

## PETER Part II - August 15, 2021

by Paula Rumbolt

**Matthew 26: 31-46, 57-58, 69-75**

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

<sup>32</sup> But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

<sup>33</sup> Peter said to him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you."

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times."

<sup>35</sup> Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

<sup>37</sup> He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.

<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

<sup>40</sup> Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?"

<sup>41</sup> Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>42</sup> Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

<sup>43</sup> Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

<sup>44</sup> So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.

<sup>45</sup> Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

<sup>46</sup> Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

<sup>57</sup> Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered.

<sup>58</sup> But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end.

<sup>69</sup> Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

<sup>70</sup> But he denied it before all of them, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."

<sup>71</sup> When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>72</sup> Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man."

<sup>73</sup> After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you."

<sup>74</sup> Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed.

<sup>75</sup> Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.



Have you ever told someone you would do something and then not do it? How about saying you would take out the garbage but then not do it? How about telling yourself you will not go back to the fridge for another piece of cake, but when everyone's gone to bed you sneak back to the kitchen for another piece? Today we are going to talk about a part of Peter's life where he is famous for saying one thing and doing something else.

Peter and the other disciples Jesus chose travelled around the land telling people about God, healing the sick, raising the dead, and baptizing people. There was a group of religious leaders called the Pharisees that did not like Jesus. In fact, they *really* didn't like Jesus. They would ask Him questions to try and get Him to say something wrong, but they always failed. By the time we get to the part of the story we are going to look at, the Pharisees, the leading priests, and the elders were planning to capture Jesus and secretly kill Him. Jesus knew they would succeed - that was His reason for coming to earth in the first place - to die for the sins of the world.

Last week we learned about Peter and the miracle Jesus did with Peter walking on the water. As we will discover today, that miracle was not enough to sustain Peter in the end. In other words, he couldn't rely on the past to give him what he needed for today. Peter, again, needed to shift his gaze from the storm happening around him to Jesus. It is a reminder to us to keep our focus on Jesus, the Miracle Worker, instead of the miracle itself.

Today we are going to look at three specific times when Peter said one thing but did something else.

### **1. Peter says, "I will never leave You, Jesus" but he does. Vs 33 and 57-58**

The passage of Scripture we read from Matthew 26 takes place on the last night of the Festival of Passover. Passover was a Feast to remember when God saved His people, the Israelites, from the 10th, and final, plague in the Book of Exodus, which was the death of the firstborn male. The Israelites were told to put lamb's blood on their door frames so the angel of death would "pass over" that household.

Fast-forward to our passage. Jesus enjoyed the Feast with His disciples and then had communion with them. The significance of this happening during the Passover, is that Jesus, the first-born male and figurative spotless lamb, shed His blood so it can be placed on the door of our figurative hearts to show that we are God's children, just like the Israelites were. The message of the coming Messiah and Lamb of God is prophesied throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 is likely the most well-known passage that describes the crucifixion of Jesus.

In our scripture for today, Jesus is sharing His last supper with the disciples. When they finished their meal together, Jesus said, "Tonight, all of you will desert me." Peter was quick to jump in. He said, "Though all become deserters because of You, I will never desert You." Well, that is not what happened. In fact, Peter went on to desert Jesus 3 times in the following few hours. He deserted Jesus in the garden when Jesus is praying, and he deserted Jesus after denying Him three times. We will look at both of these in a little bit. The other time is after Jesus is arrested. Verse 56 says that "all the disciples deserted Him and fled," which is exactly what Jesus said would happen. Verse 58 tells us that Peter decided to follow Jesus from a distance.

Let me stop there. What does it look like to follow from a distance? I imagine Peter walking far enough back that he could see where Jesus was, kind of see what was going on, and trying not to do anything to make people notice him. It seems to me that Peter was playing it safe.

I wonder what Peter's reasons were for following from a distance? Perhaps he was scared, and legitimately so. Perhaps he felt alone, since the other disciples had all run away. Perhaps he was curious about what was going to happen, which is why he stuck around at all. Perhaps the relationship he had built with Jesus was just too strong to completely turn away. What does following Jesus from a distance look like in today's world? Perhaps it looks like only going to church occasionally. Or, doing what is popular instead of what you believe is right. Or maybe it means not telling your friends or coworkers that you are a Christian. What are some reasons that people today follow Jesus from a distance? Like Peter, are we scared to be too closely associated with Jesus? Do we feel alone because no one else in our family are Christians? Is the relationship we have with Jesus too strong and real to turn completely away? Or do we believe that seeing Jesus somewhere in the distance is good enough?

## **2. Peter says "I will pray" but he doesn't. Vs 36-46**

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to the garden. Jesus went there to talk to God as He was preparing for what was going to happen later that night. Jesus wanted His friends with Him. He didn't want to be alone. Jesus asked the three men to remain and stay awake, then He left the men and went a little further into the garden to have some quiet prayer time.

Have you ever watched a movie with someone and about 10 minutes into the movie you look over to see them sleeping? This happens to me quite often. Except, I am usually the one who falls asleep. I have even napped during action movies at the theatre! Can any of you relate?

That's what happened when Jesus came back to check on His friends - they were asleep! He woke them up and this time He didn't just ask them to stay awake, He also asked them to pray. Perhaps Jesus thought they got sleepy because they were just watching, and not doing anything. So, He told them to pray, thinking that would help them stay focused and alert. Jesus said to them, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In other words, "in your heart and mind you want to stay awake, but your body is saying the opposite."

I don't know about you, but to be honest, sometimes praying makes me sleepy. I try hard to stay awake, but especially if I am laying in my bed, I will fall asleep. It's not that I don't want to pray, I do. But my body is like, "Nah, I'm tired. Let's sleep."

