this, I want you to apply this, I want you to think through this, how Peter set himself up to deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, we're not just talking about Peter, we have to filter this through our own lives and see if the passage is perhaps talking about us. How did he set himself up? Well, let me say this: the denial of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Friday evening did not start on the Friday evening. It started long before that.

The first point I want to make is this, the process started with Peter and here's number 1: he boasted too much in his own power. He was self-confident, okay? He boasted too much in his own power. We see this in our text. I didn't read that but you can go and read it for yourself. The Lord Jesus Christ said to Simon, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and you when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." But Peter said, this is to God, the second person of the Trinity, but Peter said to God, "Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death." And Jesus prophesies which tells us that Jesus knows the future. He's God and he tells him, "Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me." There's a huge problem with self-confidence and this is the problem, it's the way you view yourself. But it's not only the way you view yourself and what you can do, it is a way you view God and what God can do. This is a huge theological problem. Self-confidence has the wrong view of self and the wrong view of God. So Peter set himself up and we set ourselves up to sin, to deny the Lord when we boast in our own abilities and what we can achieve without the Lord's help. We all know that, don't we? You know, we go and it's like a glider, we jump off the cliff and then we just glide by ourselves.

Now what's interesting is that Peter heard the Lord Jesus Christ speak on this matter in John 15 when Jesus said, "The extent to which you will bear fruit is the extent to which you are going to remain in me." So he knew it. He's heard it before. He knew what Paul tells us about in Philippians. Paul puts it in the positive, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," and how easily those words drip down our lips. But for Peter it was just a theological concept. It was truth, it was there in his mind, it was information about God, he had the word of God, he had the knowledge of God, he might have even been stirred up by the word sitting hearing Jesus speak about and making a commitment, "I am now from now on going to commit myself to serving Christ." The desire was there to implement the word but we see here it was not the basis of his action. He knew truth, that as he remains in Christ's love, he will bear much fruit, but it's almost as if Peter is too strong to make that a reality. You see, you have to be weak. You have to be weak. Do you get the point? There are many Christians who are too strong. They are just too strong. As we remain in the knowledge of how weak we are, it's then that we will rely upon the power of Christ and then we will bear fruit.

Where do we see this? We see this very often and God is so gracious, he brings us into situations where this comes to the surface. Just turn with me, this is a very good

counseling verse, Deuteronomy 8:2 explains the concept to us and it's good for us to know this. We read, "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." God did not lead Israel into the desert so that he could come to know or that he could find out what was in their hearts, he already knows what is in their hearts. He took them into the wilderness so that they may realize what is in their hearts and that's our circumstances, and that was the circumstance for Peter on that night. Yes, it was to fulfill Scripture. We know that, but in that night the Lord showed him what was in his heart. When you watch pornography, it's a situation where God is showing you what you are committed to. Whatever sin you perform shows your commitment. It's a situation that just shows you your commitment and whom you trust. But let us not forget this point: Peter loved the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved the word of God. He had warm and affectionate feelings toward Christ but he also, he was also self-confident.

The Friday evening denial started long before the actual event and this serves as a warning and also as an encouragement to us. The encouragement we will come to at the end, but before you tune out, I want to say this was a man mightily used by God and perhaps you have a faulty history of commitment and denial, commitment and denial, commitment and denial. I don't want you to miss this, I want you to see that there is forgiveness and there is a welcoming to Christ, "Come to me everyone who is burdened and heavy laden. I want to give you rest." But what is striking in this passage, when he denied the Lord Jesus Christ, a few hours before that he was sitting under the best teaching and the best preaching ever. You can go and read it in John 13. He was in a service listening to history being unfolded, explained. What an amazing picture. The institution of the Lord's Table at the church needs to celebrate until Christ returns. Don't think that these things happen outside the church, it happens in the church. This is where these issues are raging.

Jesus says, "Satan has asked to sift you." Now, I don't want to go into the theology of Satan, but it is certainly true and we see that from Job that the Lord has allowed Satan to do something to his children but it's under God's control and the purpose of that is so that God's strength may be shown in us and that God will be glorified. Brad Bigney in his book "Gospel Treason" explains and many people ask, "Does Satan know our thoughts? Can he tell us what to do?" Well, the thing is Satan certainly watches and takes note of our commitments and, yes, even he can set up moments of temptation. He doesn't know our thoughts but he sees our commitments in the way we behave, the way we speak, the things we invest in.

