

# Denial and trial

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[0:00] Amen. Father, we thank you that because Christ has gone through that trial that we've read and then the crucifixion.

! Thank you that because of that we live, that he has died, our condemnation is gone. Thank you that in Christ we are both dead and raised, alive and free.

We praise his name and we pray that you'd help us as we see more of what that costs the Lord Jesus Christ and more of who we are in this passage.

Help us, we pray. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Wouldn't you have loved to have been Peter?

He witnessed a very miraculous catch of fish when he was called to follow Jesus. He got to walk on water.

[1:15] He got to be one of the few disciples that saw Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. And he was the disciple that said, you are the Christ, you're the Messiah.

Correctly saying, I know who you are. I've come to see that you are the Messiah. Wouldn't you love to be Peter? He saw some great things.

He came to believe some great truths. And so understandably, Peter is full of confidence as he follows the Lord Jesus.

Last week, we soberingly thought about Judas and his betrayal of the Lord Jesus. Jesus said there would be a betrayer amongst his disciples.

As he makes his way on this journey to the cross, we see it's full of that darkness of his betrayal. But this week sounds more positive.

[2:26] Because Peter is a great example to us of not falling away. Look at what he says. Well, look at what Jesus says, first of all, in verse 27. Jesus says, you will all fall away.

For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But don't worry, Jesus. Not all of them will fall away. Verse 29, Peter declared, even if all fall away, I will not.

Wouldn't you love to be Peter? Peter? Peter's not going to fall away. In fact, he confirms this. After Jesus says, you specifically will disown me three times.

Peter says, no, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. Wouldn't you love to be Peter?

Peter, he's so full of confidence in following Jesus, he's ready to go and die with Jesus on the cross. Well, what a great example for us.

[3:38] We're following Jesus to the cross and Peter's going there with him. Wouldn't you love to be Peter? Peter. Well, Peter makes a really good job of keeping his word to Jesus.

Notice verse 54. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself of the fire.

Peter followed Jesus. He was close by to Jesus. He wasn't falling away. Meanwhile, verse 50.

Then everyone deserted him and fled. Peter's sticking to his word. Wouldn't you love to be Peter? What great confidence.

But really what we're going to see here this evening, as Peter followed him at a distance, is two trials.

[4:47] Jesus on trial and Peter on trial. And you have in this passage a sort of Danton Abbey style scene, if you like.

Upstairs, not literally upstairs, I think. But upstairs, you've got the big wigs. Jesus with the chief priests. And Jesus is on trial and he's wrongly accused but speaks truth.

And then downstairs, where the servants are, you've got Peter on trial. And spoilers, he's rightly accused and speaks lies.

Of course he's not. He said, I won't fall away. Well, let's see. Let's see where we're going. See, after what Peter had said to Jesus so boldly, so confidently, you would expect him to say to people, I follow him.

I'm going to die with him, actually. But look what happens. Verse 66. While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by.

[6:05] When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus, she said.

You were with him. I saw you. And so Peter naturally is going to say, yeah. Yeah, of course I was with him.

He's the Christ. He's our Messiah. I wouldn't be away from him. Peter, by the way, in this scene, as he's identified later on, he's a Galilean.

It would be like, as a Galilean is in Jerusalem, it would be like sort of a Yorkshireman in Brighton, speaking with a thick accent, perhaps wearing slightly different clothes.

And Peter sticks out. He's not from these parts. And he's spotted so quickly, as surely he's one of those Jesus followers.

[7:14] But that's okay that he's spotted. I will never disown you, he says. Verse 68. But he denied it. I don't know or understand what you're talking about, he said, and went out into the entrance.

Strike one. But Peter, we thought you were never going to disown Jesus.

But it's okay, because Peter has a very quick opportunity to redeem himself here. Verse 69. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing round, this fellow's one of them.

Again, he denied it. Strike two. Peter, what's happened to you? You were so full of confidence.

You weren't going to disown Jesus. You said, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

What's going on, Peter? But more suspicions were raised.

[8:34] Peter's trial continues here. Verse 70. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.

He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, I don't know this man you're talking about.

Strike three.

And out. Sobering. Sobering. He curses, we're told. There's some debate about who or what he is cursing, perhaps himself.

Perhaps those he's speaking to, perhaps Jesus. One commentator convinced me that he's probably saying something like, go to hell for making such accusations against me.

