

I've entitled the message Disowned and Mocked

Luke 22: 54-65

54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. 55 And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. 56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." 57 But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. 58 A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. 59 About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." 60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly. 63 The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. 64 They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" 65 And they said many other insulting things to him.

This passage today deals with a famous failure of Peter, the future leader of the early church. Peter was part of the inner circle along with James and John. He was named "the rock" by Jesus and allowed to behold the transfiguration of Christ. He was the boldest of the 12 who was always speaking for the group, and often boldly. He was impulsive and had bravado. He became a critical part of the early church and was mightily used by the Holy Spirit in the years after Jesus's ascension. After Jesus went back to the right hand of the Father, Peter would preach and 3000 would be added to the church in a day.

Today, we are going to examine Peter's low point, the valley of his life. This is truly the moment of Peter's greatest weakness and greatest failure. But we will see that this is also a demonstration of Christ's strength.

After they arrested Jesus, they led him away from the Mount of Olives to the house of the high priest.

Jesus was taken to 3 locations for questioning.

1st was the house of Annas (the former high priest and father-in-law of Caiphas, the current high priest)

2nd was the trial before Caiphas and the Sanhedrin

These first 2 were likely in the same compound separated by a courtyard, as this was often the living quarters of well-to-do individuals such as high priests.

3rd was in the daylight which was the only time a legitimate trial could take place under Jewish law.

After Jesus is taken away, everyone scatters, but Peter hangs back and follows. Luke records that Peter followed at a distance. He was concerned about Jesus and wanted to know what would become of Him, but he was going to follow at a safe distance so as not to look like he was a friend or associate of the Lord. Following Jesus from afar is not safe. No matter what circumstance we are in, we need to be close to Jesus.

We have to be careful not to look down on Peter because we all deny Christ, reject Christ, disown Christ at some point. How many times do we fail to speak out when our Lord's name is taken in vain or fail to proclaim His truth and His Word where others are belittling it?

This is a lesson in overconfidence. In I Corinthians 10:12, the apostle Paul states:

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

We are most at risk when we think we are not.

Luke's account of the denials is shrunk down into one paragraph.

However, the 3 denials happened over the span of 2-3 hours according to the accounts in Matthew 26, Mark 14 and John 18.

Peter's denials most likely occurred in the courtyard between Annas's and Caiphas' house between the 1st and 2nd trials.

First...we need to understand the logistics involved in this scene.

Peter would have needed someone to let him into the courtyard where the trials were taking place. As I said earlier, the houses of Annas and Caiphas were in the same compound protected by a wall with a guarded gate. John knew the high priest, and likely used that connection to get Peter into the courtyard. John would have had to convince a servant girl to let him in.

Thereafter, Luke states that Peter sat down with those around the fire. Peter was hoping to blend in. As we noted before, although he didn't flee with the other disciples, he clearly didn't want to be too closely associated with Jesus. So...we now have Peter by the fire, seemingly in obscurity.

To understand Peter's denial, we need to look back to the Lord's supper.

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus told Peter that Satan had asked to sift him as wheat. But he promised Him that he would not fail.

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Notice here that Jesus doesn't call him Peter or "the rock" here. He calls him by his former name, Simon. Truly, Peter is acting like his former self, the fisherman who knew nothing about the Son of Man.

In Luke 22:32-33 we see Peter's over confidence. After Jesus's words about Satan's sifting of him, Luke writes:

But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

Peter is essentially saying, "I'll handle Satan's sifting, I'm ready to go to prison and ready to die for you."

In Mark 14:31 it says that Peter insisted emphatically. In essence, he is saying, everyone may fail, but not me. He is telling Jesus that he knows himself better than Jesus does. That's bold and dangerous.

Peter was a man of strong words, and we could say as the Lord does in Mark 14:38 that his spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak.

After the Last Supper, they sing a hymn and go to the Mount of Olives where they would spend the evening. Jesus was in anguish...he told the disciples to pray and He withdrew and prayed to the Father. Luke 22, starting in verse 42 says:

⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Matt 26:40 tells us that disciples slept when they should have been praying.

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.

The Lord is in utter anguish and sweating drops of blood and the disciples are tired and catching some ZZZZZs.

But the behavior of the disciples wasn't a surprise to God as Zechariah 13:7 prophesies that the disciples would all fall away:

"Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones."

After Jesus is apprehended, we see Peter pulls out his sword to attempt to stop the guards from capturing Jesus. This was His nature, to react impulsively. He was showing Christ that he would die for Him. This is the physical manifestation of his overconfidence and bravado he displayed at the Last Supper. Perhaps he was showing Christ that he wasn't a betrayer like Judas.

Now back to the High Priest's courtyard...

The first denial of Peter was to a servant girl. Perhaps the same girl who would have let him in through the gate. She would have desired to please the high priest by exposing Peter. He denied that he even knew Jesus saying, "Woman, I don't know him"

Perhaps Peter was ready for the big show in the crowd, but not ready for the servant girl who would confront him in the courtyard.

After his first denial, he must have slipped into a corner and laid low.

The 2nd denial was even more forceful, and Matthew 26:72 says that he denied it with an oath. He denied being a follower of Jesus exclaiming to a man, "Man, I am not!"

