

WHEN TEARS LEAD TO TRIUMPH

“Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly.” —MATTHEW 26:75

One of the most heart-wrenching moments in the life of the Apostle Peter must have been the night of Christ’s arrest when he heard the rooster crow. All four Gospels record this event, and with the exception of John, tell us how Peter broke down and wept. The Bible never glamorizes its leading characters, and it may be encouraging to discover we rarely become struck in a way that is original.

Peter was Jesus’ most loyal and enthusiastic supporter. At the Last Supper, he confirmed his unwavering devotion to Him by declaring, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” Jesus said to him, “This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” Peter became more emphatic. “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matthew 26:33-35). There is no reason to believe that Peter’s motivation was anything but genuine.

After the arrest of Jesus, Peter followed a safe distance behind, and three times was accused of being with Jesus, but just as emphatically, denied ever having known Him. His sense of relief was abruptly shattered when he heard the rooster crow and recalled with heavy heart what Jesus had said. When reminded of broken promises, words of never-failing loyalty and commitment to God, the rooster crows in our lives too. It is a dilemma we all face in

earnestly wanting to please God, but fail again and again. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus summed it up for Peter. “The spirit is willing but the body is weak” (Matthew 26:41). It is when we experience what is admirable in our spirits, but cannot put it into action, we realize our moral and spiritual bankruptcy. All Jesus expects of us is failure, for He says, “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

For Peter, the morning of tears when the cock crowed, made possible a triumphant morning of joy, seven weeks later. In the intervening time, stripped of his own sufficiency and confidence, Peter was enabled to stand on the Day of Pentecost in new strength and new life that was not his own. The explanation was no longer “Peter”, but “Jesus”, who had come to live in him by the Holy Spirit. Like Peter, it is not until we acknowledge we have come to an end in ourselves, and allow the life of Jesus to be lived in us that we truly experience His strength and His sufficiency.

PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for living in me by your Holy Spirit. Especially in times of failure and weakness, keep me dependent on your strength and sufficiency. Amen.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I leaning on my own resourcefulness in trying to please God?