I swear to you, I do not know the man. That's probably what's going on here. And so immediately, it hits home to Peter, what he's done.

[9:43] Immediately, the cock crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him. Words from verse 30.

Before the cock crows twice, you would have sown me three times. Words from verse 30. And he broke down and wept. We witness here a sad and what feels like a sudden falling away from Jesus, who just a few hours earlier, he said, I will never disown you.

And as we read these things, what are we to learn from them? Well, three points for us to consider. Firstly, Peter's trial is also our trial. That could be us there. Jesus said to his disciples, you will all fall away.

Would we have been any different? Would we have even made it as far as Peter did? And that could even be us this week.

[10:57] When we're in a room unlike this one, full of other believers praising the Lord Jesus, thinking about him, reading about him. Where it is so easy to follow him.

And then tomorrow find ourselves in a room full of people who are not following him. That could be us saying. Or living like we don't know him.

That could be us living like Jesus never had any impact on our hearts as we were worshipping him with his people.

That was me a few weeks ago when Becky and I went to our first antenatal class praying. But beforehand, Lord, open doors of opportunity here to share our faith.

And then I was just fearing that someone would say, what do you do? It was easy for Peter to be bold for Jesus when he was in Jesus' presence.

[12:03] When he was surrounded by fellow disciples. And it can be easy for us when we're gathered in this way to say, I'm not ashamed of Jesus. To pray bold, heartfelt prayers.

But then tomorrow find it feels rather hot when we're out there. Surrounded by those who don't love the Lord Jesus like we do.

Likewise, we can confess our sins to God one day. And then the next find we're committing the same sins.

Peter's a picture of us. A picture of a human being following the Lord Jesus. I wonder if Paul had thought about Peter before he wrote that line to the Corinthians that says, So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.

One moment, and perhaps this evening, we think we would never fall away from Jesus. And then we find ourselves struggling to live for him the next. Peter's trial is both an encouragement to us of what it's like as a human being following the Lord Jesus, but also a warning to us.

[13:30] A warning to us who are praying to falling away, praying to leaving the God we love. A warning and encouragement. Peter's trial is also our trial.

Second thing to consider, are we weeping for our sin? Are we weeping for those times when we fail to say, I know Jesus?

Are we weeping? That's how Peter responds in verse 72. And he broke down and wept. The cock crows and it hits him.

It hits him what he has done. What he has done that he said he'd never do. I told him I'd never fall away, he must have thought.

And now I have. What a wretched man I am. That word for weep implies deep sorrow, deep mourning. Like he's at a funeral.

[14:39] But mourning because of his own failure. Do we mourn for our sin? Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn.

And they will be comforted. Sinning is saying, I don't want to live the way of my saviour Jesus. It is turning away from him.

It's treason against God. Do we mourn those times that we do that in our hearts? Peter loved Jesus. Peter saw him as the Christ. Following him was amazing. He experienced some wonderful things in being so close to his Lord. And now he had failed his Lord whom he loves.

And though we may not have walked on water. Though we may not have seen him in his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. We have come to love Jesus who has first loved us.

[15:46] We have come to know his grace to us. We have come to know the blessing of prayer. The blessing of the peace that he gives to us. The blessing of fellowship with his people.

We've come to know every spiritual blessing in Christ. And so when we fail him, as Peter does here, it should make us feel sad.

We should grieve those sins that we have committed against our gods.

But we don't have to stay there in that grief. But do you see the other trial? Do you see the other trial?

What was going on in the room above? As Peter was weeping, having denied knowing his Saviour.

[16:48] Above him, Jesus was standing. Peter fell away. His disciples had fled. But Jesus was standing.

Jesus was standing on trial. He was standing being falsely accused. Verse 55.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him.

But their statements did not agree. He was standing there being falsely accused for Peter. For us. He stood with his mouth closed.

Verse 61. But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Silent as a lamb going before the slaughter. Silent as people were saying untrue, unjust things against him.

[18:02] And he was just standing there silent. He was also standing there speaking the truth. Verse 62.

In a trial where not much truth was spoken. Jesus is asked, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?

And he says, I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.

If only they knew that was true. And yet he was standing there being told he was wrong. Verse 63. The high priest tore his clothes.

Why do we need any more witnesses? He asked. You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think? Dismissed as blasphemy.

[18:59] And yet he was standing there being condemned to death. Verse 64 continues.

