



JOHN: JESUS, THE DENIED

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Scripture Reference: John 13:36 – 38

Today we're gonna be reading from John 13:36 through 38. Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." And Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." And Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times." This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Lord Jesus, as we talk about a serious passage, what it means to try to follow God, do our best, to find where he's leading us to. Lord God, it's a, it's a difficult subject. And so we pray for clarity as we try to ascertain what exactly you have for us, Lord. I pray for open hearts and open minds. There's a lot of, there could be a lot of resistance in us when it comes to trying to unpack our story around following Jesus. And so Lord, I pray for our guards to go down. I do pray for a ceiling in this building, Lord God. The enemy does not want us to move onward. It does not want a new space for people to gather and hear the good news of Jesus. And so we do pray that you would seal this place with your Spirit and that the Spirit would be palpable in here as we unpack a difficult but fun and glorious message in his name. Amen.

All right. So we're in week nine of our series in John. It's a lot of weeks. We're still going. I'm still up here. I don't even leave. I just stay on the stage and wait for you guys to come back every week. I love it so much. Um, throughout John's gospel, we've heard the name Peter many times. We've talked about him constantly. And if you're not a Christian, you may have heard of the name, Peter, you probably heard some guy named Peter in the Bible. You probably heard story. If you do know anything about him, you might know that he was a fisherman. That was his job. He was a fisherman and he was friends with Jesus. And if you know that, I mean, you

know, quite a bit about Peter. I mean, that's, that's a good chunk. Now, if you've heard anything about him, it's for good reason too, because actually Peter does a lot.

He does a lot in the Bible. He's a fascinating character. So this, this message will, will be really a character study on Peter and exactly how, what can we learn from him? You know, no disciple spoke as often as Peter does in the gospels. None, not John. None of them. Peter speaks absolutely the most and by a long shot, no disciple, coincidentally, no disciple really misunderstood Jesus as much as, as much as Peter did either. And no one did, none were taught by Jesus as publicly as, as, or by, uh, none were taught as publicly by Jesus as Peter was, which is true. And coincidentally, no other disciple while being taught by Jesus responded by thinking less. I mean, this guy, this guy needs to put his foot in his mouth so many times. And yet Peter also has this beautiful side of himself. None of the disciples confessed their love as deeply as Jesus did or as Peter did for Jesus.

Peter of course misunderstood Jesus. But he also really got him at a really deep level at times, like really deep level. And he recognized earlier than anyone else that Jesus was the son of God. And he was the Messiah. Before any of the other disciples did. And yes, of course, like I said, uh, Peter sometimes is gonna put his foot in his mouth and he should have kept quiet. But other times he spoke, he speaks prophetically. I mean, he cuts with his words and he's a powerful character.

Do you know that the disciples are listed out in the gospels four times? And the list always varies of which order the list is, but do you know that Peter's name is always first? It's always first. Judas is always last. We talked about Judas, but those are the only two consistencies. Because Peter's an absolutely important character. And even the writers of the gospels understood that. And in many ways Peter's deep love for Jesus is something to be applauded. We should go, man, Peter, we haven't thought about Peter as this wonderful character of faith, mainly cuz some of his boneheaded mistakes of course. But it's also his love for Jesus that makes his actions so questionable. Cuz he's right there. I mean Peter's right there. So much of the gospels. I mean he almost gets it right like a hundred percent of the time. So he is never right, but he's so close, right? He he's right there and all of a sudden he says, Jesus, don't just watch my feet. Give me a bath. And Jesus is like, ah man. I bet Jesus was a little bit frustrated by Peter here and there. I bet that happens. Right.

Have you ever had a relationship in your life with someone that, you know, loves you really deeply -- like absolutely loves you deeply, but they still find bizarre ways to sort of complicate the relationship? You know what I'm talking about? You have this friend or this family member who absolutely loves you with all heart. Like they are, they love you. They're like this, but every now and then you're like, man, what are you doing? That's Peter that's Peter's story.

