

The Danger of Spiritual Over-Confidence

Scripture: Luke 22:54-62

Code: 42-275

And now we have the marvelous joy of opening the Scripture. And I want you to turn in your Bible to the twenty-second chapter of Luke...Luke chapter 22 and we're going to be looking at verses 54 through 62, which is the section in which we find Peter's famous denial of our Lord Jesus.

There's no story of our Lord's dealings with His disciples that is as low and high as this one. There is no story that is as dark and light, as tragic and hopeful, as distressing and encouraging, this is the worst failure and the best recovery. Let's begin looking at this story at verse 54...Luke 22:54:

"And having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the High Priest. But Peter was following at a distance. And after they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. And a certain servant girl seeing him as he sat in the fire light and looking intently at him said, 'This man was with Him, too.' But he denied it saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.' And a little later, another saw him and said, 'You're one of them, too.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And 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.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' And immediately while he was still speaking, a cock crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the Word of the Lord how He had told him before a cock crows today, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly."

The story of Peter's denial reveals certainly the weakness of Peter. But it also reveals the strength of Christ. It is Peter at his greatest moment of failure, failure in his confessed love for Christ. It is also Christ at His greatest moment of triumph love for Peter.

In reality, I guess you could say Peter's story is our story. All of us who have come to know Christ, all of us who belong to Christ understand what it is to stumble, understand what it is to trip up, understand what it is to be overcome by temptation, understand what it is to fall. It's a story of devastation. It's a story of disappointment. It's a humbling story. It's a sad story. And yet by the time you get to its ending, it is a thrilling story. It is a strengthening story. It is a hopeful story because devastation turns to restoration. In fact, this is an example of the very familiar stories in all of our lives of sin and restoration. We are not unlike Peter at all.

But when you look at the story, what is the large lesson that we draw from this story? And I think it's easy to answer. The large lesson to draw from this story is the danger of spiritual over-

confidence...the danger of spiritual over-confidence.

Those of us who love the Lord Jesus Christ, those of us who belong to the Lord, those of us who follow the Lord are always in danger of feeling a little too confident about our devotion. You do remember that the Apostle Paul said, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," 1 Corinthians 10:12. Never are you in a more vulnerable position when you think you are not at all in a vulnerable position. Any kind of presumptuous hubris that may convince you that you can withstand any temptation that might come along, will soon prove you wrong. So as we read Luke's account of Peter's denial, I want us to read it looking at the lesson of the danger of spiritual over-confidence.

Now Luke's account of Peter's denial, which I just read to you, is all in one paragraph. And if all you had was Luke, you might think that all of this happened just almost immediately and sequentially in a few minutes. However, that's not the case. Luke shrinks down the three denials of Peter which actually took over a period of two hours into just a few moments and a few words. But when you look into the account of Matthew, which is recorded in Matthew 26, and the account of Mark which is recorded in Mark 14, and the account of John which is recorded in John 18, and you put all of that together and you blend all of those threads, they weave a tapestry that gives you a magnificent full picture of how this denial unfolded. The other three writers show us that Peter's three denials were stretched out. And while they happened in generally the same place, the courtyard of the High Priest, they happened at three different locations.

Another interesting thing about it is they are woven through the trials of Jesus. During the middle of the night, the leaders of Israel with the Romans soldiers had come to the Garden, of course, and arrested Jesus. That's how verse 54 begins. They tied Him up and led Him away. The first stop is the house of Annas. And at the house of Annas there will be an attempt made to come up with an indictment that will stick. Some crime that He has committed that can justify His execution. Following that, there will be a trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. And then finally, after dawn, there will be a third trial in the daylight which is the only time you could have a legal trial according to Jewish law, so that they can make their trumped up, unjust actions look legal on the surface. It is between those first two trials in the middle of the night that Peter's denials are woven. In fact, it's almost as if the trial of Jesus is the main story and the second line, or the sub-plot is Peter's denials going on at the very same time. So that you have the failure of Peter juxtaposed with the triumph of Christ. You have Peter in front of his enemies, collapsing in cowardice. You have Jesus in front of His enemies, standing majestic and magnificent and bold and courageous. Vivid, vivid contrast. And really the way to understand Peter's denials is to see them woven into the fabric of the trials. It might help you to get the book *The Murder of Jesus*. I've spent a lot of time in that book doing just that.

