

CHAPTER 13

The Trials Of Christ and Peter's Three Denials

Following His arrest, the sinless Son of God was tried as a common criminal and sentenced to death. During the night and into the next morning a total of six trials were conducted--three by the Jews and three by the Romans. As we consider each of these horrendous trials, it will become quite clear who was really innocent and who was really guilty!

1) Jesus Before Annas

The Scripture tells us that immediately after His arrest, Jesus was led first to _____ (John 18:13) for a preliminary examination. Who was this important person?

Annas was perhaps the most powerful and influential man in Jerusalem. He served as the High Priest from 7-15 A. D. Even after he was **deposed** (removed from office) in 15 A. D. he still retained the title. See Luke 3:2; John 18:19, 22; and Acts 4:6 where he is called the "High Priest" even though he was not the actual High Priest. So great was his influence over the priestly party that five of his sons as well as his son in law C _____ (John 18:13) and his grandson Matthias each served as the High Priest. Josephus, the Jewish historian said this about Annas:

Annas proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons, who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly. (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, XX. ix. 1)

Annas thus used his sons and relatives as his willing instruments. At the time of these events, Annas was a man of great age and experience, and also great wealth. He reaped a huge profit from the terrible temple sales--see Matthew 21:12-13--which transformed the house of God into a den of _____. Though not holding the actual office or title, he was considered the High Priest in the eyes of the people, and on any matter of great import, he was always the man to consult. We are not surprised, therefore, to learn that Jesus was led to Annas F _____ (John 18:13)!

What two things did Annas ask Jesus about (John 18:19)?

1. His D _____
2. His D _____ (teaching)

By his questioning, Annas was insinuating that Jesus was gathering around Himself a band of followers (**His disciples**) with the possible intention of political insurrection and revolt against Rome. He wanted Jesus to say something (**His doctrine**) which would make Him appear as One who was seeking to overthrow Roman rule. He knew the Romans would gladly exterminate anyone guilty of, or even accused of, sedition or treason. In short, he wanted Jesus to say something by which He would incriminate Himself.

Notice our Lord's masterful response in John 18:20-21. It was as if He were saying, "I decline to be a witness against myself, and I demand that you produce honest witnesses as the law requires." Following this fair request, Jesus received unfair treatment from the hand of a wretched officer who " _____ Jesus with the _____ of his _____ " (John 18:22).

Awful Abuse #1

This officer took his hand and struck the sinless Saviour in the face. His hand was not clenched in a fist, but it was his open hand that made contact--either a blow with the palm of the hand (cuff) or a strong slap with the hand and fingers. Even if Jesus had been an ordinary man and guilty of a terrible crime, He would not have deserved such brutal treatment. This was the first of many such blows to the face that Jesus would receive in the coming hours.

Do you think the officer was able to answer the Lord's question in John 18:23? _____ [Note: Verse 24 should be translated, "Then Annas sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the High Priest." Thus, "the high priest" mentioned in John 18:19,22 must refer to Annas (the former High Priest) and not Caiaphas (the actual High Priest).]

The Question Of Legality

The trial before Annas was entirely ILLEGAL. It was held at night, contrary to Jewish law; no **indictment** (a formal written statement charging a person with an offense) was prepared; no witnesses were heard; no counsel or defense attorney was provided for the Defendant--all these things were required by Jewish law. The only thing which was provided for the Defendant was a brutal slap in the face! It was a mockery and travesty of justice.

The other trials before the Jews were just as illegal and unfair. John James MaClaren (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. III, p. 1672) has set forth but some of the ways the law was violated:

1. Some of the judges taking part in and directing the arrest (judges should not act as arresting officers)
2. The examination before the trial (when Christ stood before Annas) and the attempt to obtain admissions
3. Endeavors of the judges to procure the testimony of false witnesses
4. Commencing and continuing the trial at night
5. Examining and adjuring the accused in order to extort admissions from Him
6. Rendering a verdict of guilty at the close of the night session, without allowing a day to intervene
7. Holding the morning session on a feast day, and rendering a verdict at its close
8. Rendering both verdicts without any legal evidence

In other words, everything they did was wrong, unfair, unjust, perverted and contrary to proper legal procedure. They seemingly broke every law in the book! They sought by any means possible (even illegal means) to condemn Jesus, but they are the ones who should have been condemned for their travesty of justice. They accused a Man of crimes He had never done and they wickedly condemned the H _____ O _____ and the J _____ One (Acts 3:14)!

2) Jesus Before Caiaphas And The Sanhedrin (Informal Trial Before Dawn)

After His visit with Annas, where was Jesus taken next (John 18:24)?

_____ This perverse priest is also described in John 18:13-14 (compare John 11:49-51). As to their character and hatred for Jesus, Caiaphas and Annas were like twins!

Mark 14:55 tells us that all the C _____ was gathered together for this nighttime occasion. This is a reference to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the ruling council.

The Sanhedrin (under the leadership of Caiaphas and under the influence of Annas) found some _____ witnesses (Matthew 26:59). Why did the testimony of these witnesses prove to be a great embarrassment to the Jewish leaders (Mark 14:56)?