Perhaps the most famous thing Peter's known for is his denial of Jesus. Right before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And that's what we're going to unpack today, the story. But how could a man who loves Jesus so much, still not come through with him when he needs him most? Cause he really does leave him.

Now, what we're gonna discover today is that Peter's story is a case study for all of our stories. That despite our best intentions to honor God with our lives, we constantly fall short. That's the

message of Peter's story. Yes. Peter should put his foot in the mouth like sometimes. And so should we, right? I mean, we, we should put our foot in our mouth sometimes, right? Yes. Peter gets ahead of himself. I get ahead of myself all the time. Just Peter does it just like us. And yes, Peter has dark moments of sin and dark moments of loss. Just like all of us.

But Peter also has one heck of a redemption story. I mean one heck of one. And if we can learn from Peter's story, we might also find ourselves with redemption story in Jesus, just like this. So let's unpack it. Let's go to our first verse in verse 36 here it is on the screen.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.

Now what what's going on here. So Peter asked Jesus where he is going because as he's prompted to ask him based on what Jesus said in verse 33 earlier in the week, Jesus mentioned that he would only be with them a little while longer and that he would actually be leaving. Now of course, in Jesus fashion, he doesn't answer the question. That's how Jesus works. He doesn't actually say where he's going. He just tells Peter, you can't follow him. And you know, Peter being his boneheaded and as bold as he typically is. Doesn't like that answer. Why? Here's what I think. I think that Peter genuinely believes that he has the tools to follow Jesus wherever it might lead. I believe he actually thinks that. He's demonstrated -- think about it -- Peter's demonstrated extroversion in leadership and boldness all throughout the gospels. I mean, that's what he does.

I mean, there's a moment earlier in the gospel where Jesus speaks really hard truths in John chapter six and everybody leaves him. Like we're talking thongs and thongs of crowds. They all wander away. And then Jesus turns to Peter and says, are you gonna leave too? And Peter's like, oh no, no, no. Where are we gonna go? You're the Son of God. I'm not going anywhere. That's bold. That's what Peter did. He responds. We believe you, Jesus. We're not going anywhere.

Do you remember Peter's faith? When he sees Jesus walking on water. I said it, Jesus walked on water. He sees him in the water, on the lake and he looks out and he says, Jesus, call me out there that I might walk to you. And he is like, all right, come on, Peter. Peter gets out and what happens? He fell in. But before he fell in, he walked. Do you forget that? That Peter actually walked on the water? It didn't say he just came crashing through. He actually walked. I haven't done that. Have you done that? We always beat up Peter like he's just like this guy that can't figure it out. He walked on water. There's only been two human beings on planet earth in all of history that have ever walked on water -- Jesus Christ and Peter.

That's pretty good company. If you've only done something that Jesus has done, that's pretty good. That's Peter's story. Peter's a chief disciple. He's an amazing public speaker. He's demonstrated his faith and he's got, he's a clearly a close friend of Jesus. He's got, he's done a lot. He's a leader with all of the physical tools to be able to follow somebody, all of them. So it makes sense that he believes that he could follow Jesus. If Jesus says, oh, you can't come with me, but where is Jesus going though?

I mean, Jesus is not going to pick flowers. Okay. He's also not even getting into a, going to go into a brawl and he needs some guys with some muscle and some boldness he's not even doing

that. Jesus is going to the cross. Jesus is going to die an unjust death on behalf of humanity. But of course Peter being as bold and as boneheaded as he typically is, he wants clarification on the matter. Now he wants to see, oh, well let me get some more information.

Verse 37. Peter said to him, Lord, why can't I not follow you? Remember I've got all the physical tools. I will lay down my life for you. And Jesus answered, You'll lay your life down for me. Truly, truly I say to you, the rooster will not crow til you have denied me three times.

