

Luke 22:54-62; Luke 22: 31-34; Denying the Christ I. Peter's Denial II. Peter's Sorrow III. Peter's Restoration

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when is the last time that you have cried? What brought about those tears? I know some people tend to cry more often than others- and sometimes tears of joy are more common than tears of sorrow. But can you imagine a grown man crying in great sobs of sorrow? What must have been going on in his heart? Well, today we find the very passage where one of the disciples is broken and humbled to the dust. Last week we consider the first of the two normal responses to danger- the fight response. This week, after the fight in the disciples is rebuked, we find that the disciples take flight- they flee. The shepherd was struck and the sheep scattered- but not Peter. Peter followed after Jesus- although at a distance. Jesus was led into a great courtyard and up into a raised area where the sham trial would take place. Peter trails behind- but in the light of the courtyard and the fire pit- those around him start to recognise him. Soon Peter will go from taking the sword to defend Jesus to denying that he even knew his master. In Peter we find great boldness but also great fear! If all deny you, Peter said in Mt. 26, I will never deny you! Are any of us really so bold as to say we would never deny Jesus? Are any of us above temptation and sin? So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ convicts Peter of sinful denial with a look of acknowledgement.

I. Peter's Denial

We start in our first point where we see Peter's denial. Now in the context of Luke 22, Jesus had just instructed Peter to stay awake- to stand firm and be on guard- pray that you not fall into temptation and sin! Jesus knew that the time of intense pressure and tribulation was at hand. Peter- pray for the strength to resist temptation- because you will fall! And now, as we read earlier in Luke 22:34- Peter is going to fail the test and fall into sin. Would Peter take up his cross and follow Christ? Would he truly follow after Christ and submit even if that meant following Jesus all the way to death? The answer is no- as Peter is identified and questioned in the courtyard. In v. 36 the servant girl- the one who watched over the gate

and gave access to the courtyard- this one sees Peter in the light of the fire and says- this one was also with him. Poor Peter has trouble with servant girls- he is identified when he wants to remain hidden in our text- and later on in Acts 12 he is identified but the servant girl forgets to let him in! So Peter is tested and says- woman, I do not know him. Not only am I not a disciple- I do not even know this man! Next- a little while later in v. 58- someone else says- you are one of his disciples, aren't you? The word is spreading- others are looking at Peter's face more closely. And one more time in v. 59- after a very uncomfortable hour for Peter- he is identified as a Galilean. Your accent gives you away- you talk just like Jesus talks! Surely you are one of His followers! So Peter is identified by his speech and by his acquaintances- you sound like him. The last one to identify Peter is one of relatives of man whose ear Peter cut off- perhaps seeing Peter in the garden only a few hours earlier. But Peter keeps denying the truth. To deny is to state that you have no acquaintance or connection to this person. It is basically saying that this man is a stranger to me – we are not known to each other! Now we should all rightly want to be identified as a follower of Jesus! We should desire to look like Him, talk like Him, and sound like Him because we have spent so much time together! But not Peter- not now as Jesus is being put on trial! So Peter feels trapped- he is in an enclosed courtyard surrounded by soldiers in the growing light. And to avoid any hint of suspicion, he even calls down curses on himself- surely I do not know this man nor do I know what you are talking about! Now this is a very serious thing- consider what Scripture says about denial! Jesus had warned back in Mt. 10:33- if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father in heaven. And again in II Tim. 2:12, if we die with Him we will live with Him, if we deny Him, He will deny us! If we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself! Did you catch that ending- He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself! We may act faithlessly- but He remains faithful! The faithfulness of Jesus is where Peter- and where we will find our hope as we continue! In the passage from Mt. 10 and II Tim 2 as we just read, to deny Jesus is to say that you do not know Him- to reject Him! This is more than just a one-time thing- it is life of rejection and rebellion! There is hope for Peter- as we will see

in just a moment! But at this particular time Peter is given a choice- deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me as Mt. 16 reads- ; or as Peter did- deny Jesus and resist persecution in order to follow your own way. And we see what following your own way leads to!

