

Peter's Fall and Restoration

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that Peter's fall and restoration powerfully illustrate the depth of human frailty and the boundless grace of Christ's redeeming love.

Scripture: Luke 22:61-62, John 21:15-17, Matthew 26:31-35, Proverbs 1:17, Luke 23:39-43

Topics: "Grace and Restoration", "Human Frailty"

Description

In this powerful biographical sermon, C.H. Spurgeon examines the fall and restoration of Peter to reveal profound truths about human weakness and divine grace. He highlights how Peter's denial, despite his favored status, serves as a sobering warning against self-confidence and lack of vigilance. Through vivid exposition, Spurgeon shows how Christ's tender look and the crowing of the cock brought Peter to repentance, illustrating the boundless mercy available to all who fall. This sermon encourages believers to rely wholly on Christ's sustaining power in times of trial.

Transcript

"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. So Peter went out and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61, 62.

PETER'S fall, as we noticed in our reading, is four times recorded, at considerable length, but it is not once excused. There is not, in any one of the records, a single word said by way of palliation of his great guilt. John pictures Peter's sin in colors of an almost neutral tint, yet he does not lessen its gravity.

Why, do you think, is this sad record thus given four times? Is it not in order that we should give it fourfold attention? It deserves this special mention, first, because it must have greatly increased the grief of the Lord Jesus Christ to know that while He was enduring untold indignities on His people's behalf, His most prominent disciple was denying Him with oaths and curses down at the lower end of the hall. Surely, this must have cut Him to the quick! I cannot imagine that any of the tortures that He endured from His enemies could have caused Him so much pain as this wicked denial by one of His closest friends. Let your pity and love to Jesus flow in deep and broad streams while you behold him that ate bread with Him thus lifting up his heel against Him and even declaring that He knows not the Man! Blessed Master, there is not one tint of all the colors of grief that is lacking in the picture of Your passion! It is not possible to depict sufferings more acute and intense than was Yours when You died, "the Just for the unjust," to bring us to God.

But, next, I think that Peter's fall and restoration are thus fully recorded to set forth the greatness of our Redeemer's saving power in the immediate prospect of His cruel death upon the Cross. Is it not wonderful to think that before He dies, He restores this great backslider—I had almost said, "this open apostate," for so he was, according to his own language, though he was not so in heart? I can, in imagination, see poor Peter bending before the Cross of Calvary and looking up, through tears of grief and joy, as he mourns his great guilt and sees it all forgiven!

Then comes the dying thief, to represent another class of characters who bring great Glory to our dying Lord. Peter is the backslider restored—the dying thief is the sinner saved at the 11th hour. He was on the very brink of Hell, yet the Master stretched out His hand to rescue him, saying, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." I cannot imagine two incidents revealing greater Divine Grace than these two, which so richly adorn and embellish the Cross! As captives chained to the wheels of the returning conqueror's chariot make his triumphal procession the more illustrious, so is Christ upon the Cross the more manifestly triumphant in His Infinite Grace as He leads the restored Peter back to his Apos-tleship and takes the penitent thief, plucked from Perdition, up with Himself into the Paradise of God!

Moreover, do you not think that there is, in this fourfold record, an instructive lesson for us concerning the frailty of the best of men? Holy Scripture does not tell us much about the best of men who lived in the olden times—its history of the saints is somewhat scanty—but it is particular in recording their faults, as if its special purpose was to remind us that the best of men are but men at the best! This Peter, who seemed to lead the van, was yet so frail and fallible—so far from being the first "Infallible Bishop of Rome"—that he even denied his Lord and Master! That is about the only point, so far as I can see, in which the Pope of Rome is like Peter, for he, too, has great presumption and he can, with his bulls and his curses, go about as far as Peter did in denying his Lord! Peter's fall seems to say to each of us, "You, too, are weak. You, too, will fall if you are left to yourself. Therefore trust wholly to your Master, but never trust in yourself. Look

always to Him and rely not upon your own experience, or the firmness of your own resolutions—for you will assuredly fall, as Peter did, unless the almighty hand of Christ shall hold you up."

