

Peter's Denial

Peter's denial of Jesus is usually looked on as a great tragedy, and it was. However, if viewed in the light of Peter's repentance and the Lord's gracious forgiveness, the story takes on a different light. The light of encouragement.

In all the history of redemption, few of God's people have fallen to the depths of sin and unfaithfulness as did Peter. Also, it can be said, that few of God's people have been so powerfully used by God after he repented and was restored as Peter. The account of Peter's denial recorded in the Gospel's, is a sobering testimony of the weakness of the flesh. But it is also an encouraging testimony to the power of God's grace.

Every Christian at times comes before the Lord overwhelmed and broken by the awareness of his sinfulness. A person who never has such an experience is either deeply cold spiritually or is not a Christian at all. Nothing is more earth shattering to a believer than suddenly realizing he has denied the Lord by what he has said or not said, done or not done. And yet nothing is more wonderful to him than knowing God's grace has forgiven and restored him.

I think that it is very important to note that Peter's denial was not merely a spontaneous relapse of the flesh. He had already laid the groundwork for defection long before the events of that night.

First was his boasting. Peter not only revealed unfounded confidence in himself, he directly contradicted Jesus' prediction that all would fall away that very night. Based on his self-confidence and devotion to Jesus, Peter considered himself incapable of disloyalty. He could not imagine anything that would cause him to waver; not even the explicit prediction by Jesus could convince him otherwise.

Second was his insubordination. Peter defiantly manifested persistent rejection to Jesus' assessment of him. Even when Jesus singled him out and predicted he not only would flee like the rest but would deny Him three times before the next morning dawned. Peter blatantly contradicted Him and continued to defend his own faithfulness.

Third was his prayerlessness. Jesus took Peter, James, and John into the garden and left them to watch and pray while He spoke with His Father, upon His return He found all three asleep. Jesus spoke directly to Peter and warned him about the danger of being in a state of prayerlessness. Jesus warned, that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Peter felt no weakness, therefore, he did not take seriously the words of Jesus. Jesus was warning Peter about the deficiencies and frailties of the flesh. However, Peter heeded not this warning. He became indifferent to Jesus' call to prayer.

Fourth was his independent, self-generated impulsiveness. Seeing nor sensing no need to ask Jesus' advice or help, he took matters into his own hands. As soon as the officers laid hands on Jesus, Peter reached and drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Although Jesus had repeatedly taught the disciples that it was the Father's plan that He suffer and die, and be raised, Peter refused to believe Him. And because it was not in Peter's plan for his Master to be harmed, he was willing to defy both human and divine authority in drawing his sword against those who came to arrest Jesus.

Fifth was his compromise in allowing himself to be in a place of spiritual danger. Peter was weaker than what he realized. Peter willingly, or knowingly placed himself in the way of temptation, and to do so is a violation of Scripture. Peter could not accept the words of Jesus because he was so controlled by his ego and self-sufficiency that he felt infallible. It was therefore inevitable that Peter would collapse when his courage proved hollow and his self-sufficiency came up deficient.

Scripture: King James Version: Matthew 26:31-75

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