II. Peter's Sorrow

So after denying his Savior 3 times, the rooster crows. This would be around daybreak. The crow of the rooster happened from 3-5am in the morning. And it was at that point- in the midst of his own questioning and abuse, Jesus turns and sees Peter. In fact, Jesus and Peter lock eyes- Jesus looks across the courtyard- down from the raised platform and he sees his disciple. Jesus gives Peter a look of acknowledgement- Jesus knows what Peter has just done. Although Peter denies that he knew Jesus- Jesus in this look proves that He the Master does know His servant- and He knew that His servant had fallen. Even if Peter denies- Jesus will not deny His servant! And this look broke Peter's heart! As v. 61 reads- the Lord turned and look- and Peter remember all that the Lord had said! And how does Peter respond? He leaves the courtyard and weeps. He wept bitterly- like the weeping one does at a graveside! The mighty Peter- the fisherman turned follower- the rock upon which the church will be built- is overwhelmed by sorrow! It is almost a violent outburst of emotion- he is over come with grief and shame! Now for Peter this will be a very important moment in his life- because there are two kinds of sorrow and two very different outcomes to this grief. One the one hand, you can have the kind of sorrow that Judas experienced and displayed! After Judah betrayed Jesus, he had a change of mind- he recognised that Jesus was innocent and tried to return the money. The priests could not take this blood money, so Judas threw the silver into the temple and went out and hung himself as we find in Mt. 27. Judas has a sense of guilt- but that guilt was not met with hope! There was no way for Judas to undo what he did- and there was no hope of pardon or forgiveness. The life and betrayal of Judas ends in anguish and death. This is worldly sorrow- and it leads to death and destruction. But there is a different kind of sorrow- listen to the words of II Cor. 7:10- godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation. Worldly grief produces

death. So there is such a thing as godly grief- a holy sorrow that produces repentance and leads to life! And that is the kind of sorrow that Peter displays. He acknowledges his sin- his rebellion against the Lord is what moves him to tears. We could say- as we learned last week- that when a Christian sins, they respond with confession and repentance- but that repentance is grounded in God's promises- rooted in faith! For Peter, there was the hope of forgiveness and grace that kept Peter from falling into despair and death! Jesus looked at him with knowing eyes- even compassion in His eyes! There was the promise of restoration as we read earlier from 22:32. So although Peter did act wickedly- in weakness he succumbed to this temptation and trail- he did not forget God's promises. The fact is, every sin is basically a denial. When we sin, we are saying- I do not know God- or I do not know His word! When we sin, we are living like we do not know Jesus Christ- we are not acting like we want to His disciples! But the good news is that there is such a thing a godly sorrow that produces repentance and leads to life! This kind of sin and denial arises from the weakness of the flesh- we fall into sin against our true, redeemed nature! It is not that our faith is destroyed or non-existence, but rather that our faith is weak! So then, falling into sin and denying Christ is not the unforgiveable sin! Praise God! Peter's denial is here to encourage us- when we sin we can learn from Peter that confession and repentance- Godly sorrow is the appropriate response! Not despair without hope- but sorrow mixed with faith and hope! That is godly repentance that leads to life! This is a work of the Holy Spirit within- a work that springs from new life and leads to eternal life! We cling to the promise- He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! Yes, I fell because I was weak- but my Savior- He is strong and able to save!

III. Peter's Restoration

So we come to Peter's repentance- but there is more good news for Peter and the church as well. Not only are we forgiven, we are also restored! Jesus looked at Peter- a look of understanding and compassion. Peter did not watch and pray- rather he slept and fell into sin by denying his Savior. But Jesus did stay away- Jesus did watch and pray! And because Jesus prayed- Peter and the church has good

news! Remember that back in Luke 22:32 Jesus said to Peter- I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail! You may fall- but your faith will not fail! You will sin- but I will restore! And when you have turned from your sin, turn again to your brothers and strengthen them! This was a promise of restoration to the discipleship! It is because Jesus prays for His people that we do not go down to defeat- but rise again to new life! So Peter will be restored again! Lets read from John 21:15-17. Note that Jesus asks Peter 3 times- v. 15, 16 and 17. Peter, do you love me? Peter is given 3 chances- 3 tries to get it right this time! Do you know me Peter- are you my disciple? Yes- Lord! Once for every denial- now Peter rightly says- I know you and I love you! Jesus follows with a 3-fold commission- feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep! Take care of my church Peter- take your place as one of my apostles- a pillar of the NT congregation of Jesus Christ! Peter has been humbled- and now as a restored disciple he is ready to lead! Humble faith is one of the marks of a godly leader of the church! As Jesus asked Peter- do you love me? That true love remains! If you love Jesus- then Jesus is enough! He is your joy and delight! Even David said in Psalm 51- restore to me the joy of your salvation! God's people can be restored- even after great and grievous sins! Because we have a good shepherd- a shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep- therefore we can say with a heart of faith- He restores my soul! Having gone through trials- seeing our own weakness- and experiencing the forgiveness and grace of our God- gives us the opportunity to share with others how we too have fallen and been restored. This in turn encourages others to not be overwhelmed by their guilt and grief- but rather to display godly sorrow that produces repentance and leads to life!

To conclude, Peter's denial is a reminder of our own weakness and failure- how we all can and often have denied Jesus in our sins. But we also find such hope and good news in that sinners can find forgiveness and grace in our precious Savior! Jesus Christ convicts Peter of sinful denial with a look of acknowledgement. Praise God for the Holy Spirit who convicts us of sin and restores our souls! Give thanks for the Good Shepherd who prays for and rescues His sheep from the pit of despair!