Now the irony of Peter is that he believes he would die for Jesus, which is a hilarious thing to think in retrospect, right? I'm sure he wanted that one back. He's like, oh, you were gonna die for me. Okay. Now I get it. He says, I'll lay my life down for you, Jesus. Well, what we know happens is that Jesus tells us, of course, this is where this is gonna end. That Peter actually gonna deny Jesus, not one, not two but three times before what? The rooster crows. Before the sun comes up. Peter goes from thinking, I'm gonna die for you, Jesus to -- Oh, we're not even gonna see the sun come up before you've rejected me three times. That's like quite a failure. I mean he missed the mark extraordinarily. I mean to think he's not even in the same zip code, right? The exact opposite thing happens.

So how? How does this go down? How, how does he fix this? How does this happen? This is unbelievable stretch that he goes through.

Well, we know that he's gonna be essentially denying him. And you know, when I think about this, I think when a person becomes a Christian -- like us in here, those are you that are a Christian. When a person becomes a Christian, the hope and the desire is that we would not only sort of, you know, receive redemption for our sins, so to speak, but that we would also love and worship Jesus. And so we hope that we would love him so deeply that we could sort of overcome the things in our lives, the brokenness, the sin in our hearts, and get past it and love them more deeply. Right? That's what I'm hoping would happen.

Have you ever had a lingering something in your life, like a lingering sin in your life, something that you've wanted to get rid of in your life, some sin, some thing that you've been doing and you've been trying to get rid of it and you're working really hard, but you just can't. Maybe you're thinking of something you used to do or some action you used to think that you were trying to get rid of it. It took you years to be able to solve that problem. That's where Peter's story and our story intersects. Our stories meet together there because despite our best intentions, Peter has good intentions. We fall short because of a sinful heart.

We do this and so does Peter. Peter has the best of intentions to follow Jesus. And yet he still cannot accomplish his goal of following Jesus to where he is gonna go. He can't do it. And Peter has a ton of confidence. I mean, where do you get the confidence to fail so miserably? I have no idea where you get the confidence to fail so miserably. I mean, this is crazy. Where can it come from? Well, I think it actually comes from one of two places. And sadly for us, I think we draw from the same two places.

Okay. The first place the overconfidence to follow God came from for Peter was an overestimation of his abilities. And we draw from the same place -- an overestimation of our abilities. See Peter at face value thought he could follow Jesus faithfully. Right? He thought he

could sort of follow God wherever he would take him. Right. And he underestimated his sinful and broken nature in his own heart. He actually didn't see it. He failed.

You know, I was a pastor in San Francisco. I don't know if you know that, if you're new, I was a pastor in San Francisco. And if you know anything about San Francisco, you know it's kind of a weird place. Right? You've seen the news stories. All that's true. It's got some beauty, but it's, it's true. It's crazy. Well, I put planted a church there. Okay. Which in retrospect, kind of crazy, right? That's what God does. He calls us to crazy stuff. That's what he does.

I planted a church there. And one of the things I noticed when pastoring in San Francisco is that the cultural context is incredibly strong. The city itself has a really profound gravitational pull towards it. Like it yanks you to it. So churches or church plants or people, they come in with a specific sort of theological perspective. Let's call it. And within a few years, there's a domino effect. There's a domino effect of walking back theology and values that soon ends, not kidding you, in full blown heresy, or even walking away from Christianity. The gravitational pool in that city is so strong that people come in believing one thing and they end up looking a lot like San Francisco. That's what happens. It's true there.

There was one large church in San Francisco it was planted by a church called Redeemer Presbyterian in New York City. For those of you that extra Christian, you know that Tim Keller, uh, the Yoda sort of, of Christianity, he, he, that was his church. So this church is planted out of a, sort of, one of the strongholds of Christianity in the US in the west. And that church goes to San -- and it, and it just absolutely does well, it explodes. It does amazing work. Like people are coming to know Jesus -- it's Presbyterian -- and so it's more formal, but people love the liturgy, all this great stuff.

Well, again, you're in San Francisco long enough and things go south. This church took all of 10 years to begin walking back it's theological positions. From caving on what they know the Bible has taught them to essentially what has become a full blown non-Christian church, a heresy church. That's what's happened over a decade.