The story line doesn't begin in verse 54. If we start in verse 54, we're not going to understand what happened. We're not going to understand why this denial came about. There has to be a context. And so, in order for us to understand what's going on with Peter here and with Jesus, and for us to

understand the danger of spiritual overconfidence, we've got to back up to where this story, this subplot, this second line really begins, and it begins back in verse 31...back in verse 31. That takes us back to Thursday night.

These trials are Friday morning after midnight from about one to three in the morning. But we want to go back to Thursday night after sundown to the Upper Room, to the Passover feast that Jesus had with His Apostles and instituted the Lord's Supper and taught them and warned them. That's where we have to start. It is on that Thursday night that Jesus says in verse 31, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and you, once you're converted, strengthen your brothers."

Jesus says Satan is coming after you. He's coming after you powerfully. He's going to sift you, shake you to the core, agitate you. Your faith, however, will not fail and you will be restored, that's a promise. Verse 33, Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, with You...that's the operative prepositional phrase...with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death." And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

Here is Jesus' prophecy of Peter's terrible, terrible fall. And at this point, we begin to see what we'll call the "way down." Point one, the way down, the path to failure, the path to sin is the path of spiritual overconfidence. And there's actually a sequence here. First you see Peter's impudent confidence...Peter's impudent confidence. In verse 33, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death." As if to say, "I'll handle Satan, I'll handle Satan's sifting. I'll handle whatever Satan brings along. I'm ready to go both to prison and to death." This is boldness. This is self-assurance. This is great trust in Peter's own strength. It's impudent. I'm ready to die before I would deny. He cannot imagine such behavior.

After the evening was over in the Upper Room, they left. Let's go to Matthew 26 and pick up the story there. They left the Upper Room, Matthew 26 verse 30. After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. On the way, Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, all of you, not just Peter, all of you. For it is written, Zechariah 13:7, a prophecy, "I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I've been raised, I'll go before you to Galilee."

In other words, you will all fall away but you will all be regathered. The same kind of prophecy He gave specifically regarding Peter, without the very specific indication of three denials. But Peter speaks up in verse 33, "Answered and said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away...all the rest of these guys because of You...I will never fall away.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.'"

With that impudent confidence becomes insistent confidence. I'll say it again, Lord. I said it in the Upper Room, I'll say it again. "I'm not going to fail You." Jesus says, "Everybody's going to fail."

"They might all fail, I will not fail." And according to Mark chapter 14 and verse 31, he spoke more vehemently. He was getting irritated at the Lord. This is an impudent and insistent kind of confidence. It is so insistent that he is saying to the Lord, "I know myself better than You know me."

And by the way, he had been with Jesus three years and Jesus had never been wrong about anything. By the way, Jesus had said you're going to deny Me three times before the cock crows, Mark actually says, adding a little detail, Mark 14:30, "You're going to deny Me three times before the cock crows twice...twice." Just keep that in mind.

So Peter's confidence is an impudent kind of confidence. It is an insistent kind of confidence. And that leads to what I call Peter's indolent confidence. While you're in Matthew 26, you might as well look at verse 40. "He came to the disciples...Jesus did...after He had gone to pray in the Garden and He found them sleeping and He said to Peter, 'So, you men couldn't keep watch with Me for one hour, keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.'"

Peter was in touch with his nobler side. Peter was in touch with his spirit, that which in him loved Christ. But Peter had way, way over-judged his ability to cope with his flesh. Peter slept when he should have been praying. That's indolent confidence. Peter wasn't alone, they all slept. They didn't need divine help. They were going to be fine. Peter was going to be great. But when they arrested Jesus later that night, they all ran in fear. They all virtually denied Christ. They all failed...failed disastrously at the most critical hour. Jesus says, "Because they slept instead of praying."