So the Lord speaks about that because he knows that Peter has a self-confident problem. What does the Bible say about this whole issue? Well, here it is. As you see, I'm flipping through a few things here because I realize I'm not going to have enough time but Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction," very clear, "and a haughty spirit before a fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12, "let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls."

Can we move on to the next point? You get the point, don't you? The second way in which Peter set himself up to deny the Lord Jesus Christ was this: he listened too little. He listened too little and Jesus said to him, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied me three times," and then, of course, Peter goes, "Lord, they may," his disciples may, "not me." The tense in which it's written is that Jesus said this to Peter over and over and over and over and over again. He didn't tell him once. Repeatedly. He told him the facts. "You are going to be tempted by Satan then you are going to deny me three times." Then in Mark 14:29, Peter says, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." Now remember this point, he listened too little. We could say he listened selectively. You know, when you think, "I'm so glad Pastor Ty is preaching this sermon because she really needs to hear it." He was saying, "Others may fall away, yet not I." It appears as if Peter, certain truths were applicable to him, other truths were not applicable to him. It is all of God's word that is applicable to us. So you see what self-confidence does, you start judging yourself in the wrong way.

So Peter's attitude gives us some guidance on how to identify our lack of listening. He heard it again over and over, the Lord was saying to him very kindly and all he said, "Lord, you know you are really good on the kingdom stuff, you are really good on the second coming and serving, but when it comes to my sin struggle, I'm not going to listen to you." What has the Lord been telling you? What sin has he been pointing out in your life where you are dragging your feet? What attitude has he brought to your attention? What vain thoughts has he framed for you? Listen to the Lord. Listen to his word. Listen to those who are wise. Listen to those who can give you counsel. Consider those who would say things that you don't like to hear. Consider whether it might be true and reflect on it.

Now, the whole issue of listening is very important, especially if you sit here. How do we prepare? We want to be practical. How do we prepare ourselves to hear the word of God and really hear the word of God? We haven't really heard the word of God until we've applied the word of God. But here are 11 ways in which you can prepare your heart. Read and meditate on God's word every day. Don't just, "Oh, I've read it." Okay, then grab coffee. "I'm getting out of here. I'm going to work." Meditate, read the word.

2. Pray throughout the week and pray this prayer, "Open my eyes that I may see. Give me understanding. Help me to take my emotions and put them to one side and consider your word for what it is and, Lord, please open my eyes."

3. Confess your personal sin profile. I know that's a word, I want to explain it. Each one of us has a cluster of sin and it's not you get white grapes, you get green grapes, you get pink grapes and you get in between grapes and they all look different but they are clusters. Not one of us here have the same sin profile. Ask the Lord, "Show me my sin. Show me my sin profile," and start confessing your specific personal sin profile to God.

Reduce your media intake because it produces isolation and the wrong kind of relating. Jess can preach on that. You've already preached on it, so they would know what I'm talking about.

Plan ahead and schedule your week around the ministry of God's word. Please don't come Wednesday evening and have a meal and then go home. That's not the important part. The important part is the preaching, is listening to the word of God.

Be consistent in church attendance, not to tick the box but to come and say, "Lord, humble my heart. I need to see my heart. I need to understand where you are working and where I should be joining you."

Worship with all your heart, and by that I mean, worship God with your thoughts. Worship God with your desires. Worship God with your feelings. Worship God with your beliefs. Worship God with your decision-making. Worship God with the values that you are going to embrace. That's worship. It's not just being present. Yes, that is part of it but it's a whole host.

Fight off distractions. What is distracting you from loving Christ with all your heart, soul and mind?

And prepare your heart before you sit under the preaching of God's word. Do you realize it is the most dangerous place to be on a Sunday, to sit under the preaching of God's word, he who spoke this world into being? You bring yourself and you sit underneath it and then you make his word into options. They are no longer commands, they are options. That's a dangerous practice. It's going to cost you your life and you are going to set yourself up to deny the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. He set himself up, he prayed too little. Have you read the story? The garden of Gethsemane, he fell asleep, now what's the big deal about this? Well, if the Lord told me, I would probably act just like Peter. I have, in fact. Let's keep it with Peter. The Lord told him, "You are too confident." The Lord told him, "You are going to deny me." The Lord told him repeatedly but knew he listens too little. By this point, Peter should know he is self-confident and he is listening too little, which the solution to that is, "Peter, watch and pray." That's what the Lord commanded them to do, watch and pray. We should be watching. We know our sin profile, we know we live in a dangerous world, and we should be praying to God, "Lord, help me not to go through the gate of temptation into sin." We find that in the Lord's prayer. Jesus taught them to pray this way, "Lead us not into temptation," yet Peter was sleepy. He didn't watch and pray. It's so easy not to watch and pray and, of course, when temptation comes, you are just swept into it and mostly you don't even know why and how you got there. Watch and pray. Is it a habit in your life to pray, to watch your sin and pray and ask God to help you overcome and say no to temptation but deal with your sinful thoughts and sinful feelings and sinful beliefs and sinful desires? If you know the extent of your depravity, you will pray. You will pray because you will understand how vulnerable you are.