And it goes from the most influential church in the city. It was about a thousand people, which in San Francisco is by and far the largest at the time it was. And that's, that's saying something for a large city. And it left a crater in the spiritual scene. We're talking, people bled out in that church. There were people that are walking away from their faith. There were people that were questioning their Christianity. There were people that left the church all together. And the sort of vacuum of Christianity in San Francisco was felt, and it was hard for the church to ever regain, a foothold there for a very long time.

Now it's not just theology that sort of causes us to fall away. Sometimes it's like the financial, the power or the sexual dynamics of a place or people. Sometimes it's those sort of things, right. It's not always, just like theology. Okay.

But then I started thinking like, if this could happen in San Francisco, like where else could it happen? Cause like, has it happened other places? Is the pattern true for other places? And I started thinking, and I was like, yes, there is a pattern for it. I can't remember. Like, has Seattle had any large churches succumb to the gravitational pull of sin, leaving a spiritual vacuum in the city? A couple, a couple. And, and the church is still recovering from it. It's still recovering from

it. People are broken. People have walked away from Jesus. It happens all over the place. So it's not just San Francisco, it's Seattle, but it's not just cities. It's true for churches. And it's not just churches. It's people, people like us.

Our sinful nature is like the gravity on our souls, keeping us anchored to the planet of sin and folly. And many of us have learned -- and others, we will learn -- that our well-intentioned abilities only get us so far.

Now the second reason for our, and for Peter's overconfidence of following God comes from -- so we have the overestimation of our abilities and the next one, an underestimation of what it means to actually follow God.

So Peter or Jesus tells Peter, rather, that he will essentially fail in following him. Which is hard to swallow. I get that. So Peter is his closest friend and he's with Jesus and he doesn't understand in that moment, the weight of what it meant to follow Jesus. Do you understand the weight of what it means to follow Jesus? Do you get it? Do you understand that if you just read your Bible and go and go to a church, gathering that everything will be great. Do you understand that? Is that, is that your gospel? I think we all have a lot of work to do in this area. I think that if Peter underestimated what it took to follow God that we might as well.

And if you're curious, let's just look at how his denial goes down, cause it's actually a really tragic story how it happens. Let's look at this, I'll read it for you. Now, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a servant girl came up to him and said, you also were with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied it before them all saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, This is the man. This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again, he denied it with an oath this time. I do not know the man. After a little while the bystanders came up to him and said, or said to Peter, certainly you too are one of them for your accent betrays you. Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man. And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and he wept bitterly.

A sad, heartbreaking betrayal and denial of a friend. You know what I think is weird about this story though? I think it's weird about this story is that Peter's overconfidence and his public declaration of Jesus was really his strength. If you look at Peter's story throughout the gospels, he is like I said, boneheaded, because he won't stop talking. He, he talks too much. He's overzealous. He, he gets in people's faces him being overconfident and publicly declaring that Jesus is his Lord. Those are his strengths. If you recall, if you recall, we haven't gone through it yet. But when Jesus comes to get captive and Judas leads the guards to Jesus to get him and they're pulling Jesus out. Peter's not going out like that. Peter reaches for his sword and is, I'm about that life. Like, you're not taking my Lord. And he, he goes for the head. He gets an ear, but he goes for like, he's not, he is not afraid. This guy is, he is not a soft mushy individual. Okay. Quite the opposite. Too much the opposite.

That's Peter's story. Of course, Jesus heals the guy's ear. He's like, I'm sorry about that, sir. Here's your ear back. That was pretty wild. No one talks about that miracle that often. It's a crazy story. He's a tough guy. He's also a natural extrovert, and clearly a naturally brave man.

Yet in the sight -- and this is what's wild about this -- in the sight of an accusation by a little girl - by a little girl and a sparse crowd -- he is shocked and strained into denying his Lord. So 50 guards show up -- I'm about that life. I'm pulling a sword. You're not taking Jesus. A little girl in a crowd -- and he denies him, not once, not twice, but three times. Like that's -- once shame on you, right. Twice, shame on me. What about three times? Three times. He failed in his strength.