_____ Finally two witnesses came forth with an accusation based on something Jesus had once said (Matthew 26:61). Compare John 2:19-21 and explain how the Jews (and these witnesses) misinterpreted what Jesus said. Did the testimony of these two witnesses carry much weight (Mark 14:59)? _____

The Strange Silence

Finally Caiaphas stood up and asked Jesus, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" (Mark 14:60). What did our Lord say in return (Mark 14:61)?

Usually men try to defend themselves even when they know they are wrong (think about yourself when others accuse you, whether rightly or wrongly). In this case, the Lord Jesus was completely blameless and innocent, and He had every right to defend Himself against the unjust charges that were being hurled at Him. We marvel, therefore, at His silence!

It is sometimes more difficult to remain silent than to speak. The Scriptures record three occasions in which the Lord was silent before His enemies and before His judges:

1. Before Caiaphas (Mark 14:60-61)—silence in the face of **prejudice**
2. Before Pilate (Mark 15:3-5)—silence in the face of **politics**
3. Before Herod (Luke 23:8-10)—silence in the face of **curiosity**

Which verse in Isaiah 53 speaks of our Lord's strange silence before His accusers?
_____ Compare 1 Peter 2:22-23.

The Solemn Oath

After the period of silence, the High Priest spoke again (read Matthew 26:63). This time Caiaphas places Jesus "under oath" ("I adjure thee"), the most solemn and weightiest oath of all, namely, "**by the living God.**" What all-important question was Jesus now required to answer (Matthew 26:63)? _____

The Lord knew that it was now impossible to remain silent. He could not deny who He was!

What answer did the Lord give (Matthew 26:64)? T _____ H _____ S _____ (in other words, "What you have said is so!" Compare Mark 14:62: Jesus said, "_____!"). Jesus also referred to Himself as the Son of man who shall come again to judge the world (Matthew 26:64 and Daniel 7:13-14).

His Great Crime

As soon as Jesus had made His great claim, the High Priest gave the **verdict** (Matthew 26:65):

HE IS GUILTY OF B _____

The Council then pronounced the **sentence** (Matthew 26:66):

HE IS WORTHY OF _____

Note: The KJV says "He is guilty of death" but other translations say, "He is worthy of death" or "He is deserving of death," speaking of the punishment they felt **He** deserved. It is actually the punishment that **we** sinners deserve (Rom. 1:32; 6:23).

What was His great crime? He claimed to be the Messiah (God's anointed King), the Son of God! When criminals were crucified, the charge or accusation was often written over their heads. For example, if a man intentionally killed someone, they might write, "This is a MURDERER!" What accusation was written over the head of Jesus (Matthew 27:37)?

Such was His crime!

Awful Abuse #2

After the sentence was pronounced, his accusers took off their religious masks and began to show themselves as the hideous monsters they really were! Their real character and awful depravity began to be revealed. First they began to _____ in His face (Matthew 26:67). There is no greater insult than this, unless it be the plucking off of hairs from His cheeks (mentioned in Isaiah 50:6 but not by the gospel writers). They also B_____ Him (Matthew 26:67), which means they clenched their fist and struck the Lord even as a boxer would strike an opponent, yet without the comfort of boxing gloves. Others hit him hard with the _____ of their hands (Matthew 26:67—an openhanded slap or cuff), and as they punished Him with their fists and their open hands, they mocked Him and made fun of Him and started playing games with Him.

They even _____ Him (Luke 22:64) and played a sadistic and cruel game of blindman's buff (a group game in which a blindfolded player tries to catch and identify another player). "If You are the Son of God as You just claimed, tell me what my name is," as one by one they would slap Him and buffet Him (Mark 14:65). Christ could have easily told them their names (that would have surprised them!), but again He remained silent and graciously endured this horrible treatment. The Bible does not even tell us all the things they did or said to Him. It merely says "_____ other _____ blasphemously spake they against Him" (Luke 22:65). It's evident who was really guilty of blasphemy. Did the Lord know beforehand that such things would happen to Him (Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32)? _____

At about the same time Jesus also received shameful treatment from one who was His friend (compare Luke 22:54-62).

3) Jesus Before Caiaphus And The Sanhedrin (Formal Trial At Dawn)

The council or Sanhedrin gathered together for one more meeting. When did this take place (Mark 15:1; Matthew 27:1; Luke 22:66)? _____ Jesus was also awake all that night, and so along with all the mockery and abuse and punishment would be added sheer physical exhaustion and fatigue which naturally comes from going many hours without sleep.

The Jewish leaders knew that their night trial was illegal, so as soon as it was day they quickly condemned Christ again, as they had done earlier (read Luke 22:66-71). Their decision was to put Jesus _____ (Matthew 27:1), and now all they needed was the permission and help of the Roman authorities to carry it through.

4) Jesus Before Pilate The First Time

The Jews bound Jesus and led Him to Pilate the Roman _____ (Matthew 27:2). In John 18:28 we are told that these Jews would not enter the palace of a Gentile lest they should be _____. Do you smell any hypocrisy in this show of piety? Here they are, involved in the worst crime ever known to the human race, and they are worried about being defiled in a pagan's palace! They were already defiled to the limit! Their only hope was to

fall before the feet of their bound Prisoner and cry out for mercy and pardon. But such is **the tragedy of religion** as men try to cover up a defiled heart instead of facing up to a holy God.

