

Sunday, March 23, 2025 am

Causes of Peter's Denial Mark 14:66-72

We are living in a time of a tragic paradox. We have an up-and-coming generation that is pleading for tolerance, understanding of others, yet when someone challenges their values they become offended and perhaps even hostile. This is especially true by many when it come to the faith of committed Christians who desire to stand firm on God's word and authority.

The Bible is clear that we are called to stand up for Jesus, even in challenging times. We find that both by example and precept in scripture (Matthew 10:32-33, 12:30, Luke 9:26). When we are among our friends and brethren it can be somewhat easier to do this. But what about when you are facing hostility and those who despise your faith? Do we find ourselves at times failing to stand up for Him?

In the New Testament, we find the example of Peter, as Jesus was being tried. He denied Jesus 3 times. He failed to stand up for Jesus. This morning, I would like to recount this event and consider some reasons behind Peter's denial of Jesus.

I. The account

- a. Recorded in all 4 gospels. Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72 (our text), Luke 22:55-62 & John 18:15-18, 25-27. Putting the gospel together, we get a complete picture of what happened.
- b. It begins with Mark 14:26-31. On the night of His betrayal Jesus warned His apostles that they would all stumble that night. They all denied it. But Peter spoke up saying, *Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.*" (vs. 29). Luke records that he is willing to go to prison and even die for Him (Luke 22:33). But Jesus tells him that before the rooster crows twice, he would deny Him 3 times.
- c. After Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested in the garden. He is taken to the location of the High Priests (Annas and Caiaphas), where they would search for witnesses until they found 2.
- d. Meanwhile Peter (and John) was following Jesus at a distance. They come to the courtyard of the High Priest and John (the other disciple) brought Peter into the camp (John 18:15-17). The servant girl keeping the door asks if Peter was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter denied Him the first time. Mark 14:68 then records that the rooster crowed the first time.
- e. Shortly thereafter he is identified by another as being among Jesus' disciples. He denies it again, more strongly (Matthew says "with an oath" – Matt. 26:71-72).
- f. About an hour later (Luke 22:59), another more confidently identifies him as of Jesus "because he is a Galilean." This time, Peter swears and curses saying, "I do not know the Man!". Immediately, the rooster crowed the 2nd time (Mark 14:72). Luke records that when this happened, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Peter then remembered the warning of Jesus and went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62).
- g. This is a sad series of events that shook Peter's faith, especially in himself. And while I know Satan had a part in his denials (Luke 21:31-32), his failures were his. I do believe that John 21 records Jesus addressing his failures by restoring him (21:15-19). We know that Peter would become a bold leader, even among the apostles and faithfully defend his Lord throughout the rest of his life.
- h. But what can we learn from this event to keep us from denying Jesus? That will be my focus.

II. Why did Peter deny Jesus?

- a. **He was overconfident** – Mark 14:27-29. Luke even records he was willing to go to prison or die for Him. I find no reason to question his sincerity. He believed it.

- i. In the garden, as Jesus was being arrested, he drew a sword to defend his Lord (Luke 22:50-51, John 18:10) and cut off the ear of Malchus. Jesus told him to put away his sword and healed the ear. Then they all fled. Sometimes **pride** and overconfidence can keep one from staying alert and making adequate preparations.
 - ii. Was Peter prideful? It is likely there was some pride. Look at the accounts. He declared even if all others denied Him, he never would. On other occasions, Peter (lovingly) rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:31-33). Proverbs 16:18 says, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall*
 - iii. Pride became the catalyst that would lead to the other elements we are going to address.
 - iv. I think of the 5 foolish virgins in Matthew 25:3. They were unprepared.
- a. **He did not pay attention to the warnings.**
- a. Jesus told Peter what was going to happen. But did his confidence cause him to dismiss the warnings? Bear in mind he had been with Jesus now for 3+ years and knew that Jesus NEVER failed in His words.
 - b. Only Mark's account tells us the rooster crowed twice. After his first denial, the rooster crowed the first time. DID Peter hear this and think at that moment? It is not stated. But consider that Mark was close to Peter and likely the eyewitness source of his gospel. Peter mentions him by name in 1 Peter 5:13 calling him his son (likely spiritual in the same manner as Timothy was to Paul).
 - c. Had he heeded the warnings would matters have been different?
- b. **He followed Jesus from a distance**
- a. Luke 22:54 records this. He was concerned about Jesus, but there was distance between him and Jesus.
 - b. That distance indicates he was not close to his Master where protection could be found. BUT it also leads to denial. WHY was he following at a distance? There was something in his mind that kept him from openly defending Jesus again at that time.
- c. **He warmed himself in the camp of the enemy**
- a. John 18:15-18 records that after he was permitted into the camp, he was cold and warmed himself by a fire. Remember that this is in the camp of the enemy. Everyone there was part of the enemy.
 - b. Being in "enemy territory" opened him up to greater risks of being challenged and attacked. He was outnumbered. In fact, based on the text, he was ALONE! When in Satan's territory we are far more likely to be exploited by him.
- d. **He failed to courageously defend his Lord**
- a. Everything prior to this LED to his denials. Now we find him denying Jesus.
 - b. This is where his courage failed. He was tested and did not pass on this occasion. 3 times, likely with warning signs, he denied Jesus.
 - c. Each time, his denials were stronger and more offensive. That is the nature of a lack of courage. When challenged, we will make excuses.
- e. **He forgot the warnings of Jesus.**
- a. Similar to a previous point, but here I want to observe that Jesus had given plain instructions to them over and over. What Jesus taught them consisted of warnings AND how to overcome and avoid falling into temptations.