Finally, the 3rd denial came from a man who was connected to a man Peter had met before. He denied being from Galilee screaming, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about!"

John 18:26 tells us that this accuser was a relative of Malchus, the man who lost his ear at the hand of Peter earlier. According to Matthew 26:74, Peter called down curses on himself after this accusation.

The same mouth that confesses Christ in Matthew 16:16 as the Messiah, the "Son of the living God" and claims to be willing to go to his death in Matthew 26:33-35 calls down curses on himself in denial of Jesus.

Then the 2nd rooster crows.

At the crowing of the rooster, Jesus looked past the crowd at Peter. He made eye contact with Peter. Peter would have seen the beaten, bruised and bloodied face of Jesus and remembered Jesus's words of warning to him. He remembered them too late...after His sin.

Peter was immediately convicted of his sin. Not just of his denial of Jesus but of his pride to think that he could never deny Jesus.

As John MacArthur puts it:

"Peter boasted too much, prayed too little, acted too fast and followed too far."

Then we see the climax of this entire event:

Luke says Peter wept bitterly.

If Peter would have gone away without tears of repentance, he would have ended like Judas. Peter was sincere when he promised to be loyal to Him, but he did not know his own weakness. He had not come to the place where he saw no good in his own flesh. Peter wept. These were genuine tears of repentance.

I John 1:9 states

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

What is the difference between Judas and Peter?

It’s rather simple: Peter repented and Judas did not.

Looking ahead we see in John 21 Jesus’s restoration of Peter and the incredible grace of the Lord Jesus and His triumph over Peter’s failure:

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” 16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” 17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

It’s interesting to note that Peter and the other disciples go back to fishing. We can’t say what was in Peter’s heart, whether he was going back to a former way of life or just being practical. They may have needed to provide for themselves, and several of them knew how to fish. At best, it seems that they were uncertain as to what would come next.

They caught nothing until Jesus showed up and told them where to cast.

After breakfast, Jesus restores Peter. A few points in this exchange to consider:

- 1) Jesus uses Peter’s former name Simon. This may have been a reminder of his frailty
- 2) Jesus has this conversation in the presence of the other disciples
- 3) Jesus asks Peter if He loves Him 3 times. Thus, mirroring the 3-fold denial from Peter.
- 4) Jesus uses agape (Godly love) in the first 2 questions and Peter replies with Phileo (brotherly love) in his replies. This may be Peter’s realization that He has limitations and it is a humbleness he learned in the courtyard during his denials.
- 5) Jesus uses the word Phileo in His last question to Peter possibly to show the Lord’s agreement with Peter and to press home the meaning even further.
- 6) Jesus tell Peter to tend his sheep after the first 2 questions, but to feed the sheep after the third. Peter would show his love as a shepherd of the early church of Jesus Christ. And Peter would ultimately be martyred for his faith in Jesus.

Moving on to the trial of Jesus we read of the mistreatment Jesus was receiving at the hands of the guards.

As I mentioned earlier, the chief priests and the elders took Jesus first to the home of Annas. It was illegal to hold Jesus without a charge, and thus they held him until they could formulate a meeting with the Sanhedrin.

They may have been afraid that if they didn't arrest him and hold him that evening, He would have left. Perhaps Judas implored them to apprehend him quickly.

But we know that Jesus was not going anywhere. He was in Jerusalem to die at the exact time God had intended.

It's important to note what a travesty of justice his apprehension and trial was.

Jesus was arrested and was to be tried for breaking the Mosaic law.

But, the religious leaders broke the law by 1) trying him at night and 2) by rendering a decision on the same day he was tried.

In addition, the high priest tore his garments which was also prohibited by the Law.

Furthermore, the soldiers were holding him until the verdict could be rendered. They mistreated him.

They were playing a horrible game with him called "hot hand."

The soldiers would have held their fists up in front of the blindfolded man. All of the soldiers but one would strike him in the face. The blindfold would have been removed and he would have been asked which soldier had not struck him.

They would have kept playing this sadistic game until his face was beaten to a pulp.

This was the beginning of a series of brutal attacks that would have left him unrecognizable. Remember that Isaiah 52:14 said:

Just as there were many who were appalled at him his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness.

Matt 26:67 and Mark 14:65 added that they spat in his face.

So, we see in this section of Luke, Christ's grace reigning over the weakness of human flesh. And we see Christ's grace reigning over the evil actions of soldiers mocking and assaulting Jesus.

We can take make these applications from this passage:

- 1) Peter was overconfident. We need to remember our frailty and sinful nature and stay close to Jesus. We need to talk less, pray more and cling tightly to Jesus.
- 2) We need to be prepared for the attacks of the world and the evil one. Peter may have been waiting for a formal inquiry from religious leaders and been ready to stand firm,

but a servant girl caught him off guard. The world is hostile to Christ. If we are to be one of His, we need to expect trouble.

- 3) Even though we will never physically strike Jesus or openly mock Him to his face, our casual indifference to Him, our love of the world, our cowardice in the face of opposition to Christ and our sins of omission or commission are serious matters and are the types of acts that put him on the cross. He went to the cross for the sins of any of the soldiers who struck Him who repented just the same as for us.