



THEN took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. 60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, *Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:54-62)

Peter was a man who seemed to do everything by three's. In the introductory text, Peter denied the Lord three times. We will develop that matter a bit more later in this devotion. You will remember that Peter was a very strong and manly fellow. He was a fisherman who lived a rugged life on the sea. He was impetuous and bull-headed, too. Perhaps this was because of his masculine disposition and strength. He had most likely gotten his way involving most disputes in life. So, he thought he knew much more than he did. Sound familiar? He was weak before his faith was made whole!

Let us take the long view of Peter's life with the Lord. We will witness now the first denial of faith of our friend, Apostle Peter.

First

AND when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus

went unto them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, *Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, *Come.* And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. (Matt 14:23-33)

Observe Peter was courageous enough to trust the Lord in walking on the sea. He did walk upon the sea, but when he saw the tumultuous waves and wind-swept crests thereof, he lost courage. He took his eyes off the LORD and concentrated them on the immediate dangers which confronted him. That is the life, also, of the Christian. We may be bold, courageous, and strong; yet, when we concentrate on the threat instead of the salvation that confronts us, we may lose courage and cry out in fear, "Lord, save me!" That is the best and shortest prayer of all. So Peter's first failure of faith occurred on the stormy waters of Galilee.

Second

His second failure led him to speak with the very voice of Satan. Peter's intention was commendable, but his act was lacking in spiritual understanding – like many ministers of our day.

*From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* (Matt 16:21-23)*

Perhaps one of the greatest of besetting sins is to try to render counsel to God as to what is the right way. Peter loved the Lord with a very big heart. He could not brood the notion that his Lord would suffer so. He would have wanted to fight first even to the death. But, though he spoke from a motive of love, the impact of his words were precisely those that Satan would have cherished in dissuading Jesus from allowing Himself to be crucified. Remember, though the Lord never succumbed to temptation, He could still be tempted, and did not relish inviting needless temptation to His doorway. We sometimes place ourselves in compromising circumstances because we believe we are strong enough to withstand the temptation; yet, why be voluntarily tempted at all? We must never place ourselves in the way of temptation, and we must never presume to tell the Lord what is best for Him, or us. This was Peter's second failure of faith.

Third

The third failure of faith for Peter is the subject of our leading text. (Luke 22:54-62) Before examining this third failure of Peter, let us not forget his amazing courage in the face of danger. You will recall what the Lord had instructed His disciples to purchase just before going into the Garden at Gethsemane: 35 *And he said unto them, **When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?** And they said, Nothing.* 36 *Then said he unto them, **But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.*** 37 *For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, **And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.*** 38 *And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, **It is enough.*** (Luke 22:35-38)

The words of our Lord bear record to the right of men and women to be well-armed for self defense. Jesus would be taken in the Garden that night by the Jewish soldiers. He did not desire His disciples to suffer injury or death. It is for this reason that Peter had the sword with which he severed the ear of the soldier that night. I hope you will think on this matter as we study Peter's three denials at the court of the High Priest, Caiaphas.

Peter had courage in following Jesus as a captive of the Jews, just as he had courage to step out of the boat on the Sea of Galilee. If he were recognized, he could have been drawn into the fate of his Master. Please observe the tragic hurt of Peter's third denial of the Lord: *"And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."* Can you imagine that cringing shame evoked by that look from Peter's best friend and Lord? It stung Peter's heart to the bone, and Peter was no longer the strong and stubborn man of old – he went out and cried like a baby. *"And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, **Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.** 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."* Peter denied the Lord three times this last night before the crucifixion. And Peter doubtlessly wept for the three days following. A thousand times he must have asked in shame, *"Why did I do it?" "Lord forgive me for being a coward and denying my Lord."*

But the Lord knows of what dust we are made. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* (Psalm 103:13-14) Even in the Garden Tomb, the Lord was aware of Peter's hurt and shame. It is for this reason that the great Angel told the courageous women at the Tomb early on the morning of the resurrection: *4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7 But go your way, TELL HIS DISCIPLES AND PETER that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.* (Mark 16:4-7) Notice, only Peter's name was mentioned because the Lord desired to soothe his hurting heart. The Lord is like that. He places wells of Living Water before us in dry places.

I have one last question to ask.

Why do you suppose that Peter had such courage in the Garden, but not at the courtyard of Caiaphas?

I believe it was because Peter had the Lord right by his side in the Garden, and when the Lord is with us, we cannot faint. But in the courtyard, Peter was separated from the Lord both by bonds and by spirit. He faltered in that weakness. When the Holy Spirit was given, Peter never again cringed from danger. He followed his Lord willingly in the sunset of his days by the pains of crucifixion.

Can we do the same if demanded?