

# THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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## Chapter 7

### WHY PETER DENIED HIS Lord

In our last study we looked at the Scriptures concerning the facts of Peter's denials, let us now go back and look at the significance behind these facts.

What was behind Peter's fall?

Peter did not fall because CHRIST prophesied that he would. Rather it is the reverse. CHRIST prophesied he would because Peter was going to fall -- the signs were all there based on Peter's nature. The cause of Peter's fall was not CHRIST's prediction, but Peter's life. As our sister Duck stated in her excellent study on another study, "It is like the roof on a greenhouse. It does not attract the sun because it is bright. It becomes bright because the sun shines on it." Peter didn't fall because GOD planned it to happen, Peter was only doing what comes natural when we take our eyes off of JESUS. Of course, you think he would have learned that back when he was walking on the water and took his eyes off of Him. Then again, some of us need to have the same lesson taught to us more than once before it sinks in, or "registers."

It is always true. "No one suddenly becomes base." Peter's fall was not a blow out, but a slow leak, and as such is the case for every man and woman that appears suddenly to deny their Lord and do that which is wrong morally and spiritually. There have been certain steps taken "in the flesh" before this. The steps may be somewhat secret or concealed, but they always exist. They may be found in every child of GOD who has ever "fallen into sin." It wasn't a fall at all. It was a deliberate walk in the flesh.

Let us then notice Peter's footprints.

1. Self-confidence: **"But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I"** (Mark 14:29).

This was confidence in Peter, or better, confidence in Simon. Later on Peter would write that we are "**kept by the power of God**" (I Peter 1:5), even though in manifold temptations and trials (1:6-7). It was no longer the flesh that kept Peter. Peter then would say with Paul, "**For I know that in my (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing**" (Romans 7:18).

2. unreproveable (or unteachable) : **"And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all"** (Mark 14:30-31).

Peter knew it all. The Word of GOD could not reach him to reprove and correct him (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Whenever the Word cannot reach us before we fall, there is nothing left but failure. Here is one who would not listen to even his own Saviour speaking to him. In essence, Peter was telling JESUS that He was wrong! Imagine that, but that is exactly what he did by speaking the more vehemently.

3. Prayerlessness: **"And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?"** (Mark 14:37).

"Simon, are you of all people sleeping?" CHRIST here gives further warning to Peter which again goes unheeded: **"Watch ye and pray, LEST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION. The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak"** (14:38).

Without prayer, and the victory gained through prayer, the flesh will overpower the spirit of a man. He would will to do good, but have no power to perform it -- for again, **"the flesh is weak."**

CHRIST's words go unheeded: **"And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him"** (Mark 14:40) and they have no answer because there is none.

The person out of fellowship is so at ease and unaware of his spiritual state that he has no trouble sleeping: **"Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep"** (Jonah 1:5).

I feel there is a lesson here also that needs to be emphasized greatly. Whenever I will not pray with another, I am the one who is wrong. Whenever there is a problem to be faced by the Lord's people and one will pray and another will not, the one who refuses to pray is always wrong. The flesh never wants to pray, and the one controlled by the flesh will not pray, for that very act (and continuous state) of prayer would reprove him and his wrong position.

GOD's man loves to pray, and the one in fellowship with the Lord loves the time of fellowship with Him. If we are not in fellowship, His presence is the last thing we want. Just as the last thing Peter wanted was for the Lord to look him in the eyes that night, we will soon be following Him afar off also.

It will be noticed that these footsteps of Peter are a series of chain reaction. Each one leads to the next and to the next. Having taken the first step, and refusing to be converted or reprov'd, one merely continues on the downward course.

4. Impulsive Actions: "**And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear**" (Mark 14:47). cf. John 18:10-11.

Peter was acting without thinking of the consequences of his action as we have already seen. He was acting to maintain his honor because he had previously boasted of what he would do. What happened to CHRIST's honor was immaterial.

In the garden when Peter should have been active, he was passive and asleep; now when he should have been passive he is active. Oh, how characteristic of "the flesh."

