



“The Bitter Betrayal by a Broken Man”

Luke 22:54-62

Theme: Faltering faith fails without a focus on Christ.

Introduction: Except for the grace of a faithful God who holds us in His hand, our faith is a fragile thing. We encounter various trials, struggles, tragedies, deprivations, disappointments, frustrations, defeats, embarrassments, failures, setbacks, or sins that create hopelessness, despair, and a faltering faith. What makes the difference between complete failure and apostasy and the ability to remain faithful and persistent in our pursuit of Christ? Is it the strength of our will? Is it the quality of our intellect? Is it the family, church, or community to which we belong? We all have seen people who have shipwrecked their faith and abandoned the Lord. What makes the difference? In our text today, we witness the truth that ***faltering faith fails without a focus on Christ!***

I. The Cautious Following of Christ – 22:54

A. THE TRAUMATIC ENCOUNTER

1. The previous scene of confrontation by the leadership of Israel being led by Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus is put behind us by the phrase *“Having arrested Him ...”*
2. Other Gospels provide us the details of their binding Jesus and the appeal by Jesus that His followers be granted leave – cp. ***John 18:8-9***.
3. Peter imperiled this liberty when he attacked Malchus and lopped off his ear – and act that would come back to haunt him in our text.
4. But, ultimately, “they all fled” – cp. ***Mark 14:50***.
5. Our text tells us *“they [the Jews] led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest;”*



B. THE TENTATIVE PURSUIT

1. Even though he initially fled, *“Peter was following at a distance.”*
2. It is clear that he had joined the Apostle John who also followed Jesus to Caiaphas’ house and was familiar with the High Priest – cp. *John 18:15-16*.
 - a. John went ahead into the courtyard, but Peter held back and didn’t immediately enter.
 - b. John had to circle back and “vouched” for Peter so that Peter was likewise granted access.
 - c. This serves as the context for the accusation that would later come – he had been scrutinized by the doorkeeper and identified by a known associate with Jesus – the Apostle John.
3. Peter’s bravado had evaporated by Jesus’ “failure” to back him up when Peter sought to defend Him – cp. *Luke 22:31-33*.
4. How often has our confidence in Christ wavered due to some “failure” on His part to do what we expected Him to do?
5. It seems that Peter, like most of us, finds himself more dominated by his circumstances and fears than He is with a confidence in God to provide what is needed.

II. The Calloused Denials of Christ – **22:55-60a**

A. THE ACCUSATION OF ACQUAINTANCE BROUGHT DENIAL – **vv. 55-57**

1. As we noted in John's Gospel, was familiar with the High Priest household and perhaps went to another section of the courtyard or maybe even was allowed to observe Jesus more closely.
2. Peter, however, attempts to blend in with the other Jews who were inside – *“After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.”*
3. Apparently, Peter was “keeping his head down” and attempting to gain whatever glimpse of Jesus he could, or maybe gain some small word of what was happening.
4. Suddenly, the door-keeper comes over and exposes Peter – likely having known that he was one of his disciples because of John's request that he be allowed entry – *“A servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, ‘This man was with Him too.’”* – cp. **John 18:17**.
 - a. *“looking intently”* [ἀτενίζω] – “to stare” or “to gaze” at someone; she essentially studied him, unlikely that he missed it.
 - b. Her accusation was a firm, conclusive statement of fact spoken with confidence and certainty.
5. Peter was caught off-guard and immediately defaulted to a self-preserving mode to avoid incrimination and repeatedly expressed denial – *“But he denied it, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’”* – cp. **John 18:17; Matthew 26:70; Mark 14:68**.
6. Peter flatly denied that he knew him, was with him, or even was acquainted with Him.
7. He was thinking only of himself and the threat he was under and thus he denied Jesus to save himself.
8. Have you ever done this? At work have you sought to hide

The Gospel of Luke

the fact that you were a follower of Jesus? I struggled with his in Jr. High and into my early HS years until the Spirit of God broke my heart.