So Peter boasted too much and prayed too little. And then he acted too fast. We'll call this Peter's impulsive confidence. Look at Luke 22 again. You know the story, his impulsive confidence. "They came to arrest Jesus...verse 50, Luke 22...a certain one of them, namely Peter," the other writers tell us, "Peter struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear and Jesus answered and said, 'Stop, no more of this.' And He touched his ear and healed him."

This is courageous, wouldn't you think? Peter did this because he was trying to prove to the Lord that the Lord was wrong. Now remember, he's been told twice that he's going to deny Christ three times. He was told it in the Upper Room. He was told on the walk to the Garden. He has been very vocal and very vehement and vociferous in pledging his loyalty to Christ. He will go to prison, which means he will be willingly submissive to those who take him into custody. He will die, he will never deny the Lord and he's going to show the Lord that his confession is no mere shallow boast.

So he grabs one of the two swords they had in their possession, starts to hack his way through the crowd that could have numbered as many as a thousand people. Where did this courage come from? Well, you remember when that whole entourage came into the Garden, Jesus said to them, "Who do you seek?" according to John 18. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." and He said, "I AM He," and they all went down like dead men...to the ground.

Well, Peter took a look at that, though, "Whew...if I get in any trouble, He'll knock them down again." Buoyed up by Christ's miracle show of power, knocking flat the whole mob, he saw the opportunity was a perfect opportunity to prove himself and to prove that his confession of loyalty to Christ was valid. He acted to verify his claims to loyalty, to verify his claims to courage, to verify his willingness to stand with the Lord for a rest, or prison or death. And this is an impulsive confidence.

Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." And so we go from impudent, insistent, indolent, impulsive confidence to what we'll call Peter's imploded confidence. The way down, we pick it up in verse 54. "Having arrested Him, they led Him away...that is Jesus...brought Him to the house of the High Priest."

Let me give you the scene. Jesus is tied up as a prisoner, led away to the house of the High Priest because they need to come up with some kind of accusation that's going to produce some validity in a trumped up court to pronounce upon Him execution, they need a charge. Only legal trials...legal trials only occurred in daylight, so they're completely above, if you will, or below, or beside the law, they're not obedient to it. There's a plot already long, long in its planning to have Him dead. But they can't go to that morning trial without an accusation, so that's what they want to work on during the night.

Phase one takes place before Annas who is the real power, he's the former High Priest who is the power behind the scenes. Caiaphas is the current High Priest who is the son-in-law of Annas. There will be then a trial or an indictment before Annas, then there will be an indictment or an attempt at an indictment before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin with him, and then the third phase will come after dawn in the morning to legitimize the trumped up court.

Now having arrested Jesus and tied Him up, they brought Him to the house of the High Priest. The house of Annas, or the house of Caiaphas? Both. In the palace that would belong to the family of the high priest, there would be quarters for Annas, the older, and quarters for Caiaphas, his son-in-law. Families often built houses like this, wealthy families around a courtyard. The street, all you had were buildings and a narrow entry through a gate, you came in and the courtyard was in the center. One section of this great palatial estate would belong to Caiaphas. One section would belong to his father-in-law Annas. They were both extremely rich because they had been extorting money out of people in the temple enterprises for many, many years. You remember Jesus cleansed the temple twice. Threw out the money changers and the buyers and sellers. You know the corruption that was going on there

that had made them very, very wealthy.

