

Strength for Today

“Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, ‘Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75).

Even when a believer sins greatly, God is there to forgive and restore.

Peter’s denial of the Lord Jesus was a great tragedy. But Peter had already taken a number of steps toward denial before uttering a single word that repudiated Christ. First, he presumptuously boasted that he would never fall away (Matt. 26:33). Second, Peter was insubordinate to Jesus and blatantly refused to accept the Lord’s prediction of his disloyalty (v. 35). Third, he was prayerless in the Garden of Gethsemane (vv. 40-41). Fourth, he foolishly and unnecessarily wielded the sword to defend Jesus (vv. 51-52). Finally, Peter compromised himself and willfully went to a place (the high priest’s courtyard) of spiritual danger (v. 69), where his faith could be tested beyond its endurance.

As Peter tried to wait inconspicuously in the high priest’s courtyard, on three occasions he was confronted by other bystanders and accused of being one of Jesus’ followers. Peter’s reaction showed he had lost all sense of reality and awareness of God. Each accusation was a bit more incriminating and provoked a more vehement denial by Peter. After the third denial, according to the Lord’s providence, Peter’s slide was halted. A penetrating look from Jesus Himself (Luke 22:61) and his remembering of Jesus’ prediction that he would deny Him three times were enough to bring Peter to his senses. As our verse explains it, “he went out and wept bitterly.”

Peter’s tears were not merely tears of remorse—they indicated a true sorrow and turning from sin. It was not until he saw Christ’s face and remembered His words that Peter grasped the seriousness of his sin and repented. This is a profound lesson for you and me. Peter’s sin itself did not cause him to repent; his forgiveness and restoration came only when he turned from sin to God. After His resurrection, Jesus affirmed Peter’s restored love three times (John 21:15-17). This gift of restored fellowship through God’s gracious forgiveness is available to all believers (1 John 1:7, 9).

Suggestions for Prayer

Commit your thoughts and plans to God throughout the day so that you may avoid the kind of compromising situation Peter was in.

For Further Study

Read Psalm 51.

- How does David’s dealing with sin parallel what we saw about Peter’s coming to his senses?
- What verses from this psalm are especially helpful in seeing this parallel?

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