B. THE ACCUSATION OF ASSOCIATION BROUGHT DISAVOWAL – v. 58

1. Peter apparently left the little fire in the center of the courtyard and went to the periphery, to a porch – perhaps he had even attempted to leave but couldn't out of a desire to avoid the gate-keeper that had already exposed him.
2. But that is not the end of the matter – *“A little later, another saw him and said, ‘You are one of them too!’”*
3. We aren't certain who this accuser is – it appears to be either the same servant-girl or another – cp. **Matthew 26:71;** **Mark 14:69.**
4. Again, Peter was accused of being one of the disciples of Jesus and Peter flatly disavowed Jesus – *“But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’”*
5. The other Gospels add the detail that Peter disavowed Jesus with an oath – cp. **Matthew 26:72;** **Hebrews 6:16.**
6. Peter appealed to Heaven to confirm what he was saying was true and heinous duplicity that sought to completely disavow Jesus altogether in order to get himself out of trouble.
7. “It took only a menial maid to fell the chief of the Twelve. Gone were all his high and heroic protestations to Jesus, gone all the spurious courage from his heart and from the hand that had snatched out the sword in Gethsemane. Here stands the arrant coward who is unable to confess his heavenly Lord and cringes in lying denial.” (The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961], 1087)¹.

¹ John MacArthur, [Luke 18–24](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 326.

The Gospel of Luke

C. THE ACCUSATION OF ALLEGIANCE BROUGHT DENUNCIATION – vv. 59-60a

1. We are told *“After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, ‘Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.’”*
2. This accusation was the most intense of them all – because the accuser had actually seen Peter in the Garden when Jesus was arrested – cp. ***John 18:26***.
3. As this man accuses Peter, others began to join him – ganging up on Peter with the accusation that “he was THAT guy!” – even using his accent as additional proof – cp. ***Matthew 26:73***.
4. In complete dismay, despair, and defensive denial, Peter denounces Jesus – *“But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are talking about.’”*
5. As if denial was not enough, Peter throws colorful language in to add a level of incongruity with those who were renown for following Jesus – cp. ***Mark 14:71***.
6. Having failed to “watch and pray,” having removed God’s grace and power from his options, and having prioritized himself above all else, Peter encountered a series of temptations and fell in a most infamous way.
7. When the power of God was being displayed so magnificently only a matter of a yards away, Peter displayed the impotence of men who sever themselves from relying upon God’s grace.

III. The Causes of Restoration to Christ – 22:60b-62

A. THE INFLUENCE OF GOD’S WORD – v. 60b, 61b

1. As devastating as this was, it was about to get worse – *“Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.”*

The Gospel of Luke

2. When the *“rooster crowed,”* Peter’s mind was jarred as he remembered Jesus’ words – *“And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, ‘Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.’”*
3. This phrase *“remembered the word of the Lord”* is central – Jesus had provided Him this prophetic word to provide Peter an orientation during his failure.
4. The Lord’s words suddenly become relevant, influential, dominant, practical, infallible, and powerful – cutting to the very heart of Peter.
5. The influence of God’s Word in providing us the needed direction is essential – cp. *Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16.*
6. When we experience things – even things that can defeat us, but we remember the Word of God, we find our faith is strengthened – cp. *John 2:22; Romans 10:17.*
7. If your faith is faltering, go back to the place where our faith is established – God’s Word and allow your faith to be restored and fortified – cp. *Acts 20:32.*

B. THE IMPACT OF GOD’S LOVE – v. 61a, 62

1. It was at this exact moment that Peter *“remembered the word of the Lord,”* that *“the Lord turned and looked at Peter”* –
2. The beaten and bruised face of Christ, defiled by the spit of his accusers, served as the backdrop of the loving eyes of Christ conveying not disappointment, but affection for Peter.
3. Jesus knew what Peter was going to do and what he had done and loved Peter.
4. Peter’s heart melted – *“And he went and wept bitterly.”*
5. His heart broke – unlike Judas who also knows sorrow for his denial and betrayal of Jesus yet does not repent – Peter does so for two reasons.

The Gospel of Luke

- a. The kindness and love of God - We are told that what causes true repentance is not the fear of the consequences of sin, nor even the level of guilt for the sin, but being struck with the depths of the kindness and love of God – cp. **Romans 2:4**.
 - b. The grace of God - Jesus had told Peter that his faith was going to falter but it would not fail because of the grace of God – cp. **Luke 22:31-32**.
6. To follow through on His kindness and grace, Jesus meets Peter after the resurrection and provides him with three opportunities to confess his love for Christ – cp. **John 21:15-17**.

So What?

1. **We constantly experience the results of living in a fallen world which can shake our faith and cause us to follow Jesus tentatively or cautiously.**
2. **There are innumerable ways to deny Christ in word, actions, priorities, and pursuits – in what ways are you likely to deny Him?**
3. **It is crucial that we maintain our focus on the worthiness of Christ through a constant exposure to Him through His Word – DO NOT NEGLECT HIM.**

**Faltering faith fails without
a focus on Christ.**