So when you put together the pieces of these trials, you look at Matthew, you look at Mark, you look at Luke, you look at John...Matthew has Jesus taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and says nothing about the preliminary meeting with Annas. However, John in chapter 18 talks about the meeting before Annas. The way it goes, He went to Annas first, couldn't come up with anything. Sent Him to Caiaphas across the courtyard, meeting with the Sanhedrin, the ruling elders of Israel to come up with an indictment. It was during these two phases of the trial which went on for a couple of hours that Peter's denials take place. And the triumph of Christ in the face of His enemies is, as I said, juxtaposed to the failure of Peter before his enemies.

All three denials occur in the same place. They occur in and around the courtyard of the house of Annas and Caiaphas. John in John 18 sets the first denial while Jesus is before Annas. So Jesus goes into Annas' quarters and perhaps in and upstairs and meets with Annas as they endeavor to come up with some excuse for killing Him.

Matthew simply says all three denials take place in that courtyard. So the first one in front of Annas, the next two in the courtyard or while Jesus is being confronted by Caiaphas. And again I say, this is not a problem because they both had the same house.

Peter clearly made his first denial while Jesus was before Annas...that we can establish. After that, the Lord would be sent across the courtyard to the chambers of Caiaphas and Peter's next two denials would take place some time in that transition.

The gate would be attended by a porter. The street...there would be just a gate, down the courtyard and all...or down the corridor and it would open to the courtyard between these great houses. The gate is attended by a porter, or a portress, who opened to allow people in and out. She usually was quartered in that location so she could be attending to that gate at all times. Portions of the great house, of course, were protected from enemies. These men had many, many enemies so there would be soon after somebody opened the gate plenty of people there to defend the security of that place. But there was a girl who was assigned the gate.

Our Lord was taken through that gate, no doubt by the Jewish temple police. The police and others pushing their way down that narrow corridor, perhaps the Roman soldiers who had come from Fort Antonia went back to Fort Antonia, their work being done for the night. Peter, who had likely fled with the rest when they all scattered at the time of the arrest, had managed to circle back around again and he shows up at the house of Annas. But he's, verse 54, following at a distance. So Peter boasted too much, prayed too little, acted too fast and followed too far.

Maybe if he had had the courage and the boldness to stand with Christ, to go in with Christ, to stand beside Christ, this might not have happened. Matthew adds, "He followed afar off into the high priest's court," Matthew 26:58.

By the way, he wasn't alone. He didn't sneak in there by himself because I don't think he could get in. He had to have somebody who could get him through the gate, and he did...a most interesting person. John 18:15 says, "Another disciple." Who is that? John, who was known to the high priest.

Wow. We don't know how the high priest and the high priest's family knew John. But they must have known him well enough that John could get Peter through the gate. And so there they were, John and Peter, arriving at the gate. And apparently John was known well enough to be able to get access for Peter. Peter is trapped somewhere between fear and love. He can't let go of the Lord. He can't expose himself by getting close to the Lord, he follows afar off but he's got to be there to see what they're going to do to the Lord he loves.

And so, he comes in. Once inside he stays far away. It is after midnight. He finds a place, probably among the temple police warming themselves around a fire in the very cool air of that altitude at that time of year. It says in verse 55, "After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down, Peter was sitting among them." Sat down by the fire to take the chill off the cold night. Probably couldn't match the chill that was in his heart as he thought about what they might be doing to the Lord. He was there to see the end, to see the outcome, to see what happened. Afraid, panicked, his heart beating, but he had to be there...he had to be there to try and prove that he wasn't a betrayer. He had to be there to prove that he wasn't a denier. He had to be there to prove he wasn't wrong, that the Lord had misjudged him, the Lord had underestimated him. He needed to be there to make his boast valid.

So the Lord is on the inside with Annas. Peter is below and on the outside, sitting with the guards by the fire, perhaps with some priests and Sanhedrin members coming in to gather for the second phase of the trial a little bit later, servants of this large house. He's in the dark. He's in the flickering fire light seeking anonymity, trying to blend in. And he's keeping himself warm by the fire.