These lessons might profit us even if we learned no others, but I think we may find some more as I now proceed to speak to you, first, concerning Peter's fall. Next, concerning the means of his recovery. Thirdly, concerning the signs of his restoration and, afterwards, if we have time for them, I hope to make a few general remarks upon the whole incident of Peter's fall and restoration.

I. First, then, concerning PETER'S FALL.

It was a very sad fall because it was the fall of one of the most favored of Christ's disciples. We know that there is such a thing as election and that there is such a thing as election out of election and, in the case of Christ's disciples, the principle was carried still further, for there were some who were the elect out of the elect of the elect! Christ had many disciples, yet He said to the Apostles, "I have chosen you twelve." Out of those twelve, he had evidently chosen three— Peter, James and John—who were privileged to be with Him on various occasions when all others were shut out. Peter had been especially favored, so that probably not even John surpassed him in the honor which his Master had put upon him. After his declaration concerning Christ's Messiahship and Deity, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." So you see that Peter was a highly favored man—and for him to deny his Master was a very terrible sin. The higher our privilege, dear Friends, the greater is our responsibility! The nobler our vocation is, the more horrible is

our sin when we fall into it.

Secondly, Peter's fall was especially sad because he had been faithfully warned concerning it. Our Lord had said to the eleven, "All of you shall be offended because of Me this night." And then, when Peter declared that he would not be offended, our Lord plainly foretold his triple denial. When Jesus, after the first part of his agony in the garden, came back to the three especially favored disciples and found them all asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch you and pray lest you enter into temptation." So that Peter knew the danger to which he was exposed. He was not, as some inexperienced persons are, surprised all of a sudden—carried off their feet by a fierce tornado of temptation. If he did not watch and pray, he ought to have done so, for he had been expressly warned, yes, and told that in that very night, not only would he be in danger, but that he would actually fall into the snare which Satan, the great fowler, was setting for him! After that warning, he was not like a bird caught in a trap which it has not seen, but like one that flies boldly into the snare. Solomon says in Proverbs, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"—yet Peter ran into it in spite of all the warning that he had received. This made his sin all the greater! And if any of you sin against the Light of God, your sin will be all the more gross and aggravated.

Further, the guilt of Peter's sin is enhanced by the fact that it came so soon after his claim of fidelity to his Master. He had said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Now, mark that declaration was made in the evening and the sun had not risen—the cock had not crowed—before he had thrice denied his Master! It may have been quite late in the evening when he uttered his boastful declaration and the night had only darkened down to midnight, or an hour or two after, before he had, with oaths and curses, denied that he even knew his Lord. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we eat our words as soon as that—if we go home from this House of Prayer and fall into sin. Or if tomorrow, while yet the sacred bread of the Communion Table is scarcely digested, we shall so act as practically to deny Christ—it will be a very terrible thing! It would have been bad enough if Peter had sinned thus 20 years after making his profession of love to Christ—but to deny his Lord an hour or two after such a vehement declaration—this was wicked, indeed!

Observe, also, that Peter's sin had degrees in it. This makes it the more interesting to us, especially if we have, ourselves, gone any part of the same evil way, for, the first time he denied his Master, it was not in the same style as the third time. Being let into the High Priest's palace, the damsel who opened the door looked him in the face and, afterwards, when Peter was sitting with the servants and officers around the fire, this somewhat busy lady came up to him and, gazing into his face, said, "You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter made a kind of evasive answer. There was a sort of subterfuge in it—"I know not what you are saying." As much as if he had said, "I do not understand you." This was really a denial of Christ, but he had so worded it as to quiet his conscience to some extent—he had not positively, in so many words, denied his Master. He was trying to do a little dodging, as some people nowadays do, and he thought, perhaps, that he might be able to draw back from the position into which he had been led by his curiosity. There was no oath

the first time, no cursing—but a simple evasive answer—really, in God's sight, a denial of his Lord, yet not so pronounced as it afterwards became.