At that point, Peter didn't realize that. He boasted too much, he listened too little, he prayed too little, and fourthly, he acted too fast. Can you remember when the high priest came to arrest the Lord Jesus Christ, what did Peter do? He grabbed his sword. He was



reacting out of his emotions. He had a desire almost to defend and protect the Lord Jesus Christ, but have you ever realized this: what if Peter was successful in driving the soldiers away? There would have been no salvation. So he was acting too fast and very often we act so fast not knowing that what we are experiencing in a specific situation God wants to bring something great about, even though the clouds are dark.

He grabbed his sword, started to swing it around. He wanted to bring something about. Now the last time I was with you in October, I preached about the portion in Mark 6 where the Lord Jesus Christ was walking on the water, and the section before that in Mark 6:33, Jesus fed 5,000 people and then it was a great day for ministry, I mean, you could have a church right there, a mega-church, and Jesus sends his disciples away. Now, John tells us in John 6 that the people wanted to crown Jesus as king. Here we have a king that can provide us with our daily fish and daily bread. You don't even have to have faith anymore, it's just going to be there. We also read about the disciples who fought among each other for greatness all the time while Peter is loving the Lord. He truly loves God but he wants to achieve things in his own way.

You are familiar with "Pilgrim's Progress," in "Pilgrim's Progress" we have two characters called Passion and Patience, and we find that Passion represents those in this world who live only for the here and now and there are many Christians who live for the here and now. So they act fast in this world to lay hold of that which is here and now. And just as Passion rejected the word of the Governor, the world is unwilling to believe God's word and choose to ignore the promises and warnings of Scripture, whereas Patience, he doesn't act fast. He believed in the sovereignty of God. He held to the doctrine of the providence of God, God's timing, and he waited for the reward to come in the future. Not Peter. He acted too fast. He wanted it to happen now. Peter had a kingdom-now mentality. He served Christ for what he could get out of him for this life only.

Let me ask you a question: do you truly live for the glory of God in this life or are you anxious like Peter, that you might be losing out on a lot of good things because you're a Christian? Or perhaps you are anxious because you are overlooked and you are not praised and you are not acknowledged and so you do certain things to compensate so you can have your desires fulfilled? Proverbs 19:2 tells us, "it is not good for a person to be without knowledge," and then it says, "And it's not good for him who hurries his footsteps." You see, it tells us that it all fits together. He didn't pray, he just acted. So we see all of these things fit together in a little temptation schedule for Peter.

Number 5 and then I want to make some conclusions, is that Peter followed too far. He followed too far. He had a relationship with Jesus, he was saved, but he followed at a distance. He was a curious Christian but not a courageous one. He was a compromiser on many levels so we even find Peter, this is a great guy, we look up to him, that moment when he followed at a distance.

What was the result of this? Then I just want us to see the implications of his heart DNA, okay? He was confident. He didn't listen. He didn't pray. He moved too fast. He followed

at a distance. The implication of this was frightening. You know as Christians we usually think of how we will stand when the antichrist is revealed or whatever and people raise up to kill us and stop testifying about Christ, are we going to be so confident, are we going to stand there, are we going to die for Christ, are we going to stand in front of the governors and the presidents or whoever, are we going to testify about Jesus, are we going to do it and it's going to be so wonderful and this glorious death. It wasn't a Roman soldier, it was a servant girl that took Peter down. Insignificant person. She opens and closes the door into the courtyard. You have these things in your heart where you are self-confident, you don't listen to the word of God, you don't pray. It's not the big things that are going to take you down, it's the small things that are going to take you down. It was a servant girl that took Peter down.

Let's conclude with this application. How do I bring this sermon to land in our minds? Yes, we've seen the structure of Peter's heart, we've seen the consequences, the servant girl in the courtyard, him denying the Lord, but where do we start? Where do we start this morning because I think all of us are sitting in this bus of self-confidence.

