

When You Crack Under Life's Pressure

"While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' Then he went out to the porch, and a rooster crowed. The servant girl saw him again and began to say to those who stood by, 'This man is one of them.' But again, he denied it. A little while later, those who stood by said again to Peter, 'Surely, you are one of them. For you are a Galilean, and your speech confirms it.' Peter began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak.' And the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought on this, he wept" (Mark 14:66-72, MEV).

Peter had a deep fault line in his personality, and it shows here. He didn't do well under pressure.

I think every follower of Jesus identifies with Peter. We don't want to exhibit braggadocio like Peter did in the upper room at the Last Supper, and say: "Lord, that would never be me" (Mark 14:29). Jesus knows the stuff we are made of, even when we do not.

Peter's problem with pressure continued well into his Christian journey. Look at what happened in Antioch. Gentile believers were coming to Christ in great numbers. Peter broke kosher dietary rules to eat with them. For the first time in his life he was eating meat and dairy products at the same time.

However, certain members of the very observant Jewish believers came to Antioch and were not happy with Peter's conduct. What did Peter do? The same thing he did in the high priest's courtyard. He wilted! Paul rebuked him (Galatians 2:11).

Peter withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentile believers because he couldn't take the pressure of adverse opinion. This cracking under pressure comes long after the resurrection! It represents a fault line in Peter's personality that the enemy exploited.

Perhaps you identify with Peter. There is an area in your life where the evil one knows you are susceptible. He will keep coming back to your weakness time and time again.

Did Peter ever get over his vulnerability to pressure? Yes, most definitely! At the end of his life he has made his "calling and election sure" and was prepared to soon put aside "the tent of this body" (2 Peter 1:10-14). Early church tradition says that Peter chose to be crucified upside down because he wasn't worthy of being crucified as was his Lord.

Luke's Gospel tells us that after his third denial, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (Luke 22:61). No wonder Peter "broke down and wept."

Do you also weep when you have failed the Lord? Is there remorse? Granted, the Lord sees that we crack under pressure, but does that nevertheless grieve us when we fail? Or do we go on sinning or failing in a cavalier manner?

Don't you love the Lord's great grace? Jesus never gave up on Peter. In fact, after the resurrection, Peter was the first of the eleven disciples to whom Jesus appeared (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5). The Lord looks at us when we fail, but He holds out His arms afterward to enfold us in His amazing love.

A Prayer: Lord Jesus, I am so grateful that You continue to

love me even when I fail. I love you. {eo}

*Excerpted from Dr. Wood's newly released book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources. **George O. Wood** is the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. For the original article, visit .*