

Restoring Deserting Disciples

Scripture: Matthew 26:31-35

Code: 2384

INTRODUCTION

A. The Significance of the Lesson on Weakness

As much as we would like to think of ourselves as strong Christians, the fact is we are weak. We would like to think we could never be caught in a situation where we would deny the Lord or His Word. But the truth is there are times we do deny Him. There are times when we desert Christ to avoid embarrassment or shame rather than be identified with Him. So it was with His disciples.

1. Predicting the desertion of the disciples

The lesson Christ taught the disciples in Matthew 26:31-35 is beneficial for us as well. Jesus predicted the disciples would desert Him, and it came to pass exactly as He said it would. This profound and unforgettable lesson changed the course of their lives. Of all that Jesus could have taught them, He revealed their weakness through the prediction of their future desertion. Matthew, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, placed that prediction in the midst of his treatment on Christ's preparation for the cross. To carry the gospel message to the world, the disciples had to be strong. But the first step to acquiring strength is admitting your weakness. So a lesson on weakness was vital for the disciples.

All the disciples affirmed what we would like to affirm, but they did so on the basis of their own strength and commitment. They thought their love for Christ, spiritual strength, and ability to control Satan was greater than it actually was. They were leaning on their own understanding (cf. Prov. 3:5). When the moment came to take a stand for Christ, as He was taken captive in the garden, Matthew said, "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56). The promise Peter and the rest of the disciples made in verse 35 was empty because it was based on human strength. Jesus had to teach them a lesson about the inadequacy of their own strength in the midst of spiritual warfare.

2. Preserving the majesty of Christ

Matthew was not focusing primarily on the disciples, although they are the surface issue. His primary objective was to preserve the majesty of Jesus Christ. Yet how could Christ retain any dignity, respect, and glory amid the desertion and defection of His own followers? Someone is bound to ask,

"What kind of leader is he whose troops desert Him during the heat of battle?" Lesser men than the disciples have been in severer circumstances, yet stood their ground. Did Christ pick the wrong men? Such an accusation potentially demeans and weakens Christ's regal splendor. But Matthew doesn't allow that to happen. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he exalts Christ by contrasting Him to the defecting disciples. The majestic character of Jesus Christ is presented as clearly in this passage as any other in the New Testament.

B. The Setting of the Lesson on Weakness

Our time frame in Matthew 26:31 is hours before the crucifixion. Christ is approaching the conclusion of His earthly life and the climax of redemptive history. Only four chapters in all four gospels are devoted to the first thirty years of Christ's life, yet thirteen are devoted to the last day of His life. In preparation for the cross Christ closed out the Old Covenant with His final Passover, instituting the New Covenant of His body and His blood, represented by the bread and cup of the Lord's supper.

1. Imparting the legacy

Matthew 26:30 says, "When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." During the Passover meal Jesus and His disciples consumed four cups of wine. After the main meal--consisting of the Passover lamb, bitter herbs and sauce, and unleavened bread--they drank the third cup and sang the latter portion of the hallel (Psalm 115-118). After that they drank the last cup and sang the final song--Psalm 136, the great hallel. Every verse in Psalm 136 ends with: "For his mercy endureth forever."

But Matthew left something out of his narrative. Before they sang that last hymn, Jesus taught His disciples the things recorded in John 14-16 and prayed to His Father, as recorded in John 17. In the three chapters of teaching, Jesus promised to pass on His legacy to the disciples--His gifts of peace, joy, contentment, comfort, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and hope for the future. He spoke of the persecution to come, but promised ultimate deliverance from it. Then Jesus prayed to the Father for the unity of all His disciples, including those who would come to believe in Him in the days ahead. We know those things happened before they left the upper room because John 18:1 says, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples."

2. Departing from the upper room

When Jesus and the disciples left the upper room it was nearly midnight. As they went out into the street, they saw the city alive with activity as if it were midday. It was the time of the Passover--the feast of unleavened bread. Some people were eating their Passover meal, such as the Galilians and the Pharisees. Some were still preparing to eat it the next day, such as the Judeans and the Sadducees. Since the Temple gates were opened at midnight for the festival, many people were

surging toward it. Visitors to Jerusalem were everywhere, negotiating for a place to hold their Passover the next day. Many people were carrying the animals they would sacrifice the next day.

It was through such activity that Jesus and the disciples passed. Once they were out of the city, they went down the eastern slope of the Temple mount and crossed the Kidron brook, running full with water from the winter rains and with the blood of thousands of animals slain in the Temple. The blood flowed out the back of the Temple, down the slope, and into the brook. After crossing the brook they ascended the Mount of Olives to their familiar resting place--the garden of Gethsemane, Gethsemane probably meaning "olive press." People didn't own gardens in the city--there was no room. But they could maintain gardens on the slopes of the hills around the city.