Pilate first asked for the accusation or the charge (John 18:29). What is this man guilty of? His question was a fair one, but notice how the Jews tried to evade it (see John 18:30)! They knew that their charge of **blasphemy** would not be of great concern to Pilate. Somehow they must try to make Christ appear as an enemy of Rome. Thus, according to Luke 23:2, their formal accusation was made up of three charges:

1) _____

2) _____
(Compare Luke 20:19-26)

3) _____

The first charge was not specific at all. The second charge was obviously untrue. It was only the third charge which would have been of concern to Pilate because anyone seeking to be a "King" would be a threat to Roman rule.

Pilate's Plan #1

At first Pilate hoped to turn Jesus over to the Jews and to let them deal with Him according to their law (John 18:31). This would have been possible except for the fact that the Jews demanded the death penalty. But why could not the Jews put Jesus to death (John 18:31)?

Who alone could execute the death penalty? _____ What method of executing criminals was used by the Romans (Luke 23:33)? _____ Did Jesus speak beforehand about the manner in which He would die (John 18:32)? _____ Compare John 3:14; 12:32; Matthew 20:19. If the Jews had put Jesus to death, what method would they have used (John 8:59; 10:31)? _____ This same method was used against S _____ (Acts 7:58-59), even without permission from Rome!

Pilate then realized that he would have to deal with this capital case, and so he met with Jesus in his palace to question Him about the third charge brought against Him by the Jews, "Art thou the _____ of the Jews?" (Luke 23:3). Jesus answered to the point, _____ (Luke 23:3--in other words, "What you have said is so!"). John gives us the most information concerning this interview in John 18:33-37. The Lord made it very clear that He was the _____ (v.37) and He did have a _____ (v. 36), but He also explained that His subjects were not militants who were intending to fight against the Jews or against Rome (v.36). Such a King was no threat to Pilate, and thus he announced his verdict of "NOT GUILTY" (John 18:38).

Pilate's Plan #2

The Jews could not be satisfied until Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross. In their urgency they happened to mention one word which triggered a thought in the mind of Pilate. Read Luke 23:5-6 and write this key word found in verse 5: _____ With this bit of information, Pilate was able to send the Accused One to yet another Judge!

5) Jesus Before Herod

Herod the tetrarch happened to be in _____ at that time (Luke 23:7). Why was Herod so glad to see Jesus (Luke 23:8)?

_____ What mighty miracles did Jesus perform before His eyes? _____ What amazing things did Jesus say to this man (Luke 23:9)? _____ Did the Lord satisfy the sinful curiosity of this one who had murdered John the Baptist? _____ The only thing Herod gained from this interview was a new F _____ (Luke 23:12)!

Awful Abuse #3

According to Luke 23:11, Herod joined with his soldiers to mock the King and to dress Him in a gorgeous, shining robe. The F _____ (the word Jesus used to describe Herod, see Luke 13:32) had his FUN! Finally they sent Him again to _____ (Luke 23:11).

6) Jesus Before Pilate The Second Time

Pilate's Plan #3

Certainly Pilate was not as glad to see Jesus as Herod was (compare Luke 23:8)! After having been examined by both Pilate and Herod, the verdict was still, "NOT GUILTY" (Luke 23:14-15), so Pilate desired to release Him. Pilate knew who the guilty ones really were (Mark 15:10; Matthew 27:18), and he was hoping to persuade the people that Jesus should be released instead of the murderer Barabbas (Mark 15:6-10). He wrongly offered to _____ Him before releasing Him (Luke 23:16), even though he had just said that Jesus was not guilty (Luke 23:15). Thus Pilate wanted to punish the innocent to appease the people! The Jews, however, even outshined Pilate in their wicked injustice. They wanted to crucify the Innocent One and release the guilty murderer (Matthew 27:20-21; Acts 3:14-15)!

Pilate's Plan #4

Pilate's next strategy was to severely whip Jesus, hoping that the Jews might have pity upon Him and consider this as sufficient punishment, so that He could then be released. Thus he took Jesus and _____ Him (John 19:1).

Awful Abuse #4

Nothing was more terrible than the Roman scourge, except for the Roman cross. Consider the following:

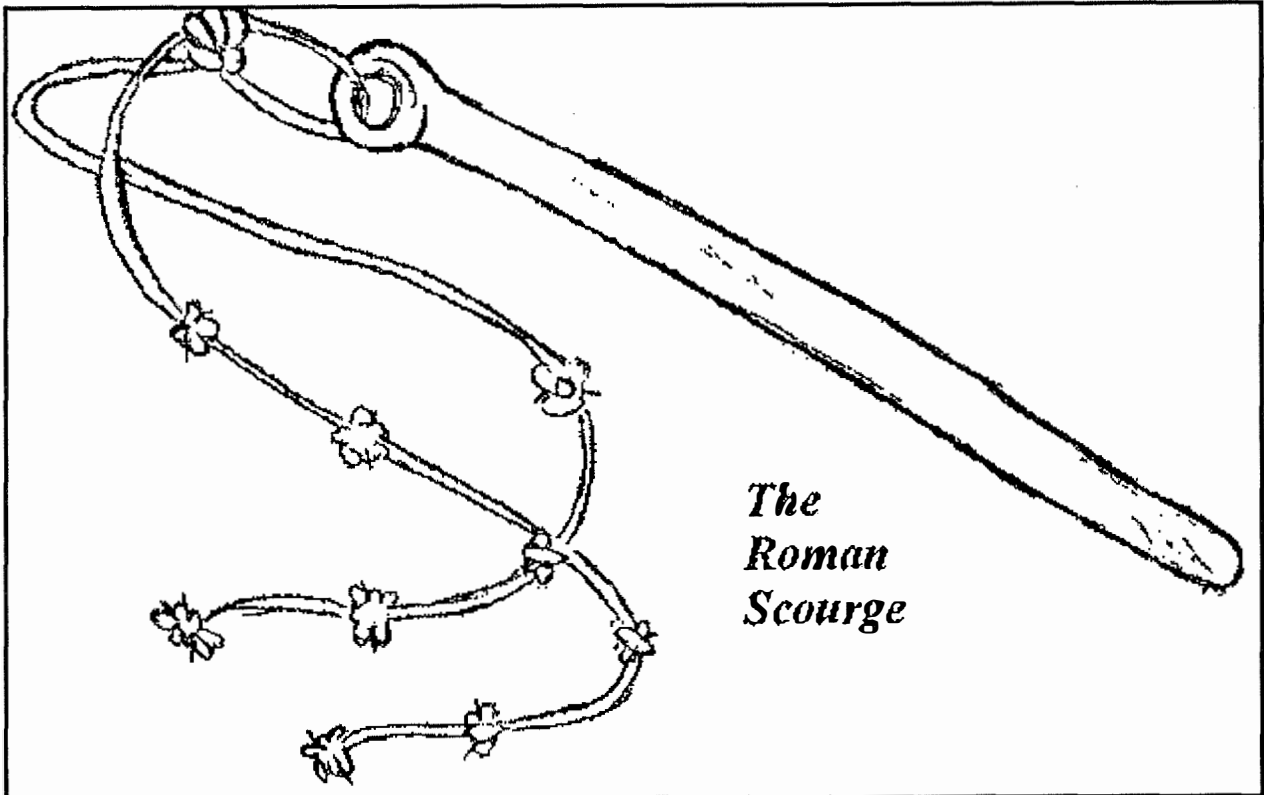
Such scourging was hideous torture. The Roman scourge consisted of a short wooden handle to which several thongs were attached, the ends equipped with pieces of lead or brass and with sharply pointed bits of bone. The stripes were laid especially (not always exclusively) on the victim's back, bared and bent. The body was at times torn and lacerated to such an extent that deep-seated veins and arteries--sometimes even entrails and inner organs--were exposed. Such flogging, from which Roman citizens were exempt, often resulted in death. --William Hendriksen, *John*, p. 414

Stripped of clothes, the victim was forced to bend over a low pillar, while a short-handled whip with several leather thongs studded with sharp objects

was used to lash and lacerate the back. Roman law laid no limits on the number of blows to be administered. --D.Edmond Hiebert, *Mark*, p. 384

A scourge is a Roman's implement for severe bodily punishment...So hideous was the punishment that the victim usually fainted and not rarely died under it.

--*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, p. 2704 ("Scourge")



Compare Psalm 129:3. That Jesus was scourged may help to explain why He was unable to bear His cross all the way to Calvary.

Isaiah 53:5 is often thought to be a reference to the scourging Jesus received at the hands of the Romans. It says: "by His _____ we are _____." It is better, however, to understand this to refer to the terrible punishment Christ received at the hands of God the Father when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree of Calvary's cross. The great emphasis of Isaiah 53 involves not what the Romans did to Jesus but what God the Father did to Jesus. He was stricken and smitten by God (v.4), even though we know that at His trials He was smitten by the Romans. Even though He was in some ways bruised by the Romans during His trials as they struck Him with their hands and their fists and abused Him in other ways, yet Isaiah 53 emphasizes that He was bruised by the LORD (v.10). The emphasis in Isaiah 53 is upon what GOD did to Him--see verse 6 ("The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all"). Isaiah 53:5 says that the Messiah "was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." The clear teaching of the Bible is that Christ paid the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross, not prior to the cross. See 1 Peter 2:24--"bore our sins in His own body **on the tree**" and see also the fuller discussion of this at the end of **Chapter 11**

in these "Life of Christ" studies. It is in this same context that the last part of verse 5 says that we are **healed by His stripes**, referring to the punishment inflicted upon Him by the Father when He was punished as our Substitute. This is further confirmed by 1 Peter 2:24 where Isaiah's phrase, "by whose stripes ye were healed," is quoted by Peter. This same verse makes it clear that it was **on the tree** (cross) that He bore our sins in His own body. Thus we conclude that the stripes mentioned in Isaiah 53:5 were blows received from God the Father when He died for our sins and not blows received from scourging at the hands of the Romans prior to the cross.

William Kelly said it this way:

When it is said, "By His stripes we are healed," is it credible that a saint could believe they refer to His being scourged by the soldiers? These figures so multiplied in Isaiah 53 express not merely of what man did to Jesus, but what He suffered from Jehovah, when He hid the iniquity of His own on the rejected Messiah -- figures taken from what is common among men, but above all to express that which He Himself inflicted. It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, it was He that put Him to grief; and it was for the transgression of His people that He was stricken. He bare the sin of many. [William Kelly's "The Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16," as found in R.A. Huebner's publication, *Thy Precepts*, Vol. 14, #4, July/Aug 1999, page 123.]