And then it happens out of nowhere. "And a certain servant girl seeing him as he sat in the fire light, and looking intently at him, said, 'This man was with Him, too.'" A certain servant girl? Yeah, Matthew says a maid. Mark says one of the maids of the High Priest. But John says the maid who had let him in the door. Oh, she knew. She must have known John who came to give access to Peter. She knew Peter was a follower of Jesus.

She let Peter in at the request of John. And now she comes in to show her loyalty to the High Priest whom she serves. She wants to impress the men around the fire with her knowledge, her insight. She has the secret information on this stranger at the fire. Seeing him in the fire light, looking intently,

staring at him. She says, "This man was with Him too." And his worst fears have come true. He's exposed.

Now I want you to understand that if you read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you're going to see different expressions. "This man was with Him, too." Matthew says, "You too were with Him." Mark says, "You were with Jesus, the Nazarene of Galilee." But those are not troubling because this is a very natural scene. She would have said several things several ways to this collection of people sitting around the fire making her accusation clear to everybody. And at the moment she started unleashing this accusation with disdain and derogation, she literally pulled the trigger and shot the bullet into Peter's self-confidence.

His reply is immediate, verse 57. "But he denied it saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.'" That is a lie, that is an act of cowardice. That is a flat denial. He's caught off guard. Oh maybe he would have been ready for a prepared defense alongside the Lord if he had been in there standing beside the Lord in the presence of Annas. Maybe he would have been prepared. Maybe he had thought through what he would say if he was called before the Sanhedrin or Caiaphas. But in the most unexpected way, when an insignificant nobody, a servant girl, walks up out of nowhere and fires a shot at him, it fells him to the ground.

He's far from the Lord. There's not going to be any miracles now to deliver him. And when left on his own, he is a coward. Maybe he was ready for the big thing, but he wasn't ready for the little one, a little unexpected thing that brought him down. And his denial was immediate. He denied it before all of them. This indicates too that once the girl had thrown the accusation at him, the rest chimed in. "Oh really, so he's one of..." And he was denying it before everybody.

Here we see Peter caught off guard. All his supposed strength, his so much idol boasting, he's unmasked as weak and cowardly. Sure his spirit was willing but his flesh was weak. How fast he is gone from being willing to take a sword and fight everybody, to denying that he even knows Jesus before a girl.

Mark said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Mark, "I don't know Him." John, "I am not His follower." And no sooner did he make that first denial than Mark 14:68 says this, "And he went out into the porch and the cock crowed."

Now remember, Mark 14:30 said, "Two cock crowings." The first one came after the first denial. Probably didn't hear it. Excited, scared, guilty, pained...he leaves the flickering light of the fire where he can be recognized and he slides back toward the porch or the vestibule which is most likely that long corridor that went back toward the gate. He's moving away. It dawned on him the prophecy was coming true. He heads for the exit.

On the way, he's confronted again. A little later, according to verse 58, another saw him and said, "You're one of them, too." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." Another here in the masculine form. Matthew says "another maid," though. Mark says, "Servant girl." And Peter answers with a masculine man, it could be generic, but it now is escalating to the point where you've got probably the original servant girl keeping her accusation up. Now you've got another servant girl jumping in. And now you've got men adding their accusations. And this thing is mounting. And while there are many accusers now, there are three denials, as our Lord said.

And it comes out of his mouth almost automatically. Matthew says he denied it before all. Says it emphatically. Mark says, "I do not know what you are talking about." Listen, his confidence is imploding. He is collapsing in on himself. This is the second denial scene, including probably the first girl, another girl, men, part of the crowd. They're all coming after him now. Matthew says, "His accuser pointed him out again with words of derision, 'This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.'" And Matthew says in Matthew 26:72, "Peter denied it with an oath...denied it with an oath." His second denial is stronger than his first denial. As the accusers mount and escalate, his denials escalate.

But he still can't leave. For some reason, though the fear is palpable, he can't leave. And so he lingers still in the courtyard area. Verse 59, "After about an hour had passed," he must have found some dark corner for a while. "Another man began to insist, 'Certainly this man also was with Him for he is a Galilean, too.'"