- b. Peter, at this moment, was not thinking about everything Jesus had taught them. Matthew 26:75 after the rooster crowed he remembered the warning. Also consider Matthew 26:41 in the garden – watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation.
- f. The denial of Peter, while the work of Satan, happened with a series of events. It began with his pride and like a chain of dominos, everything else fell into place.

III. **Are we in danger of denying our Lord?**

a. ***Can we be overconfident?***

- i. Pride is a dangerous attitude that often stands in the way of doing the right thing. But it also can stand in the way of being taking precautions. When we think everything is right and safe we sometimes do not think about the dangers. Pride can put us in an environment where we will be more vulnerable.
- ii. Proverbs 16:18, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*
- iii. 1 Corinthians 10:12, *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*
- iv. James 4:6, *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* Vs. 10 calls for us to humble ourselves in His sight. That is the answer to pride.
- v. James 1:22-24, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

b. ***Am I alert to warnings around?***

- i. Spiritually, we live in a dangerous world (physically also). When we are overconfident, we let down our guard and fail to see the warning signs. Satan is a master of deceit. He wants us to think everything is ok.
- ii. 1 Peter 5:8 calls for us to be sober and vigilant.
- iii. 1 Corinthians 16:13, *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*

c. ***How close am I to Jesus?***

- i. We have been studying what it means to be a disciple. Luke 9:27 reminds us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. To follow Jesus means He directs everything about us. Galatians 2:20. Our goal ought to be to draw as close to Him as we can.
- ii. We cannot "sort of" follow Jesus and be pleasing to Him. And when we are doing things that draw us away from Him, it becomes easier to deny Him AND more difficult to NOT deny Him.
- iii. James 4:8, *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* NOTE: The opposite is also true.
- iv. Hebrews 2:1 warns us to give the more earnest heed to what is said, lest we drift away.

d. ***Who am I associating with?***

- i. In progression, because of pride, we let down guard and we begin to not pay attention to the danger signs. As we drift farther from Jesus, we drift closer to those of the world. In time, if we are not careful, we begin associating with the ungodly. They WILL draw us away and possibly into the world.
- ii. 2 Corinthians 6:14 warns us to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.
- iii. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns that evil company corrupts good habits.
- iv. Proverbs 6:27 – *Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?* It is a text dealing with immorality.

- v. When we associate with the worldly, we are more likely to be drawn away from our Lord and deny Him.
- e. ***Am I willing to stand up for Him –***
 - i. This is the step where we do deny Him. Everything up to this point has been leading in this direction. Now we are there. Peter had made decisions and now he denies his Lord and weeps bitterly.
 - ii. As Christians, we are called to courageously stand up for truth.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 16:13 – *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*
 - iv. 2 Timothy 1:7 – *God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*
- f. ***How much time do I spend with His word?***
 - i. As a final point, we take steps to ensure that we do not become part of the cycle that leads to denial. That means we spend time with Him in His word and prayer and with His people.
 - ii. Hebrews 2:1-3 again reminds us that we need to “give heed to what we have heard”.
 - iii. Acts 20:31-32 where Paul admonished the elders at Ephesus, *Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*
 - iv. There is a saying in medicine, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. The answer to NOT denying our Lord lies in what we do to prepare. With every step we have addressed in this lesson, there are steps we can take to ensure we stand fast. Let us make that our goal.

Remember Matthew 10:32-33. Thankfully, we know that Peter repented, and his later state shows it. And in that we can learn that no matter what our past has been, we too can repent and return to the Lord (1 John 1:9, Acts 8:22). BUT an even better solution than that is to have never been put into the situation in the first place. What about you? Are you in danger of denying your Lord? Think about it!