There were only eleven disciples with Jesus now; the Lord had dismissed Judas several hours before. As Jesus and the disciples ascended the Mount of Olives, they needed to stop and rest. While they rested, Jesus confronted the disciples about their weaknesses.

Jesus' teaching prior to this time had basically been positive--they received nothing but promises in John 13-16. But now it was time for a warning. Out of necessity they needed to learn that strength is born out of a recognition of weakness, not a recognition of strength. Jesus intended to eliminate any illusions. It is as He teaches this lesson that we see a marvelous contrast between Christ and His defecting disciples.

I. A CONTRAST BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

A. The Ignorance of the Disciples

The disciples were woefully ignorant. Peter said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. 26:33). In only a few hours, they all defected, including Peter. In verse 35 Peter says, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." The rest of the verse says that all the disciples affirmed the same thing. They were all ignorant of their own weaknesses and the strength of Satan. They were ignorant of the power of the test they would face in a few hours. They were ignorant of many things, to say nothing of their ignorance of the Old Testament, including the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 referred to by Christ in verse 31: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

B. The Knowledge of Christ

In contrast to the ignorance of the disciples is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Beginning in verse 31 Jesus teaches the disciples a lesson about the stupidity of self-sufficiency. He says, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the

flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up again, I will go before you into Galilee" (vv. 31-32). Then in verse 34 Jesus says to Peter, "Verily I say unto thee that this night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice." Jesus knew the disciples would forsake Him that night. Nevertheless He knew He would be raised from the dead and would meet them again in Galilee.

1. The panoramic view of Christ

Picture Jesus in a control booth facing television screens depicting present and future events. He could see what Judas was doing at that exact moment. He could see the Jewish rulers planning their strategy. He could see Peter's denial and the disciples fleeing from His presence. He could see the Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders coming with clubs, swords, and torches into the garden to take Him captive. He could see, and even feel, the kiss of Judas Iscariot on His cheek. With the eyes of His supernatural knowledge He saw vividly the prophecies of the Old Testament coming to pass. He could see the plan of God unfolding. Jesus didn't strain to acquire such knowledge; it was easily within His grasp.

Nothing is lost of Jesus' regal majesty. It remains clear because His knowledge of those events was clear. He knew the present, what would happen that very night. He knew the past, for it was written in the plan of God. And He knew the future, that the disciples would forsake Him.

2. The prophetic plan of God

One of the reasons Jesus knew what was going to happen was that He knew Scripture. In Matthew 26:31 Jesus says, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written." What was about to take place was in the plan of God. It was not some event initiated by the whim and will of Judas, the religious leaders, or anyone else on earth. It was God's divine plan. Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 in Matthew 26:31: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Jesus knew not only what Judas and the religious leaders were doing, but also what Satan was planning. Jesus knew how all the events of that night and next morning would turn out because of His knowledge of the past, present, and future.

a) The context of Zechariah 13:7

Zechariah 13:7 is not an easy passage to interpret. If it had been simple, the disciples might have understood it. The context speaks of false prophets, whom God will judge according to their false prophecies. Then verse 7 says, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

b) The interpretation of Zechariah 13:7

At first it might seem that the Lord is referring to smiting a false shepherd and scattering his followers. But we have the clear interpretation of Christ, who says that the smitten shepherd is the Messiah and the scattered flock His people.

(1) Identifying the shepherd

In Zechariah 13:7 God says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd." That statement indicates God is not referring to a false prophet. God wouldn't refer to a false prophet as His shepherd--His personal representative. God says He will bring His sword "against the man." Here Zechariah uses a Hebrew word that is not the generic word for man, but one that means "mighty man" or "man of great strength." The shepherd God would slay is the mighty shepherd of God. Then verse 7 says, "The man who is my fellow." That literally means, "the mighty man of My union" or "the mighty man equal to Me." Who is equal to God? Christ. Who was God's shepherd? Christ. Who is the mighty shepherd? Christ. Clearly Zechariah has turned from a discussion of false shepherds. While it was true that God would wound the false shepherd in the house of his idol (v. 6), God would also wound the true shepherd and scatter His sheep. The end of verse 7 says, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." That means God will preserve a remnant.