Awful Abuse #5

For the Roman soldiers, scourging was not enough. Consider all that they did:

- 1) **They robbed Him** with a scarlet-purple robe (Mark 15:17; Matthew 27:28). Throwing this around the scourged Saviour certainly must have hurt Him.
- 2) **They crowned Him** with a _____ of _____ (Mark 15:17) and pressed it upon His head.
- 3) **They sceptered Him.** Having forced Jesus to sit down, in His right hand they now place a sturdy _____ (Matthew 27:29), for a king must have a scepter.
- 4) **They adored Him** in cruel mockery. A soldier would drop to his knees and say, "_____, _____ _____ _____!" (Matthew 27:29). Then another would take his turn, and still another, until all had shared in this fun.
- 5) **They spit upon him.** They descend to a level lower than the beasts (Matthew 27:30). Each soldier, when his turn came around, after getting up from his knees would spit into the face of God's only begotten Son.
- 6) **They slapped Him** hard in the face with the palms of their hands (John 19:3), the same face that the Jews had repeatedly slapped and buffeted just hours before. Does this help explain Isaiah 52:14 and 53:2? Do you think the paintings which show Christ dying on the cross show us the face of the Saviour as it really was?
- 7) **They hit Him.** Before any of these mockers vacated his position in front of Jesus, he removed the stick from the hand of the victim and struck Him on the head with it, as if to say, "What a king you are! One that gets hit over the head with his own scepter!" And as the fiend hit Jesus, the thorny spikes were driven deeper into the flesh. All this they did to one who was already SCOURGED! [See William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, pages 959-960]. See also Mathew 27:30.

But, before we feel sorry for Jesus, perhaps we should remember that it is these soldiers who we should really feel sorry for (see Philippians 2:9-11). There will come another day when these men will once again bow before the KING, the very One they mocked and abused. They will face the King of Kings in all His glorious majesty and power and awesome holiness. He will also be their Judge.

After all this was accomplished, Pilate brought forth Christ to exhibit Him to the crowd and said, "_____ " (John 19:5). However, when the Jews saw the battered and beaten Jesus, they had no pity (John 19:6). They would only be satisfied to see **Him on the cross**. They wanted BLOOD! What crime had He done? "He made Himself the _____ " (John 19:7). He claimed to be the Son of God.

All of Pilate's efforts to release Jesus failed (read John 19:8-16). Finally in his weakness, all he could do was wash his hands (Matthew 27:24) and deliver Him to be crucified. Who took full responsibility for this KING OF ALL CRIMES (Matthew 27:25)?

_____ Forty years later more than a million Jews perished in the streets of Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Pilate was pressured by the crowd to do what he knew was wrong, and no amount of washing would ever make his hands clean. The sin of the Jewish leaders was even G _____ (John 19:11) but the sin of Pilate was GREAT!

* * * * *

Now that we have studied the terrible trials of Christ, tell what you have learned about the following:

1. The awful **depravity** (evil, corruption) of man
2. The absolute sinlessness and innocence of Christ
3. The grace and love of God
4. The humility of Christ (Philippians 2:8)
5. The difference between the first and second comings of Christ (compare Matthew 26:64)
6. The sufferings of Christ (if He suffered so much at His trials, what must the cross have been like?)
7. The right response when falsely accused or wrongly mocked (compare the book of 1 Peter)

HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SAVIOR !

Peter's Three Denials

The Lord's Prediction of Peter's Sin.

Would Peter be the only one who would have a problem on this night or would the other disciples have a problem also (Mark 14:27)?

What did ALL of them do
(Mark 14:50)? _____

According to Mark 14:29, did Peter have a lot of self confidence? _____

I can do all things→ **Self-Confidence (confidence in the flesh--Phil. 3:3).**

I can do all things through Christ→ **Christ Confidence.**

Peter was saying, "Not I Lord! Others may fail you, but I won't!" Often we have the same problem: "Oh, I would never do that." What should my attitude be towards the possibility of sinning? I need to realize that there is no sin that my rotten, depraved heart is not capable of. "There but by the grace of God go I." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

What was the Lord's prediction (Mark 14:30)?

_____ In Mark 14:31 do we find more self confidence on the part of Peter? He claimed that he was even willing to _____ with Jesus! He said that he would never deny the Lord in any way! Did the other disciples say similar things or was Peter alone in this (v.31)?

Instead of saying, "Lord, I'll never do that!!!" it is much better to say, "Lord, search me and know my _____; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there by any _____ in me and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Luke 22:34 is only time that Jesus calls him "Peter" (with the exception of when the Lord first gave him that name, as in Matthew 16:18 and John 1:42 where the word "stone" is the Greek word "Petros" or Peter). Usually the Lord addressed him as "Simon." Why did the Lord use the name "Peter" in Luke 22:34 in connection with His prediction of Peter's denials? Perhaps the idea is this: "Peter, you are supposed to be a stone (a petros), but you are going to act very weak. You are not going to live up to your name. And the reason you are going to fall is because you are going to fail to take your stand on the great Stone, the Rock (Petra) Christ Jesus, and apart from Him you are just a weak pebble!"

