

Jesus Can Redeem Your Denials

Peter's three denials could have marked the end of his ministry. But the power of Christ's forgiveness led to three great victories.

The

Easter story is full of gloom. Agonizing prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Hostile mobs demanding execution. Betrayal and beatings. A crown of thorns and a bloody cross.

But

one of the saddest parts of the story, to me, is what happened to Peter the

night Jesus was arrested. Peter was tired, stressed to the breaking point and

fearful of the crowd. When the high priest's servant girl accused him of being

a disciple of Jesus, he denied it. When she repeated her accusation to some

bystanders, he denied it again. When others questioned him, the Bible says

Peter "began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this man you are talking about!'"

(Mark 14:71, NASB)

"This Easter, please remember that after Peter wept in the darkness of his shame, the sun came up and Jesus lovingly restored his faith. He will do the same for you."

Then

the rooster crowed, and Peter remembered Jesus' words: "Before a rooster crows

twice, you will deny me three times" (v. 72).

This

could have been the end for Peter. He wept bitterly and disappeared. He never

says anything else in Matthew and Mark's gospels. Luke records the fact that

Peter went to Jesus' tomb and found it empty. John's is the only gospel that

explains how Peter found full restoration for his failure.

Sulking,

lonely and dejected, Peter went back to what he knew—his fishing job. He had

fished all night and caught nothing. But then Jesus appeared on the shore and

invited His friends to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They

hauled in a full net of fish! This was a divine sign that their Master still

had plans to use them.

Peter

must have been curious when He saw the full breakfast Jesus had prepared for

the disciples on the beach. How could this be? Jesus wasn't frowning or

scowling. Nor was he waiting to deliver a stern lecture. He didn't scold Peter

or even remind him of his sin. This amazing Savior simply invited Peter to sit

with him and eat.

Then

Jesus talked his beloved Peter through the process of healing. He said to Peter

three times: "Do you love me?" Surely Peter realized that Jesus was repeating himself

three times in order to intentionally apply His forgiveness to Peter's three denials. Jesus' three commands to Peter ("Tend My lambs," "Shepherd My sheep" and "Tend My sheep") provided all the reassurance he needed.

Jesus had not disqualified him. He was not a failure. He was back in the game.

What is even more amazing is how the shaky, impetuous, insecure Peter was transformed after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit a few weeks later. This weak man who crumbled under pressure when His Master was arrested then preached not one, not two, but three important sermons in the opening chapters of the book of Acts.

First, Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and boldly declared to a crowd that Jesus is the Messiah—and 3,000 people were converted. Second, after God healed the lame man in Solomon's portico, Peter preached a sermon of repentance and 5,000 people were saved. Third, after Peter and John were arrested and brought before the high priest, Peter bravely defended his faith in Christ and told the elders: "There is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12).

Three denials. Three affirmations of Christ's love. Three courageous sermons defending Jesus in the face of opposition. I hope you can do

the math.

There

is a bit of Peter in all of us. We are weak in the face of temptation. We feel like failures. Some people even keep a spiritual scorecard reminding them that they struck out.

This Easter, please remember that after Peter wept in the darkness of his shame, the sun came up and Jesus appeared on the shore with a meal prepared. Just as He invited Peter to breakfast, and then lovingly restored his faith, He can do the same for you.

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