5. Unfaithfulness: "**And they all forsook him, and fled**" (Mark 14:50).

Now this should have been enough to cause Peter (and all of the others) to realize their spiritual condition. It was this prediction in Mark 14:27, "**And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,**" that caused Peter to say, "**Although all shall be offended, yet will not I**" (14:29).

It had now been fulfilled, but Peter did not weep bitterly at this time. He has not hit rock bottom but is rapidly moving in that direction.

6. Following CHRIST afar off: "**And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.**"

Intimate fellowship with the Lord has now been broken. This will only lead to further sinning.

Because Peter was following at a safe distance behind the procession, as CHRIST was taken to Annas' home, he was left outside in the street as the gate was closed: "**And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter**" (John 18:15-16).

Evidently both Peter and John started following the procession together after fleeing the scene in the Garden. John went in with the procession moving quickly ahead so as to join in with the end of it, but Peter missed entering. John, who knew he was outside, went out and got him and came back in with him.

James Stalker reminds us: "A western house looks into the street, but an Oriental into its own interior, having no opening to the front except a great arched gateway, shut with a heavy door or gate. When this door is opened, it discloses a broad passage; penetrating the front building and leading into a square, paved courtyard, opens to the sky, round which the house is built, and into which its rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, look . . . On the side of the passage, inside the outer gate, there is a room

or lodge for the porter or portress, who opens and shuts the gate; and in the gate there is a little wicket by which individuals can be let in or out."

John felt he was doing Peter a favor by bringing him into the house, but while John might enter without being tempted to deny his Lord, Peter could not. What a graphic illustration of the doctrinal truth Paul presents in Romans 14 and 15 and in 1 Corinthians 8-10 concerning the weaker brother. If we do something that causes our brother to sin, we have sinned against our brother. We may not fall, but if he falls, we sin also.

John, because he was known to the high priest and therefore to his servants, would have been able to move around with perfect ease, but not Peter. He was in a strange place and was probably fearful of being recognized as one of JESUS' disciples.

Whether John was present at Peter's first denial is not known; however, he is the only one who mentions it. It may have been that John hurried away not wanting to miss anything that was going on, and Peter was left behind. I personally feel John was there. At any rate, the very maid who let Peter and John in, questions Peter: **"Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"** He saith, **"I am not"** (John 18:17).

Don't hurry over this. **"Art not thou ALSO one of this man's disciples?"** This maid knew John was a disciple of CHRIST for he was known unto the high priest and therefore to his servants; she is asking Peter if he were also a disciple, and she says this because she could reason why John would want to bring him in. Peter says: **"I am not."**

I imagine if you would have asked Peter right after this: "Why did you say that," he would have answered: "I don't know." It was something he said without thinking about it or premeditating it at all. Subconsciously Peter is fearful.

After this Peter stands with the officers and servants and warmed himself.

7. Wrong Company: **"And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not"** (John 18:18-25).

**"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"** (Psalm 1:1).

Nothing is mentioned further of John from this point on until we come to the cross and see him standing beneath it with the Lord's mother. The implication is that John as well as Peter went to Caiaphas' house when the Lord was taken there.

At Caiaphas' house another fire is kindled in the courtyard, and Peter is standing with the men warming himself. They ask him: "**Art not thou also one of his disciples?**" He denied it, and said, "**I am not**" (John 18:25).

Peter has emphatically said, "**No**," and he figures this will suffice; so the next time we see him he has set down at the fire and in light of the fire one of the maids of the high priest spots Peter. She intently looks him over and then speaks up: "**Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus.**" But he denied, saying, "**I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest**" (Mark 14:68). "**Woman, I know him not**" (Luke 22:57).

At this Peter felt he had better change location. So he went into the precourt or forecourt which is the archway leading from the gate of the court.

#### 8. Fearful.

Peter is now controlled by fear, and in this state the whole nature of the flesh will manifest itself -- given enough time.

The very same maid who spotted him in the light of the fire sees him again in the forecourt and began to say to them that stood by: "**This is one of them.**" But he denied it (Mark 14:69-70a).

Another maid saw him and said unto them that were there: "**This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene.**" Being controlled by fear, Peter felt now the need to make his denial even more emphatic than he had done before, so he denied with an oath, calling GOD to witness: "**I know not the man**" (Matthew 26:72).