The second time, he seems to have got up from where he sat by the fire. He was evidently not comfortable there and he had gone out to the porch, a good way off from the rest. And then, still wanting to see the end of the matter, he had come back. He did not press his way into the inner circle around the fire, and sit

there, but he stood and leaned forward just to warm his hands. And then it was that this woman, noticing how restless he had been, came up with a companion of hers and, looking at him, began to say to the other woman, "I know that he is one of them, I am sure that he is." And then she and the other both broke out saying, "You were with Him! We are sure you were with Him." And the men joined in the cry, perhaps most of them said, "Oh, yes, he is one of them!" And then Peter "denied with an oath, I do not know the Man." Oh, how dreadful for him to call Christ, "the Man," when he had boldly declared that He was the Son of God! What a terrible fall was this!

After this, Peter gets up and goes away from the fire altogether. It is a large place, so he still keeps within the enclosure, but he gets up into a corner where the light does not fall upon him. And there he remains for about an hour, not very easy, you may be sure. At last, he begins to talk to those around him. He thought that they would not find him out, now, because the firelight did not reach so far, but he did not remember that his tongue would tell tales, for those near him said, "Listen! That fellow has the accent of Galilee! He is a Galilean and all the people who were with Jesus were Galileans. Depend upon it, he is one of them! We are sure that he is, for his speech betrays him." The accent of his countrified speech showed Peter up as being one of the fishers from the Lake of Galilee—so now they come all around him and they said to him, "We know that you are a disciple of Jesus." Then there was the High Priest's servant, whose kinsman's ear Peter had cut off—he said, "Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? I carried a lantern and I know that you are the man that chopped my relation's ear off. I am sure that you are!" Then Peter, worst of all, not only denied his Master, but, as if he knew that a true Christian would not swear and, therefore, the way to prove that he was no Christian was to curse and swear, therefore he did it! He cursed and swore to convince them that he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Oh, but this was dreadful! This was terrible! No excuse is given for Peter in God's Word, nor will we try to think of any, but we will, each one of us, pray, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe."

There is another aggravation of Peter's sin which I must mention, that is that all this was done very close to where his Lord and Master was suffering at that time. I think that this Tabernacle might very well picture the kind of place that palace was. Take away those galleries and leave this upper portion—here is Christ, with the High Priests and all the rest of them, in this upper part. Perhaps it was not so much raised above the rest of the hall as this platform is, but, still, it was a raised place. And there were the servants sitting down below where they could see everything, and also be seen, in the open square with a big fire blazing up in the midst—sending its volumes of smoke up to the midnight sky. And there is the Christ, His back turned towards Peter, but He is within hearing. Oh, I think that fact alone ought to have checked Peter's tongue and inspired him with such love, pity and sympathy that he would have found it impossible to deny his Master. And for you and me to sin in the very Presence of the Majesty of Heaven, (and all sin does that), is an enormous crime.

What was the reason why Peter thus sinned I answer, first, that it was because of his fear of man. Bold Peter became a raving coward! And, ah, how many have denied their Master because they have been afraid of a jest or a jeer! It was but a silly maid and another gossip with her, and a few idle women and men around the outdoor fire, but Peter was afraid of them and, therefore, he was not afraid to deny his Master.

Perhaps the chief reason for Peter's denial of his Lord was his confidence in himself. If Peter had felt himself to be weaker, he would really have been stronger. But, because he felt so strong in himself, he therefore proved to be weak as water and so denied his Master.