Question for you. What is your greatest strength? What is your greatest strength? Are you a great speaker? Are you a great speaker, like Patrick up here? Eloquent speaker. Are you a great teacher? A preacher? Are you a wonderful prayer? Do you just pray, and everyone feels the Holy Spirit when you pray? Are you incredibly friendly or hospitable? Are you an evangelist? Do people come to know Jesus around you? Are you a musician? Do you sing amazingly? Do you play an instrument beautifully? Are you great with kids? What are you? What is your strength? Think about it for a second. Because God can use all of our strengths, but if we suppose we can follow God because of our strengths, then we'd be sadly mistaken. Such as the tragic stories of spiritual vacuums in large cities. It's not the only variable. Our greatest human strengths, no matter how strong they are or what they are, are never adequate for following Christ in and of themselves. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Peter, in his story, he's got a lot of strength. He's got a lot of bravado. He's got a lot of oomph. He's got it all. Peter in that moment learned how limited of a man he really is. I just don't have it in some places.

Now Peter's story isn't just a cautionary tale for us to avoid, and I feel like if we were to end there and just say, well, just don't do what Peter did. That would not do the story justice, and I don't think it would even tell you what's actually going on here. We of course should try though to learn from his failings. I'm not saying go out and deny Jesus three times for the rooster codes. That's not what I'm getting at. Okay. Or before the iPhone goes off. Whatever, you don't have roosters in your yard. It's not Portland. I don't get points for a Portland dig? I mean...

If you've been along, if you've been alive for a while, we all sort of fail, don't we? If you've been alive for a while and a Christian long enough, you sort of know that failure is kind of how it goes. If you read the Bible, you kind of know that humans sort of just repeat a cycle of failure over and over again. Question -- who here as they've gotten older, maybe you're older in the room or maybe you're not, you're just wise -- as you've gotten older, you realize the older you get, the more you realize you don't know.

By show of hands who, if you've gotten older, you know, you know what I'm learning that I actually know less now. Right? Because the more, you know, the more you don't know, right? All the 15 year olds are like, I got it figured out, what are you talking about? Like you just figure out over time, oh man, age and experience only teach me that I know less, and I'm capable of less. I just learned that fact, right? You discover your limits.

Peter's redemption story is a lot like this. You know, one of the most profound versus in, for me in this text, when I think about it is this part where it says that Peter went away and wept bitterly. He understood what happened. He remembered what Jesus told him. That's not, that's not the only thing he did. He remembered all the times Jesus loved him and was there for him

and was close with him and cared for him and protected him. And then he remembered that he betrayed him three times in that moment. And he goes, and he weeps. That's hard.

Jesus was a good friend and a Savior. I bet Peter felt like a fraud. When you really think about Peter's story to weep, bitterly, the author puts it in there -- all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable -- we understand that -- for teaching correction, reproof, training and righteousness. We know that. That word is in there for a reason, that he wept bitterly. I mean, he probably sobbed, He loved Jesus so much. I bet he felt like a phony. And I bet when he laid his head on that pillow, that night, so to speak and he, and all of the bravado and the confidence goes away and the guard, the fences go down and all the real emotions flood. And he is like, man, I'm, I'm a phony, I'm a fraud. I can't believe this. Am I good enough for this? Jesus said, am I good enough for this? Do I actually have the faith? Am I strong as I'm supposed to be? Do you ask yourself those questions?

Do you have imposter syndrome from time to time? Where you feel like, you know, this life of Christianity is the standard, and I feel like every time I bump up against it, I fail. Like I'm supposed to, I'm supposed to be in this sort of relationship. I'm not in this sort of relationship. I'm supposed to be in a church community, building myself up. And I, and for some reason I'm not in that. Or I'm supposed to be honoring people at work and honoring my boss and I just, I can't stop it. I can't stop hating the guy. We're in all these we're in this season where we just are bumping up against our limits over and over again. And we feel like frauds and phonies. And do you ask yourself the questions? Am I good enough for this? Can I even follow Jesus? Do I actually have a faith? Am I even a Christian? Am I supposed to be stronger than this?