So, you guessed it, when Jesus came back to see His friends, they were asleep again! They just couldn't keep their eyes open!

Jesus shows great strength and honesty in the midst of the most difficult time of His life. He reveals His emotion to His Father, God. The disciples were the opposite. They were weak and allowed their physical being to control their mental and emotional being. Jesus wanted them to pray so they would not give in to temptation. When we pray, we receive God's power to overcome the things that tempt us. When we reveal our emotions to God in prayer about what we are facing, He will give us the strength to have power over it. He will walk with us and continue to strengthen us.

## **3. Peter says "I will never deny Jesus" but he does. Vs 35, 69-75**

When Jesus says that Peter will deny Him before the rooster crows, he was almost offended by the thought of turning his back on Jesus. He said, "No! Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!"

I remember going to youth events in my teens and every time I left the camp or retreat, I renewed my desire to walk with Jesus and I vowed to never turn my back on Him. I was like Peter, declaring that I would never deny Jesus. Then, just like what happened in Peter's story, things got tough for me. After I was assaulted in grade 8, I turned my back on God and considered ending my life on a regular basis. But, during a youth event, I recommitted my life to Jesus and began to walk His way again. In grade 10, I was assaulted again, and I turned away from God again - this time to unhealthy coping mechanisms that left me feeling guilty and ashamed. Let's see what happened for Peter.

Peter was sitting around a fire in the High Priest's courtyard. He went and sat with the guards and waited to see how things would play out with Jesus. As he was sitting there, a servant girl said to him, "You were with Jesus." Peter denied it in front of everyone by saying, "I don't know what you're talking about." A little later, another servant girl said, "This man was with Jesus." Peter denied it again, "I don't even know the man." Later, someone from the crowd said to Peter, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your accent." This time Peter was angry, he swore and said, "A curse on me if I'm lying - I don't know the man!" Immediately the rooster crowed, and Peter remembered that Jesus said he would deny Him three times before the rooster crows. Peter immediately felt guilt and shame because of his actions, and he went away, sobbing.

In the book of Luke, there is a line added to this part of the story. Luke says that after the rooster crowed Jesus turned and looked at Peter. What does this tell us? It tells us that Jesus knew exactly where Peter was, and even though he was denying Jesus, Jesus still cared enough to know where he was. Jesus wasn't disappointed in Peter. Jesus knew Peter was going to betray Him. And, after he did, Jesus affirmed their connection. With love in His eyes, Jesus made sure Peter knew he was still loved, and he didn't have to walk around in shame with his head down.

Why would God put a story like this in the Bible? One reason is to show us what happened to Jesus. He was let down and betrayed by His closest friend, which means Jesus can relate when we have struggles in our relationships. The second reason is to show us we are not alone. Peter really messed up, so God put his story in the Bible so we would have someone to relate to. I want to be angry with Peter because he walked and talked with Jesus and yet deserted Him when He needed His friends the most. But truthfully, if I were in Peter's shoes, I don't know that I would have done anything differently than he did.

God's goal in our lives is to redeem us. Redemption means to be brought back into the relationship we were intended to have. God wants us to talk freely to Him, to live our lives for Him, and to do what He has created us to do. Sometimes that is difficult when there is sin in our lives. We can feel shame and guilt which makes us turn away from God instead of towards Him. Peter didn't do anything he said he would do. He made promises he didn't keep. He let Jesus down over and over again. And, when asked if he knew Jesus, he said "no." I, too, have done all those things.

Here's the good news: Peter wasn't disqualified because he messed up. And, neither are you. I don't know what it is you struggle with. I don't know how many times you've turned your back on God. I don't know if you deny knowing Jesus when you're with friends or coworkers. I don't know if you're following Jesus, but from a safe distance. But what I do know, is that God loves you no matter what. He knew that you were going to mess up, and keep messing up, and He still sent Jesus to die for you. Maybe you are smack dab in the middle of some sin right now that you say you won't do again but you keep going back to it. God still loves you. He still wants a relationship with you.

I will close with this story:

A little boy visiting his grandparents was given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit his target. As he came back to Grandma's back yard, he spied her pet duck. On an impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead.

The boy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck!" So, Johnny did the dishes.

Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing, Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally smiled and said, "That's all taken care of. Johnny wants to do it." Again, she whispered, "Remember the duck." Johnny stayed while Sally went fishing.

After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally's, finally he couldn't stand it. He confessed to Grandma that he'd killed the duck.

"I know, Johnny," she said, giving him a hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you."

Like Grandma, Jesus already knows the sins we have committed. And, He has already forgiven us. Sometimes it feels easier to hide from what we have done. Perhaps it's something we did a long time ago that still haunts us. Perhaps it made us start following Jesus from a distance and stop praying. We make ourselves a slave to what we did by pretending on the outside that everything is fine, but on the inside the shame from the secret is tearing us apart. So, what do we need to do when we find ourselves in this kind of situation? First, we need to recognize that we did something wrong. Then, we need to turn back to God by confessing to Him what we have done. And, thirdly, we need to accept the forgiveness that Jesus died to give us.

I want to leave you with the picture of Peter having just denied Jesus three times and the rooster crowing. Peter is full of shame because he realized he had done exactly what he said he wouldn't do. Even though Peter was ashamed, his head was not too low to make eye contact with Jesus. Right in the midst of Peter's sin, Jesus looked at Peter. Even though Peter turned away from Jesus, Jesus never turned away from Peter. And He will never turn away from us.