(2) Identifying the sheep

Zechariah is saying that the day is coming when God is going to smite His own shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, and scatter the sheep. I believe Zechariah is referring to the nation Israel. It was characterized by chaos after the death of their Messiah. In [sc]A.D. 70, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed along with the Temple. Today the Jewish people are still experiencing that same chaos as a result of rejecting their Messiah. The scattering of the disciples was the first phase of that chaos. But Zechariah 13:7 also says, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." When the nation of Israel went into chaos, God gathered the scattered disciples. (Many Christians were preserved from the destruction of Jerusalem in [sc]A.D. 70 because they knew enough to flee [Luke 19:20-22].) Similarly God will preserve a future remnant of those who love Christ.

The prophecy of Zechariah is critical to our understanding of Christ's supernatural knowledge. He knew the meaning of the plan of God. He knew how to interpret a difficult passage in Zechariah perfectly and clearly. He understood the disciples--He knew what they were going to do. He knew what Satan was going to bring to bear on them, and He knew they wouldn't handle it. He knew what Peter would do, even though he said he wouldn't do it. He knew every detail of what was going to happen and when. Jesus didn't lose, but the disciples did. They are not heroes--they abandoned Christ. They revealed themselves to be ignorant, unable to understand the plan of God, the prophetic word, or the signs of the times. Christ shines by comparison.

II. A CONTRAST BETWEEN COURAGE AND COWARDICE

A. The Cowardice of the Disciples

Matthew 26:31 says, "All ye shall be offended." The Greek word translated "offended" means "trapped." The disciples we're going to get caught in a trap--one they couldn't escape from.

What was the trap? Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." The disciples were afraid--afraid of what the Romans or Jewish leaders would do to them. When they saw the soldiers and leaders come with clubs, staves, and swords to seize Christ, they fled. They defected at the heat of battle. It happened exactly as Christ said it would. When the pressure was on, they were gone. They were ashamed to be identified with Christ and bear His reproach. Certainly they loved Him and desired to be faithful, but they were afraid.

The disciples didn't have the faith to believe that the Lord could deliver them from their trial. They saw Christ as a victim. And if He were a victim, what were they going to be? If He couldn't escape from the soldiers, how would they ever escape? Admittedly, identifying yourself with Jesus Christ can bring reproach. Hebrews 11:26 says Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." But everyone doesn't make that choice. There are some of us who flee when the pressure's on, running for safety because we're afraid.

B. The Courage of Christ

In contrast to the cowardice of the disciples is the perfect courage of Christ. He steadfastly moved toward the cross committing Himself to the Father's will. Christ trusted God and put His life in His hands. The disciples couldn't do that. They were cowards. Christ's valor is remarkable. He was going to the cross to bear the sins of the world, even though He'd never been touched by sin. He would be abused, mocked, and spat on, yet He moved toward His fate with distinctly divine valor. His courage was predicated on an absolute trust in the Father, who commissioned Him for such a purpose.

Even defecting disciples can't diminish the majesty of the Lord. They fled out of fear, but He stood true to His task with great courage, facing death, sin, and Satan for their sake.

III. A CONTRAST BETWEEN POWER AND WEAKNESS

A. Jesus' Power over Death

The disciples were afraid to face the moment of their trial because they were weak and couldn't handle death. In Matthew 26:32 the Lord says, "After I am raised up again, I will go before you into Galilee." The Lord faced death with great courage because He knew He had power over death. The

disciples knew they didn't, but they wouldn't commit themselves to the One who did--they lacked faith to do so.

1. Christ's commitment to God's power

Romans 6:4 says that Christ "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Before Jesus went to the grave, He repeatedly said He would be raised from the dead (Matt. 16:21; 17:9; 20:19). He committed Himself to God's divine power over death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christ was able to face the cross because He knew He had the power to conquer death. He took on death as an enemy to be defeated. The disciples paled in comparison.

Christ believed what Abraham believed when he offered up Isaac. Hebrews 11:19 says that Abraham knew "God was able to raise him [Isaac] up." Abraham believed that if God wanted to take Isaac's life, He would have to raise him from the dead to fulfill His promise. That's why he was willing to offer up his son. And that's why Christ was willing to go to the grave: He knew God fulfilled His promises. In Christ's case, God promised to raise Him from the dead to make Him King of Kings.

2. The disciples' distrust of God's power

The disciples should have known that God would raise up Christ. After all, only a few days prior they saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44). Even the rulers knew He raised Lazarus. The disciples should have remembered Him saying, "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26). But in the weakness of their faith, they remained cowards. In the strength of His commitment to God, Jesus moved toward the cross with power.

The majesty of Christ shines in comparison to the weakness of the disciples. He believed in the power of God over death; they did not.

