

## Luke 22:61-62

Good Friday, March 29, 2024  
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

***And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.***

**Peter:** "Let me tell you more about a night that was truly a very low point in my life. Earlier in the evening, what you call Maundy Thursday, Jesus had said to me, 'Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.' I couldn't believe what I was hearing! Could I really fall at the hands of Satan? No way! I voiced my protest. 'Lord, I'll go to prison with you. I'll face death with you! I won't deny you!' That's when He spoke the warning again. 'I tell you Peter, the rooster will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me.'

"I do regret that I did not take the warning to heart. Jesus was right. But at the time, I refused to accept it. There were many things that we disciples would not accept at the time, like Jesus giving Himself up to His enemies, and being crucified! Though He had *warned* us, we couldn't take it. I even tried to stop it with a sword. How brazen I was to cut off that man's ear. How devoted *Jesus* was, not only to heal the guy, but to then let those soldiers arrest Him. How panic-stricken we all became! We looked at each other and thought the same thing. 'They've taken Jesus; what will stop them from taking us?' So, we turned and ran as fast as we could out of the Garden of Gethsemane.

"A few hundred yards down the path, I slowed down to catch my breath. I looked behind and noticed that the soldiers were not running after us. We weren't in any danger. Then I thought of my promise to Jesus, how I would face all for Him. I had to go back. I persuaded John to come with me. We followed, at a safe distance, behind this massive group, hundreds of men leading Jesus to the home of the High Priest. That's where I took a fatal step. I should have stayed away. But I always do this, I was impulsive. I went into that courtyard. I kept thinking, 'I've gotta see what happens! I owe Jesus that much!' I was so preoccupied with my promise that I didn't even think about the situation I was facing.

"You can relate to that, I think. At some point or another, you too have allowed yourself to enter into situations that were sure to bring temptation. Like most temptations, this one seemed harmless, at first. A bunch of servants and guards, standing around an open fire—I joined them to keep warm. But then, one of them, a young female servant, kept staring at me. When she realized who I was, she blurted out to the others, 'This man was with Jesus.' And I panicked! There were guards right next to me! I felt threatened! 'What if they arrest me?' I was outnumbered, and Jesus wasn't there to help! I had to do something! So, I said, 'Woman, I don't know Him! I don't know what you're talking about!'

"Then I tried to get away from the group by leaving the fire and walking out to the porch, but that girl followed me, and she said again, 'This man is one of His disciples.' I denied it, twice more. Even took an oath, even invoked a curse on myself. Anything to convince them that I wasn't His disciple, just trying to save my own skin. At that moment, a rooster crowed in the distance. I looked across the courtyard, and there He was. The guards were moving Jesus to a different part of the compound. He stopped and looked right at me. Suddenly, I knew what I had done. I had denied the Lord three times, just like He said I would, and just like I promised I wouldn't.

“I would always be known from that point on as the disciple who denied His Savior. Pastors and teachers would point me out as a blatant example of falling into temptation. And I won’t deny it. I’m not going to cover it up. No, I say this to you, because I want you to recognize how easy it is for you to do the same. You haven’t denied Him with the exact same words that I did. But what about your actions? Have you done things, or not done things, that *would* deny the Christian life He expects you to live? Have you kept your faith hidden from the unbeliever? Do you say *nothing* when the chance to witness the Gospel comes along? Do you remain silent when people sin openly in front of you? That’s what I did. And I pray that you might use me as an opportunity to recognize when you’ve done the same, because there’s forgiveness for you, just as there as there was for me.

“In that moment, when I saw Jesus looking at me, the thought of what I had done brought tears to my eyes. I couldn’t defend it. I was in the wrong. The Lord had every right to cast me away. But, when He looked at me, His *face* did not show anger. It was a look of pity; it was a look of love. His look at me caused me to remember what He said a few hours before. Yes, He said that I would fall into sin. But He *also* said, He also said that I would turn back! Of course, we know that God was doing the turning in my heart. He moved me to repent of my sin. He also caused me to know the relief of having my sin forgiven.

“It took me a while to realize how expensive that forgiveness would be. The Lord did not merely *overlook* my sins, as we Christians do when we forgive each other. No, the Lord made *full atonement* for my sin, He paid for it. Not just for my sin of denial, but all of my sins were paid for on the cross. Our slate is wiped clean, yours and mine, because *Jesus* paid the price. I know it for a fact as one who saw the crucified Jesus risen the grave. He appeared to me personally and assured me that because of Him, I was right with God, no longer guilty in His eyes.

“Now, you Christians today were not there to see any of that. Maybe you think it to be some kind of *disadvantage* that you weren’t there to witness it. But it doesn’t change a thing. You have the exact same Savior that I have. Jesus knows your sins as thoroughly as He knew mine. Jesus moves you to repent, even as He moved me. Jesus Christ has justified you of all of your sins, as much as He has justified me. Because of Him, you and I can look forward to a day when we see Jesus face-to-face, when we can revel in the sight, and when we can also meet each other for the first time.

“Until then, my fellow Christians, may you always experience the recovery of His grace whenever you fall. And may you also do as I wrote, ‘Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and forever. Amen.’”