Still milling in the shadows in the courtyard area, wanting to see what happens to the Lord, maybe he heard the screams that were coming from the false trials. There were screams coming, you know, from the false trial of Jesus, screams against Jesus calling Him a blasphemer. They would have been readily heard in the night. And at some point, another man steps up and makes another accusation.

By the way, we know who this man is. This man, John 18:26 says, "A relative of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest who lost his ear in the Garden that night." And according to Matthew 26:73 they said, "We know you're a Galilean follower of Jesus because you have a Galilean accent, your speech betrays you." He can't get away.

His response is even more heated, verse 60. Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Listen to what Matthew adds. Matthew 26:74, "Then he began to curse and swear." Peter? Peter out of whose mouth came, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" And of whom Jesus said, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you but My Father who is in heaven?" Out of his mouth came cursing and swearing? What do you mean by that?

He pronounced curses on himself if he was lying. It's as if he was saying, "Damn me if I lie. May God damn me if I lie." That's how vehement he was in his denials. Curses are the negative things. He pronounced divine judgment on his own head if he was lying. Swearing is the positive side. He was pledging truthfulness in the name of God.

So on the one hand, he's pledging truthfulness on the name of God and asking God verify his truthfulness. On the other hand, he's saying if I'm a liar, let God judge me. Wow! What started out as a single lie to a single girl has escalated into a fury of lies with cursing and swearing. We just can't quite understand this. This is the braggadocio...this is the bravado..this is the bravery that he claimed completely collapsed in on itself.

And at that very moment, verse 60, "Immediately while he was still speaking, a cock crowed for the second time," right on schedule. There were plenty of chickens and plenty of crowing going on, but there were two crows from one or two chickens that had phenomenal significance. All that the Lord had told him had come true. His brash over-confidence was unable to give him strength to meet this temptation. He had boasted too much, prayed too little, acted too fast and followed too far.

And then the most compelling sentence in the story is written by Luke. Verse 61, "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter." Boy, that must have been some moment. I think of what Jesus says, the vision of Revelation 1 portrays Him with laser eyes penetrating everything. Perhaps Jesus' trial had ended before Annas, before Caiaphas. He was coming back out from Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin across the courtyard and looked right into Peter's eyes. His face would have been covered with spit because they had been spitting on Him. His face would have been battered and puffy and bruised because they had been punching Him in the face. And through those swollen eyes, and spit on His face, He looked into the eyes of His fallen leader. The look was not hate, it was love, but it was sad, it was lonely. It was disappointing for Jesus.

But how much more for Peter? The pain must have been shattering to Him. Total collapse, crystallized, captured, frozen in that moment as their eyes meet. And verse 61 said, "And Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, how He had told him before a cock crows today, you'll deny Me three times." And he went out bitterly. And that is exactly what he should have done.

What is going on here is so instructive. Peter's footprints are left in the sand for us. Self-confidence, warm feelings of affections toward Jesus, Peter thought were enough for him to be able to handle any temptation. It was his self-confidence that led to his insubordination. He refused to accept and yield to the warning words of Christ. He didn't take the word of His Lord seriously. He rejected reproof. He ignored the voice of God and that led to prayerlessness. He slept because he didn't need to pray. He omitted spiritual duty and that led to independence. He reacted by taking out a sword and charting his own course without ever considering the Word of the Lord and that led to compromise. He wound up far off, sitting with the enemies of the Lord. A compromising course that led him to mingle with the

enemy and brought him all the way down to defeat.

Sure, this was the darkest hour in human history. This was hell's hour. This was Satan's hour. And Peter fell victim to it. He was no match. He underestimated the power of evil in his own flesh. He had reached the top. He had been called by Christ, loved by Christ, received the keys to the Kingdom, sharing in miracle power, leader of the Twelve, privileged preacher of the Good News, fallen to the pit of falsehood and profanity, denying his Lord.