First I want to draw your attention to John 21 and you can turn there if you want to but I'm just going to talk to you. The Lord Jesus Christ is meeting his disciples next to the lake. He made them a breakfast and then he took Peter one side and he said, "Peter, do you love me?" Then he says to him, "Do you love me more than these?" Remember, he said, "Lord, they might deny you, I'm not going to deny you." I think this is where we should start. I know this is where we should start. We have to be grounded in the love of Christ. We have to be grounded in this truth he came into this world to save sinners. Ground yourself, remain in his love. We were just talking about having devotions every morning, I struggle with having devotions. I've struggled for many years and we were sitting and listening this week, what do we do when we do our devotions? Let's go to the mine of Christ's love and let's go down that shaft into his love and let's be secure in his love. Even though you have sinned, secure yourself in the love of Christ.

Solidify yourself in the love of Christ. This is where restoration starts, a love of Christ. Christ came for sinners. Very often we think we are such sinners that the very thing that qualifies us to be saved, we make a disqualification. "I can't come to Christ, I'm too much of a sinner." No, that's the qualification. You have to be a sinner or else you can't come to Christ. Now that's all love, isn't it? Christ welcomes sinners. That's where we start.

Secondly, recognize the times when Jesus addresses your self-confidence and your lack of growth. I want to draw your attention to Galatians 2. Can you remember Paul calling out Peter who ate with the Judaizers that came from Jerusalem, and there he was again and it says he feared them, so he withdrew from the Gentiles and he went and he ate with the Jews. He was self-confident not in Christ but in law-keeping. And there are times when we need to recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ is addressing our self-confidence, those hard moments, those trials, the context is just so hard. Those other times when Christ is at work, he's not calling you to be confident and have your own strength to overcome it, he's calling you to go to Christ and roll your burdens upon him and submit yourself to Christ. That's how we deal with self-confidence.

So here again, we see in Galatians 2 that Peter had a constant problem with this. This is a few years after the death of Christ, the Gospel is spreading throughout the Middle East and Peter is still struggling and so we are still struggling, we need to remind ourselves at that moment of the love of Christ and we need to look at our context and say what is Christ putting his finger on, which area in my life, where am I relying upon my own strength, and run to Christ.

Thirdly, watch your context and watch what's happening in your life right now. Whether it's a bad email, whether it's a new job that you simply don't like, whatever the circumstances are, God is up to something. This time I want you to turn with me to 1 Peter 1:6. Again, it is Peter writing. It is Peter writing and he's telling us how to equip ourselves for those moments when life is hard. Remember, this is the man that struggles with self-confidence. How do we judge our context?

Look what he writes in verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice," now he's writing to believers. Peter didn't rejoice in this before. That night he didn't rejoice in his suffering, he tried to escape it. But listen what he says, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." Let's just stop there for a moment as I close the sermon. Do you note the word "if necessary"? The word "if necessary," well let me first say this, when difficulties come, we are not in control of those difficulties but here he is talking about difficulties that come if necessary. So who is bringing the "if necessary," the necessary trials? God himself is bringing it into our lives for a very specific purpose. And do you note the word "a little while"? Well, it might be the rest of your life here on earth, that's a little while in comparison to eternity, but usually it's just a little while that we have to face this difficulty. God brings it into our lives for a little while if necessary.

Now look at verse 7. What is he after? "So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." That is what he's after. He said to Peter, "Once you've denied me, I've prayed that your faith will not fail." So in the midst of our difficulty we are simply called not to rely upon ourselves but to cast ourselves upon Christ. Go to God. Get lost in God. Rely upon God.

The Christian is not one that is self-confident, he is Christ-confident. He is God-confident. That's living the Christian life and that is where God wants to bring each one of us. Are you willing to hear this? Are you willing to repent of your self-confidence? Are you willing to rely upon Christ because that's bringing him glory. That is the glory, we rely upon him for our strength, for our well-being, for our future, for everything. That's living the Christ-centered life and God wants that for all of us. Christ died so that we can live like that.

I'm done and am I supposed to pray? Or are you going to pray? Jess, will you pray, please? Thank you.

Pastor Jess Arnds: 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Let's pray.

*Lord, we commit ourselves to you as the God of infinite love who has paid the price for our salvation and our forgiveness and nothing can take us out of your hand. And Lord, we want to walk with you, we want to honor you. I pray, Father, that you would give us wisdom to recognize where our hearts are tempted, led astray and distracted. Lord, I pray for those that are struggling and down, that you would encourage them and strengthen and establish them, that we would altogether with one voice praise you and praise your grace and give honor to the one who saved us. Give us joy in this, Lord, and thank you for this message we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*