They all condemned him as worthy of death. And so he was completely mistreated.

Verse 65. Then some began to spit at him. And they blindfolded him. And they struck him with their fists. And said, prophesy.

And the gods took him and beat him. Do we see our Saviour's trial?

Do we see our great Saviour's love for Peter who had disowned him downstairs? Jesus knew about that.

[19:56] Remarkable. Verse 27. Jesus said, you will all fall away. And yet he chose to willingly continue and endure this injustice.

Jesus chose to proceed, knowing Judas would betray him, knowing the others would fall away at his hour of trial. What a great Saviour.

As we mourn for our sin, we don't mourn as those without comfort. We see comfort here.

As we mourn for those times when we have denied knowing our Saviour, we find comfort here. As we see our Saviour's willingness to endure this terrible position to him.

Do we see our Saviour's love? That should be us, shouldn't it? There, in that place.

[21:12] We're like Peter. We spend times living like we never knew him. But we see our Saviour's love here as Jesus stood before the courts on trial instead of us.

Our Saviour's love for us. Our Saviour's love for Peter was shown in other ways after this too.

Perhaps we'll remember that familiar scene at the end of John's Gospel, a beautiful scene where Jesus said to Peter, Peter, do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Three times, like it was three times when Peter denied him.

It must have hurt Peter. It must have been painful for Peter, but he was graciously and lovingly being restored by the risen Lord Jesus.

[22:22] Jesus, who stood on trial for him. We see this restoration in Mark's Gospel too.

Just a hint of it. Mark 16, verse 7. It's thrilling to spot this this week. Mark 16, verse 7.

Jesus says, but go, tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.

Just as he told you. And Peter. Knowing what Peter had done on that night as Jesus stood on trial for him, for us.

Knowing that it would be recorded for us to read of Peter's falling away in this way. And yet, we read here. And Peter.

[23:30] Go and tell Peter. Go and tell him what I've done for him. Go and tell him my work of salvation for him has been done. We see our Saviour's love here.

We see his willingness to endure such awful suffering for people like Peter, for people like us. His friends, his disciples.

Those who follow him. Those who sing his praises one day and the next find ourselves ashamed to admit we know him. He endured such awful suffering for us.

We praise our great Saviour. And as we heard this morning, in our Saviour's love, in knowing Jesus, we find great security.

That he has stood on trial instead of us. Peter, I'm sure, I'm convinced, learned many things from this.

[24:39] Mark, in writing this gospel, would have heard direct eyewitness accounts. And very likely heard from Peter himself. Who probably sat down and said to him, tells him all about those highs.

Those wonderful highs that we mention of following the Lord Jesus. But also, in humility, said to Mark, And record this to you. I haven't been perfect.

I have failed him to. To tell us this for our own learning. To warn us against falling away.

But also to encourage us when we do. And we do see that Peter learn from this. As you read his first letter, 1 Peter.

Just a few verses to draw to your attention from there. 1 Peter. 1 Peter chapter 5.

[25:43] 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5.

1 Peter chapter 5. Under God's mighty hands. That he may lift you up in due time. Right and say it's good to recognise. Who we are before the Lord.

Humble yourselves before him. He's learned. He's learned to be humble. And Peter has also learned.

That it is God who keeps us by his grace. It's not in our own efforts. It's not us saying. I will wholeheartedly follow you to the end.

We need to depend on God's grace for this. We do want to say that. But we want to recognise.

We're in need of the grace of God in this. Verse 10 and 11 of 1 Peter chapter 5 says this.

[27:10] I'm a God of all grace. He called you to his eternal glory in Christ. After you have suffered a little while. Will himself restore you. And make you strong.

Firm. And steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. Peter knew that grace of God. As he spent that time denying the Lord Jesus. But then was graciously restored by him. He says, you know what?

You need to know that grace too. And that grace will lead us very safely home. On Friday we're going to see more of our Saviour's love as we look at the crucifixion itself.

Isn't it wonderful? We can see it even before that. We're going to respond in two ways. Firstly we're going to respond by singing of our Saviour's love for us.

[28:21] And then after we've sung it. It would be lovely if a few of us could lead us in some prayers of praise. For our Saviour's love for us. And so we'll sing this hymn together.

This familiar hymn. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. And wonder how could he love me? A sinner condemned unclean.

And so we sing how marvellous. How wonderful is our Saviour's love for us. We'll stand and sing.