Thus we have another step taken by Peter.

#### 9. Oath -- Calling GOD to witness his lie.

Then after a little while, a male servant saw him, and said: "**Thou also art one of them.**" But Peter said: "**Man, I am not**" (Luke 22:58).

Then the servant of the high priest who was a kinsman to the man whose ear Peter cut off said to Peter: "**Did not I see thee in the garden with him?**" Peter denied it. But the man confidently affirmed: "**Of a truth this man also was with him: for he is a Galilean.**" To this Peter said: "**Man, I know not what thou sayest.**"

While Peter was in the process of speaking, the cock crowed.

Then after a little while again, they that stood by said to Peter: "**Of a truth thou art one**

**of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee that thou art a Galilean."** This causes Peter to panic and so to take his final step on his downward course. He began to curse and to swear and said: **"I know not this man of whom ye speak."**

10. Cursing: Peter's language as a fisherman before he met the Saviour.

Peter says in effect: "Does my speech betray that I am his disciple? Well then, listen closely to my speech. Does this sound like someone who is His follower? Would anyone who was His follower use language like this?"

Peter knew that they knew that no one belonging to JESUS would use such language as Peter was using. What a testimony Peter was unconsciously giving to CHRIST and to his disciples, but oh how wrong that such a testimony of CHRIST's purity and of His power to transform men should have been borne in this way from the Lord's own disciple.

Still today the world does not expect cleanness of speech and conduct from its own, but it does expect and demand it (and rightly so) of one of the Lord's disciples.

### **CAN THE DISCIPLE OF THE LORD REVERT BACK TO THE OLD LIFE AND CONDUCT?**

Yes he can. But he can never do so as a manner of life. Formerly, before he met JESUS, this was the way he lived. He can now only do this as an act, after which he will be convicted by the HOLY SPIRIT within.

Should he persist in sinning and hardening his heart to the HOLY SPIRIT's reproving, he is on dangerous ground simply because he is GOD's child. He cannot live this way for GOD will take him off the scene. Read very carefully, and very prayerfully, these following passages: Acts 5; I Corinthians 5, 11; James 5; and I John 5).

The cock now crows the second time. Peter hears it, and there comes to his mind all the words that CHRIST spoke to him, but he refused to listen and believe. It was just beginning to become light; the trial and beatings before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were over; CHRIST was being led out. At the very instant Peter was swearing and cursing, CHRIST was close enough to His disciple to pick up every word. With the crowing of the cock, **"the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."**

### **THE LOOK OF CHRIST**

Eye met eye, and while no words were spoken, yet a volume of words were communicated. What a look it must have been. It had to bring conviction, and yet be filled with compassion, else Peter would have been brought to despair. One would imagine that the look must have been one of hurt love, for had it been one of angry indignation - it might have crushed the disciple on the spot!

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BBB: Here is a preacher that is not only NOT singing, "Oh for a look from my Saviour," but also hoping that He didn't hear what he just said. But He more than likely did. A part of me wants to say, "Poor Peter, today would have been the one day to stay in bed." Isn't there something of the human element in all of this?

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It was both a sword to cut, and a balm to heal. It was used as the climatic turning point in Peter's life. It brought Peter back to reality and spiritual truth. For the next fifty days Peter will be moving upward until he delivers to these same people the message of the HOLY SPIRIT as the powerful preacher of Pentecost. Did you get that? These same people to whom he now denies JESUS he will deliver that message.

### **HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?**

How far have we sinned against our Lord? It makes no difference how far we have gone, there is always forgiveness if we will but turn and seek it. But if truth be told, isn't even one step in the wrong direction too far? Let alone the ten steps of Peter.

**"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:9).

The Lord is always faithful to His child. Satan would love to bring the child of GOD to the place of despair so that he plunges himself over the precipice that Judas used to end his life. If Satan can succeed in having the child of GOD do this, he can gain the victory and defeat the Lord's plan in that life. If Satan can make them a mental wreck over their sin, it will be a good second best.