We know, also, that it was caused by a lack of watchfulness and prayer on the part of Peter. He was off his guard when he was sitting or standing comfortably by the fire and, therefore, he fell so sadly. His fall was caused, I expect, by a general lack of steadfastness in his character. He was impetuous, impulsive, quick, ready, brave, courageous, but, at the same time, he lacked backbone. He did, even after this, lack that essential element of a strong character, for Paul had to "withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed." But, in this time of testing, he manifested a sad lack of solidity of character. He was carried away by surrounding circumstances and even when they happened to be against his Lord and

Master, he was still carried away with them! Those of you who have abundance of life in you, and plenty of force of character, must make sure that you also have the force of Grace, lest your vivacity—the very thing which makes you to be leaders among us—should become your ruin in the time of trial! He is well kept whom God keeps and he it is also who, with prayer and watchfulness, guards himself against all the dangers that surround him. Thus I have tried to describe to you Peter's fall.

' II. Now, secondly, notice THE MEANS OF PETER'S RECOVERY. They are worth notice.

The first means was, the crowing of the cock. It seemed strange that it should crow, the first time, before the period that was known among the Jews as "the cock-crowing." That happened after Peter had denied his Master once, but he does not appear to have taken any notice of it, for he afterwards denied his Master again and yet again. And just as he was speaking the third time, while the words were in his mouth, shrill and clear over that palace wall came the clarion of the cock. Oh, that crow must have gone home to Peter's heart! We cannot preach half such impressive sermons as that bird then delivered, for its message forced its way into Peter's conscience! God has many ways of reaching man's conscience. I have known Him touch the conscience by very singular means—very frequently by the observation of a little child—by the sudden death of a neighbor or a friend—even by some sentence in a newspaper. There are many birds that God can cause to crow when He bids them, and they startle the sinner as much as that one in Jerusalem startled Peter! But that was not enough, nor was it half enough to bring him to repentance.

The next thing that touched Peter, and the main thing, was the look of Christ. It is not possible for any of us to give such a look as that. It was such a look as Jehovah gave to the primeval darkness when He said, "Let there be light," and the darkness was dissipated by one glance of Jehovah's eyes. So the darkness, which the devil had cast over Peter's soul, was made to fly by one flash from the eyes of Jesus! There were volumes of meaning in that look. "Is that Peter, who declared that he would never deny Me? Remember, Peter, what I said, and what you answered—and see which of us turns out to be right." That look also said to Peter, "All these griefs and all this shame that I am enduring do not pierce Me so keenly to the heart as your denial does." Yet was it not also a look of inexpressible tenderness, as if the Master said by it, "I still love you, Peter, so come back to Me and I will yet restore you!" I think it was a heart-piercing look and a heart-healing look all in one—a look which revealed to Peter the blackness of his sin and also the tenderness of his Master's heart towards him. That look did the work—that was the great means of Peter's recovery. First, the crowing of the cock, or something in Providence, and then the look of Christ, or something of Grace.

Then, what came in next was Peter's remembrance of Christ's words, for that look awakened his memory and his memory reminded him of all that his Master had said to him—and of all the happy fellowship he had had with the dear Master and what wonders he had seen Him do. I daresay that Peter remembered how he had once walked upon the water and how he began to sink until Jesus stretched out His hand to

save him. At any rate, memory did its work, for, "Peter called to mind the words that Jesus said unto him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept." So those three things co-operated in producing Peter's recovery.

But there was one thing, at the back of all these, which we must never forget—that is, the prayer of Christ for Peter. He said to him, "I have prayed for you," and the effect of that prayer was made apparent in the Apostle's restoration. That look was effectual upon Peter because the Lord Jesus had, in private, made prevalent intercession for him. So his faith was not to fail him and he was to come out of the devil's sieve with not one particle of the genuine wheat that was in him, fallen to the ground, but only the chaff taken away! That was the great means which Christ used for Peter's recovery and I beg you, dear Friends, to emulate your Savior's example in this respect. Pray for the fallen, look lovingly and pitifully upon the fallen, for your very look may do them good. Speak to the fallen, seek to guide the fallen back to Christ and who knows how many of them you may be helped to restore?