B. Jesus' Promise Regarding His Death

Jesus told the disciples He would go before them into Galilee (Matt. 26:32). He would return to be their shepherd and lead them once again. He did just that. After being raised from the dead, He told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary this: "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matt. 28:10). He came out of the grave and kept His rendezvous with the disciples. He knew He had the power not only to conquer death, but also to abolish death. But the disciples had weak faith, love, and gratitude.

This lesson is important for us to learn. We parade our ignorance when we boast about our courage, for when the chips are down, we may turn out to be cowards. We can claim to have the strength to face any test, but when the test arrives we so often find ourselves to be weak. Yet that's not all bad. Until you learn you are weak, you can't know where true strength lies. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Paul quotes the Lord's instruction to him: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." We all must learn to stop trusting in ourselves.

IV. A CONTRAST BETWEEN PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Matthew 26:33 says, "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Peter was claiming to be the most trustworthy disciple of all. He was proud and self-confident, but actually he was weak and ignorant of his cowardice.

A. Predictions of Peter's Denials

1. John 13:38

Peter didn't learn his lessons well. It was only a few hours before that the Lord confronted his boasting. While they were in the upper room, the Lord and Peter entered into this dialogue: "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, where goest thou? Jesus answered him, Where I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:36-38).

2. Matthew 26:34

Later that night, after Jesus and the disciples left the upper room and were resting on a slope of the Mount of Olives, Peter as we have seen, claimed, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. 26:33). In verse 34 Jesus gives Peter the same answer He did in John 13:38: "Verily I say unto thee that this night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice." Twice in one night Peter was told of his coming denials, yet he remained prideful and self-confident.

3. Luke 22:34

Luke's gospel records the first occurrence of Jesus' prediction, but Luke provides greater detail than John. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Sifting is the process of separating the wheat from the chaff by violent shaking.

In the phrase, "Satan wants to have you," Luke used the Greek word humas. It is plural; Satan wanted to shake all the disciples like they had never been shaken before.

Peter had a previous encounter with Satan. In Matthew 16:22 Peter rebuked Christ for predicting His coming death. Jesus then said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (v. 23). So this present circumstance was not a new one for Peter.

Jesus did not leave His prediction without encouragement. In Luke 22:32 He says, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Jesus prayed that Peter and the other disciples would not experience a total collapse. They would be restored and would then be able to strengthen others because they would have learned the lesson of not trusting in themselves.

In spite of that encouragement, Peter remained resolute in his obstinacy: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (v. 33). Then the Lord said, "Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (v. 34).

Manifestations of Peter's Pride

Peter and the rest of the disciples stood on treacherous ground. Frankly, Peter was acting like a fool. His foolish pride was manifest in three ways.

1. He contradicted the Lord

I got my mouth washed out with soap for contradicting my mother or father. Contradicting a superior is a serious matter. Peter was actually saying that the Lord of the universe was wrong when he insisted that he wouldn't deny Him.

2. He claimed superiority over the other disciples

In Matthew 26:33 Peter says, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."

3. He trusted in his own strength

In verse 35 he says, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."

B. Pain over Peter's Denials

1. Experienced by Christ

The humility of Jesus is revealed beautifully in verse 34: "This night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice." At that point Jesus would be alone--forsaken and deserted. The majestic humble Christ resolutely and willingly went to the cross to die and shed His blood for weak and proud disciples, who deserted Him at a time He needed them most. What amazing condescension and humility! How dare they be ashamed of the living God, who is not ashamed of them! It is understandable for God to be ashamed to associate with sinners, but inexcusable for sinners to be ashamed to associate with God.

The Time of the Denials

In Matthew 26:34 the Lord pinpointed the time of Peter's denials: "This night, before the cock crows." The Jews divided the night into four parts: evening--6 p.m. to 9 p.m., midnight--9 p.m. to midnight, cock crow--midnight to 3 a.m., and morning--3 a.m. to 6 a.m. The period from midnight to 3 a.m. was called cock crow because that's approximately the time when roosters would crow. It was nearly midnight when, for the second time, the Lord predicted Peter's denials. In a few hours, before three in the morning, Peter would deny the Lord three times.

2. Experienced by Peter

Christ knew every detail of what would happen, not only regarding His own life, but of Peter's as well. He knew where Peter would be, who he would meet, and how he would deny Him.

The setting of Peter's denials took place in the courtyard of the high priest's residence. While Peter waited to see what would happen to Jesus, he was confronted by people about his association with Christ. According to Matthew 26:74 Peter began "to curse and to swear." It wasn't enough simply to deny Christ; he had to be profane in his denial. Then he said, "I know not the man. And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus" (vv. 74-75). What a painful remembrance! Verse 75 concludes, "He went out, and wept bitterly." Peter remembered having said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (v. 35). It was a nice sentiment, but Peter didn't have the strength to pull it off.