And we really shudder at this. It's just an unbelievable thing. And we wouldn't be surprised if Peter was another Judas and went out and hanged himself. But this is no Judas and his faith will not fail. The true Peter is seen not in his fall but in his recovery, for this is not a story of final failure, like Judas. This is a story of restoration. It was his love for Christ that broke his heart. It was his love for Christ that made him weep bitterly. It was his love for Christ that made him contrite, penitent, broken. The coward is conquered by love for Christ. And so that's not the end of the story, that's the end of Luke's record in verse 62, but that is not the end of the story. The way down is not the end of the story.

Let me take you to the second point, the way up...the way up. Here's the way up. Peter remembered...remembered. He remembered what the Lord had said. "Went out," second verb, "left the High Priest's house for a solitary place to contemplate the greatness of his sin and the horror of what he had done. And he wept bitterly." The Greek is "sobbed out loud." He faces the corruption of his own flesh. He faces his own weakness. He feels the pain he has brought on the Lord. He cries for pardon and he cries for forgiveness.

You see, Satan would want to bring a soul to the point of despair so that he plunges himself into hell as Judas did without repentance. But our Lord seeks to bring a soul to the point of despair so that he cries for forgiveness and mercy and by repentance, finds heaven. This is true repentance.

It's not really our sins that makes us weep. Oh, they have a part in it. But for Peter it wasn't just his sin that made him weep, it is when we see the kind of Savior we have sinned against that really makes us weep. And so he wept.

But that was not the end. John tells us the end, John 21. Turn to John 21. After the Lord's resurrection, He met His disciples in Galilee. It was time now for the full restoration of the disciples, and in particular, the full restoration of Peter. Verse 15, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said, 'Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said, 'Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do You love Me?' Peter was grieved because he said to Him the third time...do you love Me?...and he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all

things, You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'"

How many times did Jesus give Peter an opportunity to say he loved Him? Three...one for each denial...one for each denial. And then He called him into the ministry, "Tend My lambs, Shepherd My sheep, tend My sheep." If the Lord didn't use failing people, He wouldn't use anybody. But Peter, Jesus had said in Luke 22:32, "Your faith will not fail...your faith will not fail." His faith did not fail. He repented. He was restored and was used monumentally in the book of Acts which immediately follows the book of John. Peter preaches on Pentecost, one sermon three thousand are saved. Preaches again, five thousand more are converted to Christ. And he has a marvelous ministry, gospel ministry. And eventually a day comes when he is crucified, tied up, bound to a cross. Tradition says he wouldn't die the way His Lord died, he wasn't worthy. So he asked to be crucified upside down, and upside down a cross he gave his life for Christ.

Peter is a great teacher for us, to help us understand how to face temptation and not be overconfident. But also, how to face temptation with hope. Let me turn Peter into a teacher for you. Listen to his words, 2 Peter 1:1. "Simon Peter, a slave and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those...listen...who have received a faith of the same kind as ours." What kind of faith had he received? A faith that does not...what?...fail. This never left him. From the human viewpoint, that was a failing faith. And when he introduces himself for the first time in his first epistle, and in his second epistle at the very beginning of that second epistle, it is about the faith that will not fail. This is what he clings to. In 2 Peter, you have received a faith of the same kind as ours.

Go back to 1 Peter 1, verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." That's the kind of faith you have. You have the kind of faith that can be tested, it can be tested in the fire and it will not perish. In verse 9 he says, "You have the kind of faith, the outcome of which is the salvation of your souls." Peter never got over this faith that cannot fail, that will not fail.

His final words are in 2 Peter 3:17. The last thing he wrote, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this before hand, be on your guard." He's a good one to teach us, isn't he? "Be on your guard lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men you fall from your own steadfastness." He knew you have a faith that cannot fail, but he also knew you can fall from being steadfast. He couldn't write these letters without writing himself and his lessons into them. Be on guard. Don't engage in spiritual overconfidence so that you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen...Amen.

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