Do you feel like a fraud sometimes because you keep doing, saying, doing that thing or betraying Jesus fully? If you do, and I sense that many of us have felt that way over time. Here's two things I'd say to you. Okay. Actually, first thing, actually, it's the discovery that we are fraudulent, that actually leads to a breakthrough of self-awareness. Because guess what? Being a Christian means learning that you actually don't have the power to follow Jesus alone. It's sort of the point of Christianity. When we uncover our limits and our weaknesses, as Peter learned, and we learn that no matter how bold or gifted, we are capable of harming God and harming others and harming ourselves. That's all possible. But you grow in self-awareness because you've found limit.

Second thing, understanding you are weak -- and this may sound just absolutely crazy if you're here and not a Christian -- understanding you are weak is actually the key to unlocking a deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus. Understanding that you are deeply broken and need help is the key to a deeply meaningful relationship with God.

See, when we uncover our limits and our weaknesses, we allow Christ to enter in them. When you don't know you have weaknesses or you and you try to cover 'em up. Why let God in? Why? There's no reason, I figured it out? You know, we, we mostly pray for things we want or things we lack. That's the culture of America. We very rarely are praying for more of things that we already got figured out.

If you make half a million dollars in the room you know what, Lord Jesus, I pray for 650 next year. Maybe, but it's more rare. When you have no money, you pray for food on the table,

don't you. We pray for our need. When we uncover our limits and our weaknesses, we actually allow Christ to enter in them, and then we can actually be used to do wonderful things on his behalf.

Now I'm gonna give you a little proof here. This is the apostle Paul in second Corinthians, chapter 12. Okay. Paul wrote second Corinthians, listen to this, But he -- that's God, or just Jesus -- said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Okay? In weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that by the power of Christ or so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then I am content with my weaknesses. Content, with my weaknesses. Content with my weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I'm weak, then I'm strong.

See the apostle Paul knows something and he knows something that we're learning, and he knows something that Peter's gotta learn. Jesus overcomes our weakness so that in our weaknesses, we might become strong.

See the author of this verse, Paul, he was criticized by his contemporaries. That's what's actually happening here in second Corinthians. So there's a group of people that have sort of read Paul's letters around the region and then have met him in real life and said, you know what? This guy, Paul, he's real bold in his letters. Have you read Romans? Oh, so fire, right? I mean, goodness gracious. Right? I read that thing and I meet this guy in real life and he's five foot one. He's got a crooked nose. He's stumbling his speech. He's weak. He's all talk. Or he's all writing. This guy's nothing. He probably can't even preach. Not like I can preach. That's what Paul's thinking.

And so Paul gets wind of it, and he decides I'm gonna respond. I'm gonna respond. I'm gonna do a little bragging of my own, says, Paul. He says, you know what? You're right. But I got some stuff up my sleeve. Like this thorn in my flesh. It makes me physically weak, mentally weak, spiritually weak. That's it? What else? Oh, I got some other stuff. I'm pretty incapable. I'm actually not that good at a lot of stuff. I'm actually not that good at many things. And yeah, maybe my nose is a little crooked, I am a little short and maybe I'm a little feeble. And that's it. But you know what those weaknesses do? They bring me to the end of myself. And that's what you need to understand. When I come to the end of myself, that's when Jesus does his best work in my life. It's when I stop pretending that I got it all figured out that I could actually get some work done. That's what God's trying to do. You know, anyone who is actually faithful in the Bible is someone who God uses their weaknesses for? That's the story. Every story you go through every major character in the Bible. Talk about Moses. Guy can't even talk. He saves Israel out of Egypt. He parts the red sea. That's the story of the Bible.