Luke adds a poignant detail to this narrative: "Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crowed. And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter" (22:60-61). Can you imagine how Peter felt?

We see the pride of the disciples in sharp contrast to the humility of Christ, who was to sacrifice Himself for those who wouldn't name His name under pressure.

V. A CONTRAST BETWEEN DESERTION AND RESTORATION

A. The Promise of Restoration

Matthew 26:32 leads us to the positive conclusion of the matter. Jesus said, "After I am raised up again, I will go before you into Galilee." The idea is He would lead them into Galilee. In spite of the disciples' deserting the Lord, He was loving and merciful. He restored them. He lived out the repeated phrase of Psalm 136: "His mercy endureth forever." The disciples were worthy of nothing, yet in spite of what they did, He gathered them together and led them into Galilee. John 21:15-17 records His specific restoration of Peter. Christ asked Peter to feed his sheep. Three times He asked him if he loved Him, as if to make up for the three times Peter denied Him. Once He restored all the disciples to the task of the ministry, He ascended into heaven, gave them the Holy Spirit, and sent them out to change the world.

B. The Proof of Restoration

Christ's restoration of the disciples proves to me that God is in the business of restoring those who have deserted Him. That's comforting to know. If we are believers, we may forsake Him at some point in our lives, but under no condition will He ever forsake us.

Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). You must learn that your resources are in the Lord, not in your own strength. The disciples learned that lesson. Acts 5:41-42 proves it. A council of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem called the apostles in for questioning regarding their activities. They beat the apostles and "commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go" (v. 40). Those apostles, with the exception of one, were the same men who deserted our Lord in Matthew 26:56. You might expect them to run again. But Acts 5:41-42 says, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his [Jesus'] name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

CONCLUSION

The disciples learned a powerful lesson about their weakness. Jesus returned from the grave and put His loving arms around them, restoring them. He then recommissioned them and sent them out. After seeing His mercy and power in His resurrection, they were no longer afraid of death. They knew they

also would rise from the dead. The grace of Christ left them to go out with a new approach. The same thing must be true in our lives. Not until we realize how the sweet and tender grace of the Lord has restored us will we go out and conquer the difficulties we will surely face. I thank God for the times I failed and the Lord taught me the frailty of my own strength. But I can rest with the knowledge that my strength is only in His power.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why did Jesus need to teach the disciples a lesson on weakness?
2. What was Matthew's focus in Matthew 26:31-35? What accusation was he attempting to defuse?
3. What event did Matthew leave out of his narrative that John included?
4. In what ways were the disciples ignorant?
5. What were some of the events that Christ saw before they took place?
6. How did Christ know what was going to happen (Matt. 26:31)?
7. What is the context of Zechariah 13:7? How did Christ interpret that verse?
8. Who is the shepherd referred to in Zechariah 13:7? Explain. Who are the sheep? Explain.
9. What trap did the disciples fall into (Prov. 29:25)?
10. How was Christ's courage manifested?
11. Why was Christ able to face the cross with courage?
12. The disciples could have faced death with courage if they had remembered what event?
13. On how many occasions did Christ predict Peter's denials?
14. In what way did Christ encourage the disciples in the midst of predicting their coming denial?
15. In what three ways did Peter manifest his pride?
16. How is the humility of Christ revealed in His prediction of Peter's denials?

17. When did the Lord predict that Peter would deny Him?

18. How did Christ restore the disciples?

19. What does Christ's restoration of the disciples prove about God?

Pondering the Principles

1. The disciples deserted Christ because they were afraid of what the Roman and Jewish leaders would do to them. And that fear translates as being ashamed of Christ. Does your behavior betray your shame of being identified with Christ? When you are in a situation that calls for you to identify with Christ, do you keep quiet, or even deny Him? If you have been guilty of being ashamed of Christ, you should confess that now. As an act of repentance, you can turn your fear of men into courage. Look at how Christ faced the cross. He put His complete trust in God. You need to do the same. That means you have to risk being vulnerable to abuse and suffering, but that is God's will for your life (1 Peter 3:17). To help in times of suffering, memorize 2 Timothy 3:12: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (NASB).

2. Peter manifested his pride in three ways: he contradicted the Lord, claimed superiority over the other disciples, and trusted in his own strength. Have you been guilty of that kind of pride? Look up the following verses: Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Philippians 2:3, 9-11. How do each of those passages apply to the three manifestations of pride? Based on those verses, what should your attitude be towards the Lord, other believers, and yourself? Commit yourself to a daily pursuit of those attitudes.

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