### **WHAT DO WE NEED?**

We need to look into the face of the One we have denied just as Peter did. Never mind you don't want to, you NEED to. When Peter looked at Him, he saw One who loved him with an infinite love EVEN IN HIS SIN. The Lord loved Peter even though Peter had just denied Him. He was on the way to the cross to die for Him -- greater love hath no man than this.

The very fact that CHRIST loved Peter was what broke Peter's heart.

As James Stalker has penned it: "He saw now what kind of MASTER he had denied; and it broke his heart. It is this that always breaks the heart. It is not our sins that make us weep; it is when we see what kind of Saviour we have sinned against." It is when we look into the eyes of our Saviour! We need to look in His eyes daily.

The remembrance of his fall and restoration never left Peter for one moment the remainder of his life. It colors everything in Peter's first Epistle. It might be a good idea to go over and read it after reading this sad tale from the life of Peter and see if you can see the face of JESUS in His Epistle.

## **THE WEeping MAN**

I have heard some say that they never like to see a man cry. I would to GOD we had men today who could cry. Many of the men GOD used have been men that wept before Him.

## **JOB**

**"My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16)**

## **DAVID**

**"For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalm 102:9)**

**"And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (II Samuel 15:30)**

## **JEREMIAH**

**"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jeremiah 9:1)**

**"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive" (Jeremiah 13:17)**

**"For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed" (Lamentations 1:16).**

## **NEHEMIAH**

**"And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4).**

## **CHRIST**

**"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41)**

## **JOHN**

**"And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon" (Revelation 5:4).**

PAUL

**"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. ) (Philippians 3:18-19)**

**"And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him" (Acts 20:37)**

PETER

**"And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75b)**

**"And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:72b).**

## **WEEPING IN THE SCRIPTURE**

The Word of GOD tells us:

**"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Luke 6:21)**

**"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep" (James 4:9)**

**"Weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15).**

Here is weeping, not because of any personal sin, but because of a heart of compassion. Many times Scripture portrays weeping as the sign of the true repentance of the heart and conviction of sin.

**"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5-6)**

## **EARTH HAS NO SORROW THAT JESUS CANNOT HEAL.**

Duck Adds:

This story of Peter and his denial of Christ is one of my favorites. And it is true that Peter never forgot that night and what He did. That look from Jesus, well, I can't even begin to imagine what it much have looked like...though I got a feel recently of a little of what it might have felt like. The pain Jesus must have felt, to have been denied by one of His dearest, His rock, His Peter.

Jesus and Peter were both in the court yard. Peter was at the fire and Jesus was being

spit upon, hit, geared, and other things by the crowd. But in the mist of all that it was Peter's denial that the Savior heard. And when their eyes met Peter's heart must have broken into a thousand pieces...just as the Savior's had. He had just denied the Man he loved more than his life. Because Jesus is our life.

But the story is far from over. Jesus told the Apostles to meet Him in the mountains. This was after the resurrection. But Peter was still having problems and talked some of the other Apostles into going to the beach. Now isn't that just like Peter...and how like us that is. Peter wanted to go fishing. It was what he knew how to do and what he did before Jesus. Peter did exactly what we do. He tried to go back to his old life. But once we have tasted of Jesus...and gotten glimpses of His Kingdom to come...that is all but impossible. Oh, you can go back, but it just isn't the same anymore.

They were all on the Sea of Tiberias and it was night when they got into the boat. Now there is another point. When we try to go back...isn't it always night, always dark. Well the boys caught nothing, a boatload of nothing. Isn't that what we always find when we go back, nothing. We come up empty. It's just not there any more.

Well when morning came...as it always does with Jesus...always the light, Jesus was standing on the shore. Now look what He calls the boys in the boat...rebels? Nope. Rogues? Nope. Ex-apostles? Nope...He calls them His children...and He ask the question no fisherman catching no fish wants to be asked..."Catching any fish, boys?"

Now most fishermen would answer , "well we got a few nibbles", or "the weather is just not good for catching fish" But the answer they gave was just "no" Know why? Sounds good when we think about the good old days, fun, friends, good parties. But when we get back there...it is empty, nothing there. Ever notice how the devil can always remind us of the kicks...but leaves out the kick-backs?

Want to know what happens next?...it is a super great story and I do love it so...it really speaks to a sinner's heart...

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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