The Enormity of Peter's Sin

In Mark 14:69-70 Peter was asked if he were one of Jesus' disciples, but he denied it. When you think of the word "deny," think of the word "no." Are you one of the disciples? Peter denied and said, "NO!" [Jesus said that a true disciple must "_____ himself" (Matthew 16:24). This means that he must say "NO!" to self!] The opposite of the word "deny" is the word "confess." When you think of the word "Confess," think of the word "YES." For example, when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9) we are saying, "Yes, Lord, I have sinned and done this wickedness in Your sight." If Peter had confessed His Lord, instead of denying Him, he would have said, "Yes, I am one of His disciples, and I'm not ashamed of it!"

In Mark 14:71 we learn that Peter denied that he even knew Jesus! How serious is the sin of denying the Lord? If we deny the Lord, what will He do to us (Matthew 10:33; 2 Tim. 2:12)?

_____ What did Jesus say about those who are ashamed of Him (Mark 8:38)?

_____ Peter was ashamed of his Master and claimed he didn't even know Him. His sin was very great! Peter denied the Lord he loved!

Peter's Three Denials

1) All four gospel writers record this event in detail.

The birth of Christ found in only two of the four gospels!

2) Each gospel writer gives the same basic story but each one contributes his own unique details.

To get a full picture of what happened you need to go to all four gospel accounts.

3) The Place: Where did it happen?

Peter's denials took place in the court of the High Priest's residence. The key he used to get through the door was the Apostle John who had connections with the high priest (see John 18:15-16).

4) The time: When did the denials take place?

The denials took place in the middle of the night, even as it was getting toward morning (roosters usually crow before dawn). At the same time that these denials were taking place, Jesus was in close proximity. He was being illegally put on trial. As we have seen, there were actually six trials that Jesus attended that night: He stood before Annas the former high priest; before Caiaphas the present high priest, before the Sanhedrin the ruling council of the Jews, before Pilate the first time, before Herod that "fox," and before Pilate the second time. Christ was going from one trial to the other all through the night and even into the early morning hours.

5) The circumstances of the denials.

Peter warmed himself by a fire (John 18:18---a F _____ of C _____). Keep this detail in mind. It will be important later.

Each denial got worse. The last denial was greater and stronger than the first. "I _____ this man of whom ye speak" (Mark 14:71). In connection with this last denial, Peter began to C _____ and S _____ (Mark 14:71). This does not mean that he used filthy and foul language. This does not mean that he used filthy four letter words. If you are a saved person, such garbage should never come out of your mouth (see Eph. 4:29). Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). If someone claims to be saved and uses filthy language, **his heart is showing!** His filthy language is revealing a filthy heart, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

If Peter was not using filthy language (which is what we normally think of when we think of someone cursing and swearing), what was he actually doing?

Swearing means "taking an oath." For example, "I swear by heaven that I am telling the truth that I don't even know this Man." So not only was he lying, but he was lying under a voluntary oath: "I swear by God!" "May God be my witness as I go and tell this terrible lie!"

Curse means that Peter called down curses on himself. He put himself under a curse: "May God do this and that to me if I am not telling the truth." Peter's sin kept getting worse and worse.

Not only did the denials keep getting worse and worse, but they kept getting more and more uneasy and uncomfortable for Peter.

See Mark 14:70—His speech betrayed him! He must have thought like this: "Oh no, they recognize from my speech that I'm from Galilee." Something else made Peter extremely uncomfortable. In John 18:26 we learn that a man was in Peter's presence and this man thought that he recognized Peter. This man was a relative of Malchus, the man whose ear was sliced off by Peter when Jesus was arrested (whose ear Jesus healed)! This relative of Malchus now thinks he recognizes Peter! This made it all the more difficult for Peter to deny Jesus. When a believer sins, God doesn't always make it comfortable for him. God in His grace and mercy, can make it a horrible experience, not a pleasurable one! Are you thankful for this? _____

The denials did not take place in rapid succession. When you read Mark 14:66-72, for example, it seems like they happened one right after the other. But in Luke 22:59 we learn that this was not the case. About how much time elapsed between the second and third denials?

The rooster crowed two times, not just once. Some of the gospel accounts make it seem like there was only one crowing of the rooster, but there were actually two. The is not a contradiction. It is simply that Mark's account gives fuller information on this point. After the first denial we read this: "...and the _____ crew (crowed)" (Mark 14:68--the end of the verse). After the third denial the rooster crowed "the _____ time" (Mark 14:72). See the Lord's prediction in Mark 14:30.

When the rooster crowed the second time, something else remarkable happened. Only Luke tells us this detail. The rooster crowed the second time even when Peter was still speaking (Luke 22:60, that is, right in the midst of his third denial before he had even finished his regrettable words). At this very instant "the Lord _____, and _____ upon Peter (Luke 22:61). It was then that Peter remembered the Lord's prediction of his denial (v.61). "And Peter went out, and _____" (Luke 22:62).

The timing of this was unbelievable. If it had only involved the rooster, that would have been quite remarkable in itself. Who gave the rooster his cue? [*"Okay, Mr. Rooster, he's about to deny the Lord for the third time. Now he's starting to say it. That's your cue!"*] The Lord has complete control of the animal kingdom, and He had one rooster standing by waiting patiently for the Creator's cue. Of course, the rooster was just doing what he was accustomed to do, having no idea of the significance of his early morning ritual on this eventful day.

But the rooster was only one half of this timing miracle. Remember, the Lord Jesus was going from trial to trial. He was a captive Prisoner, being led from one place to the other. They were leading Him; He was not leading them. Yet at the very moment the rooster crowed, Jesus was in just the right position to turn and look at Peter. God is sovereign over every circumstance of life and He can make sure that the right person is in the right place at the right time to do the right thing. His timing is flawless.