All of us. When we give ourselves to Christ, he actually now has room to operate in our lives. Yeah, he does. As it turns out, finding out that you're weak is actually a strength. Totally upside down. Because that's where God will start doing the heavy lifting.

So instead of hiding your weakness, because you got this thing you're dealing with and you just gotta hide it. Instead of trying to overcorrect for your weakness and just pretending in your mind that you haven't, that you've got it all figured out, and you're just, and you've got all this sort of bravado and machismo like Peter. Or instead of wallowing in your weakness, because

woe is me. I'll never figure it out. I can't do this. I am weak. I can't move outta bed. Or instead of becoming shameless in our weakness, and just being weak for the sake of weak in my sin. Cuz who cares, I've already done it. Why not just keep going? Instead of doing all those things, we actually let Christ enter in and say, yeah, I'm weak, but what of it? Jesus is strong. And guess what? It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And man, if he's strong, that's all I need. That's all I need. That's the Christian faith.

Look at how Peter -- to end our time -- look how Peter leans into his weakness after denying Jesus. Now again, after Jesus deny -- after Peter denies Jesus, Jesus is then captured, crucified and killed. Okay? But then Jesus rises. That's why we celebrate Easter. And Peter is told by Jesus that, I love you. This is a part of a sermon that Peter wrote and that is preaching in Acts chapter four after all of that stuff happens, check this out. Acts chapter four, verse 10.

Peter says, as he's preaching, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead -- by him this man (Peter talking about himself) is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation -- listen to this -- There is salvation -- if you're here and you're not a Christian, you should listen up -- And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

So that means Peter looked at the landscape and saw all of the other gods in the region. He saw the gods of this, the gods of that, the gods of that today. We see the gods of Hinduism and the gods of Mormonism, we see the gods of all the other regions and new age gods, we see the gods of Islam, and we say, no other name must someone be saved than this one, Jesus Christ. He was bold in his faith.

Now, verse 13, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men -- they were weak. They were, no one looked at them like they were anything -- The people were astonished. And they had recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Pete.r had been with Jesus And you know, the great thing about Peter after discovering that he was weak is that he didn't stop. He didn't quit. He pressed into Christ and Christ graciously welcomes them home and empowers them to do the work. Hey, if you're here and you feel weak and you're like, man, this COVID thing has got me and this stuff at work and the weather is bothering me, and my I'm on the rocks with my wife or my, my spouse or my kids or my grandkids or whatever it is. If you feel weak, don't quit. Don't quit. Don't stop. Don't stop pressing in to Jesus. Behind our greatest weakness is often our greatest redemption because when we can give it up, Jesus can give in. And he finally takes over and we finally get to see what he's made of.

If you stop now, you're gonna miss out. Don't you understand? That's the walk. If you've read the book, you know nobody figures it out and lives happily ever after. It's only until they release themselves and Christ comes in that they finally can let it go and let it spin.

What often feels like a catastrophic failure of weakness in our lives can actually be a foundation of a new story if we allow God into our grief, into our shame, into our conviction, into our weakness.

Your story is just about to become a weapon in the hands of the Redeemer. And you're gonna give up now? That would be foolish. You should be like Peter. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, you say that when we are weak, you are strong. Well, Lord Jesus, you have a bunch of weak people here and we're open and willing to admit that we just do not have the answers. So Lord God, we pray for your omnipotence, your power, your glory, by your Spirit -- would you just illuminate our hearts for a moment as we reflect back at what you've done for us on the cross?

For my friends here that don't know you, that are far from you, that just feel like, eh, I just don't know if I'm ready for this. Lord Jesus, I pray you draw them closer against their will, Lord. That you actually know what's good for them. And you know that they'll figure out at one point, they're gonna hit their head on a pole. And someone's gonna need to be there for them. And I pray that's you, Lord. I pray you're the one that's there for them. I pray you put people in their lives, maybe someone who brought them here today, that could be the person that they call.

Lord Jesus, we love you. We praise you. You are the good God who saved us all. In his name, amen.