III. Now, in the third place, I am to speak very briefly upon THE SIGNS OF PETER'S RESTORATION. What are those signs?

First, he went out. There was something suggestive in that action of his. It might be very cold outside, but Peter left the warmth of the fire. His heart was hot within him, so he could stand the cold and, therefore, he went out. It is always a sign of repentance in Christians who have fallen when they leave the company where they were led astray. If any of you were once professors of the faith and you have turned aside through the evil associations that you have formed, cut yourselves loose from those associations at once! "Oh," someone says, "but I might be a loser if I were to do so." You cannot

lose as much as you will if you lose your soul! "Oh, but I do not see how I can escape." You must find a way of escape somehow—you must do as Lot did. Though he had all his wealth in Sodom, he had to flee from it—and the message to you professors who are among the ungodly is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Thus Peter went out and it was a wise thing for him to do.

He not only went out, but he wept. As he kept on turning over his sin, it appeared to him in all its blackest hue. We are told that he wept bitterly. Convulsive weeping came upon him—he could not stand himself—his very heart seemed as if it would flow away in rivers of repentant tears.

It is a blessed sign of the work of Grace in the soul when the man who has sinned quits his evil companions and mourns over his sin as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. If any of you have sinned like Peter, go and weep like Peter. If you have fallen like Peter, then let your soul bitterly bewail your transgression. Many talk about the greatness of David's sin, but if they knew the depths of David's repentance and the heartbreak that came with it, they would not so glibly speak of it. There is a tradition that Peter never heard a cock crow, or thought of this incident, as long as he lived, without weeping. And although that is only a tradition, I can well believe it was the case, for that is just what would be likely to happen to a true penitent.

IV. Now I close with A FEW GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE INCIDENT.

My first remark is—Christian, it is bad for you to be in evil company. It was bad for Peter to be among those who were standing or sitting round that fire. On a cold night everyone likes a nice comfortable fire. Yes, but you had better suffer discomfort and inconvenience rather than associate with wicked men. Peter

was sitting in the seat of the scorner, so we do not wonder that, at last, he used the scorner's language! Keep out of evil company if you possibly can. If you are obliged to go where bad language is used, do just as you do when you have to go out in a shower of rain—carry an umbrella to shield you from the rain and go through it as quickly as you can. When, in your daily calling, you have to mix with ungodly men, carry the spirit of watchfulness and prayer with you—and slip away from their society as quickly as you can.

My next remark is that it is idle for a true disciple to try to disown his discipleship. Peter says, "I am not one of Christ's disciples," but, even by the firelight, he looks like one of them. He swears that he is not and gets away up in the corner where there is no light. But, as soon as he begins talking, they say, "You are one of them!" His very speech causes him to be discovered—and if you are a genuine Christian, you can no more hide yourself than can the violet in the grass, whose perfume tells the passerby that it is there! There is something about you which will cause people to find you out. I should recommend those of you who have believed in Christ, but have not joined the Church, or made a confession of your faith, to do so speedily because, whether you do so or not, the ungodly will be down upon you! When once Christ sets the mark of His Cross upon your forehead, all sorts of people will see it and they will say, "You are one of Christ's followers! Your very speech betrays you. There is something about you that is different from the rest of us, and which tells us that you have been with Jesus." Do not try to hide this distinguishing mark if you have it—and even if you do, you will not be able to do so.

The next general remark is—when you have to depict your own character, always use the black pencil. Never try to extenuate anything. We shall never have any biographies, written by uninspired men, after the fashion of these Bible biographies. I am sure that if Peter had been the minister of a neighboring Baptist Church and had died, and I had been asked to write his biography, I should not have mentioned his denial of his Lord. Or if I had done so, I would have had his wife down on me if she was alive! And, if not, all the members of the congregation would have said, "What a shame it was to say anything about that matter after the man was dead! Mr. Spurgeon has written a brother-minister's biography and he has put in all the details of that sad incident which ought to have been suppressed." Very likely it ought to be, but it never is suppressed in the Bible narratives—we get all that happens recorded there. When Mark wrote, as we believe, under the guidance of Peter, he did not keep back anything, but put all down as black as it really was!