Read Mark 14:65. Notice that this is the verse that precedes the account of Peter's denials. It is interesting that in the midst of Jesus being illegally tried, slapped in the face, buffeted like a punching bag, spit upon, etc., *one of the Lord's major concerns was His wayward disciple*. It was the essence of unselfishness. He turned and looked at Peter. Their eyes met.

What a look that must have been! It was a piercing look which totally penetrated Peter to the heart. It resulted in a broken man. He was totally crushed by the enormity of his sin. He went out and wept bitterly. "Blessed are they that _____, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). It was a deep sorrow that would lead to repentance.

Think back to the time when Peter walked on the water. As soon as Peter began to sink, **Jesus was right there** and reached out His arm to save him (Matthew 14:30-31). In this passage, as soon as Peter denied the Lord thrice, **Jesus was right there** and their eyes met. Dear believer, you need to remember that in your darkest hour of sin, **the Lord Jesus is right there** to rescue you.

What was the difference between Peter's sin and the sin of Judas? Peter denied the Lord; Judas betrayed Him. Judas pretended that he loved Jesus and even kissed Him (Matthew 26:49), but it was the hypocritical act of an unclean, unregenerate disciple (see John 13:10-11). Judas did not really love the Lord but he acted as if he did. Peter really did love the Lord, but during his denials he acted as if he didn't. Peter's sorrow led to genuine repentance. Judas' sorrow led to his death, and even though he acknowledged his sin (Matthew 27:4), he never turned to the Saviour.

What Were the Factors that Led to Peter's Sin?

Keep in mind Peter's recent history. Just hours earlier he had been "to church," as we might say today. He attended the very first communion service. He listened to the Lord give a great and famous message (which is now found in John chapters 14-16, and known as the "upper room discourse"). He and the other disciples even joined Jesus in the singing of a hymn (Matthew 26:30).

If you have just been to church, participated in the worship, had communion, heard a great message and sung a hymn, does it seem likely that you would leave church and go out and commit a sin of the magnitude that we are talking about: **denying that you even know Jesus Christ!** And yet this is exactly what happened to Peter and it could happen to us as well. "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."

What were the factors that led to Peter's sin:

1) Peter was self-confident.

We already talked about Peter's self confidence. He relied too much upon Peter. Self will always let you down. Self is an unfailing failure!

2) Peter failed to watch and pray.

Study Mark 14:32-42. Verse 37 is of interest because although Jesus found "**them**" sleeping (Peter, John, James), He spoke specifically to Peter! He knew what Peter was about to do on that night. "W _____ and P _____, lest ye enter into _____" (Mark 14:38). Peter failed to watch (stay awake), and he failed to pray, and he entered into temptation. Notice in this passage that there were **three times** that Peter failed to watch and pray, corresponding to the three times that he denied the Lord. Many times Peter had stayed up all night in a boat catching fish, even though he was very weary, and yet he could not stay awake one hour to pray on this fateful night.

How many times do we fail and fall into sin simply because we did not spend time with the Lord in prayer? The battle against sin begins on our knees. Submit yourselves to God and the devil will flee from you (James 4:7).

3) Peter followed afar off (at a distance).

See Mark 14:54. Peter did not stay close to the Lord. To be fair to Peter, it should be noted that he probably could not have gotten any closer to Jesus. He was in the courtyard of the residence of the high priest. Jesus was very close by, so close that at one point He could look at Peter and their eyes could meet. It is very unlikely that Peter could have barged into the trial itself. He probably was about as close to the Lord physically as he could get. But spiritually Peter followed the Lord afar off, from a distance. Spiritually he was not close to the Lord at this time. Thankfully, there would come a time, in the not too distant future, when Peter would be so close to the Lord that the unsaved would marvel at this ignorant and unlearned fisherman and take knowledge that he had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13)!

4) Peter was overwhelmed by his circumstances.

Peter was absolutely crushed under the weight of what he considered to be unfavorable circumstances. Everything seemed to be going wrong. His Lord and Master had been arrested and was being condemned to death. Peter's whole world seemed to be falling apart.

There's a real lesson here. We need to learn to trust God even when everything seems to be going wrong, even when our whole world seems to be falling apart. Job said it well, "Though he _____ me, yet will I _____ in Him" (Job 13:15). The Psalmist said, "What time I am _____, I will trust in thee" (Psalm 56:3).

Actually everything that was happening to Christ was actually working out for Peter's eternal good and for Peter's salvation, but Peter did not understand this yet. When circumstances seem overwhelming and when everything seems to go wrong, we need to remember Romans 8:28!

5) Peter sat among the Lord's enemies.

See Mark 14:54. If you get with the wrong crowd, you are going to end up doing the wrong things. The Psalmist said, "I am a C _____ of all those who fear Thee and of those who keep thy precepts." Are your friends those who fear God and obey Him?

Peter's Recovery

1) His bitter tears.

"And Peter went out and _____" (Luke 22:62). His tears reflected a broken and contrite heart. Does God want us to be sorrowful when we sin (James 4:8-9)? _____ The unsaved person can sin and enjoy it. The saved person can sin but he hates it. Paul said in Romans 7:15, "for what I would [what I want to do], that do I not, but what I _____, that do I."

2) The Intercession of Christ.

In Luke 22:31 Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, _____ hath desired to have _____, that he may sift you as wheat." The word "you" is plural. It refers to more than just Peter. Satan was out to get all of the disciples. Indeed, Satan is out to get all those who are believers in Christ (see 1 Peter 5:8--he's like a roaring _____ seeking whom he may devour).

"But I have prayed for _____, that _____ faith fail not." The words "thee" and "thy" are both singular. Now the Lord is referring specifically to Peter.

Some people complain about the KJV and its use of "thee" and "thou" and "thy" etc. but sometimes these little words are very helpful. Modern English uses the second person pronoun and it does not distinguish between singular and plural (the form is the same for both). Thus, the word "you" may either be singular or plural. "I invite **you** to come over to my house!" The term "you" could be singular, referring to only one person, or it could be plural referring to more than one person. The context would usually make it clear as to whether one or more persons are involved. But the KJV is more specific. The words "YOU" and "YE" are plural (see for example John 3:7 where Jesus was not just referring to Nicodemus), and "THEE", "THY" "THOU," and "THINE" are all singular. Thus we have a simple rule: if the pronoun starts with a "Y" it is plural; if it starts with a "T" it is singular. Your Bible study will be enhanced if you pay attention to details such as this.

Jesus prayed that Peter's F _____ would not F _____ (Luke 22:32). What does this mean? Didn't Peter's faith fail? He certainly had a major lapse of faith, resulting in three serious denials. The idea is this: "Peter, I'm praying that your faith will not totally fail." Peter's sin did not lead to a fall from which he could never recover. It was a serious fall but not a fatal fall. He fell down hard on the ship of faith but he did not fall overboard. He failed but he did not utterly fail. His faith was eclipsed but it was not a total eclipse. He did not fall like Judas did, a fall from which there was no recovery. Peter fell but he recovered.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he _____, he shall not be utterly _____: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23-24). "Peter, I will pray for you that your faith fail not. You will not be utterly cast down." See also Proverbs 24:16—"For a just man _____ seven times, and _____ up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Peter's fall was great but he recovered. It was not a fatal fall. [Note: In thinking of the sin of Judas in which he betrayed the Lord, it would be wrong to say that Judas sinned with the result that he lost his salvation. In the case of Judas, he never had a saving relationship to Jesus Christ. See John 13:10-11, where we learn that Judas was the one disciple who was UNCLEAN, that is, had never been forgiven, had never received his "salvation bath."]

Luke 22:32 speaks of Peter being "converted." Sometimes saved people need to be converted, because they are going in the wrong direction. Peter needed to turn and go in the right direction. And thankfully, Peter did make a change his direction.

"I have prayed **for thee**." Is Peter the only one that enjoys such blessed intercession? Does the Lord Jesus pray for you that your faith will not fail (see Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34 and compare John 7:15)? What would have happened if the Lord had not prayed for Peter? As believers, where would we be if it were not for our Lord's faithful intercession on our behalf? How thankful we should be for the way Christ intercedes for His own--ever living to make intercession for us!

Peter's recovery was not complete until after the resurrection at which time the Lord had to deal with him in a special way. We learn of this encounter in John 21 where the risen Lord Jesus met several of the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias) early in the morning (remember, the denials also took place in the early morning hours). What detail mentioned in John 21:9 reminds you of the denials of Peter (compare John 18:18)?

_____ This probably jostled Peter's memory.

Read John 21:15-17 carefully. The Lord dealt with Peter in a very gracious way. We have seen that three times Peter failed to watch and pray (Mark 14:32-42); three times Peter denied his Lord (Mark 14:66-72); and three times the Lord gives Peter the opportunity to CONFESS his love for his Master (John 21:15-17). Remember, when you think of the word CONFESS, think of the word "YES." Peter, do you love Me? Peter's response, "Yea (YES), Lord; Thou knowest that I love thee" (verses 15-16). Also three times the Lord says "Feed my sheep (lambs)" (verses 15-17). This is in agreement with the Lord's prediction that following Peter's conversion, he would strengthen his B _____ (Luke 22:32).

In John 21:15 we learn that when Jesus said to Peter THE THIRD TIME "Lovest thou Me?" Peter was deeply grieved. It was almost as if the rooster crowed again! Peter did love the Saviour, but he still had painful memories of his triple denial.

WAS PETER A CHRIST-DENIER?

The answer is both YES and NO.

Think of the difference between a snapshot and a video. If you were to take a picture of Peter during one of his denials, then you would look at it and conclude that he was a Christ-denier. However, if you were to take a video of Peter's entire life you would find that he was a man who boldly confessed the Lord Jesus and even gave up his life for the sake of the Saviour and the gospel which he fearlessly preached. This video presentation would obviously include his bold preaching on the Day of Pentecost when he confessed Christ as Lord before thousands of Jews.

A further example of this is found in John 17:6 where Jesus sums up the life of His disciples by saying, "They have kept Thy Word." If we were to look at certain incidents in the life of these disciples we could find examples of obvious disobedience. Peter's denials would be a chief example of this. And yet, their lives, viewed as a whole (video), were characterized by obedience (compare also 1 John 2:3-5).

Peter gladly and fearlessly confessed Christ before men and someday Christ will confess him before the Father and before the holy angels (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Rev. 3:5).