But, next, when you are writing of a Brother's character, try to describe it as fairly as possible, for that is what John does in his description of Peter's fall. It is very mildly drawn compared with Peter's own account of it. We must never say what is false, but when there has been something that is wrong, let us always put the kindest construction we possibly can upon it. There are always two ways of telling a tale and they may both be true. The one is to lay heavy stress upon all the faults. The other is to do as John does—to mention them, but to say no more about them than he feels really obliged to

say. Let us be truthful, but let it never seem as if we had any grudge against the wrongdoer. The sacred writers often teach us this lesson and here, Peter gives the worst account of himself, and John gives a more favorable report concerning his erring Brother.

Another remark I have to make is—observe the power that is in people's eyes. You must often have noticed this. What a power there was in that maid's eyes when she gazed earnestly upon Peter! It was that earnest gaze of the girl that made Peter deny his Master. But, then, see the power for good that there was in Christ's eyes. "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Eyes can say far more than lips can! Often there is more heart-affecting eloquence in the eyes than there is in the tongue. Sometimes you Christian people,

members of the Church, may be by the side of a man who utters a wrong word—but you need not tell him of it—just look at him, that will be enough. If an ungodly man shall even swear in your presence, do not give him a supercilious look, as much as to say, "O you wicked sinner, to do such a thing in the presence of such a holy man as I am!" But there is another kind of look, as if you felt so grieved and were amazed that he could so take in vain the name of the ever-blessed God—that is the sort of look to give him. If the Lord will manage your eyes for you, you will find that they will be potent messengers of love for Him. God give you to have those sanctified eyes which can work wonders for Him!

My last remark is this— what a mercy it was that Christ did not treat Peter as Peter treated Him Peter said, "I know not the Man." Ah, me, but if the blessed, meek and lowly One had said, "I know not the man," it would have been all over with Peter! May God grant that Christ may not say of anyone of us, at the Last Great Day, "I know not the man"! He will say it of all who know Him not, and whom He does not know—they are not acquainted with one another—and if they continue as they are, He will say, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Though He has eaten and drunk in your presence and taught in your streets, yet will He say, "I know you not. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." The mercy is that He never said that to Peter. And He will never say that to you, or to me if we come and cast ourselves in penitence at His feet, bemoaning our sin, and putting our trust in Him alone! May God grant this blessing to each one of you, dear Friends for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 26:31-35, 57, 58, 69-75; MARK 14:53,54, 66-72; LUKE 22:54-62; JOHN 18:15-18,25-27.

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be tautology if we read all four of them. And if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

Matthew 26:31-33. Then Jesus said unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended. This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of what the Master had just said. "All you shall be offended because of Me this night." Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended."

34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow—The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun. "This night, before the rooster crows"—

34, 35. You shall deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You. Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to His face!

35. Likewise also said all the disciples.

57, 58. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

69-75. Now Peter sat outside in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what you say. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with

an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you. Then he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly. Now let us read Mark's account, which will especially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene—it is just such an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

Mark 14:53, 54. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chiefpriests and the elders and the scribes. Then 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. Thus we learn what a cold night it was—that night in which the Savior's "sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Often, at Jerusalem, the days are extremely hot, yet the nights are as cold as if it were winter through the abundant dews that fall and cause a dampness everywhere.

66, 67. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him. I think I see her, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he was warming himself at the fire: "She looked upon him."

67, 68. And said, And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what you say. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. This first time was not the regular time of cock-crowing, but those birds crow when they please. Before the fixed period called the cock-crow, Peter was to deny his Master three times—this was the first time.

69, 70. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it. "You have the peculiar brogue of that part of the country. 'You are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.'"

71, 72. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept. He does not say that he went out and wept bitterly, as Luke says in his version of the incident.

This is Peter's own account of it, so he says as little as he can to his own credit, while he tells all that is to his discredit. You notice that there seem to be some slight differences between these two accounts and it is quite natural that it should be so. If any two honest men here were to describe any scene that they had witnessed, the two would be sure to differ in some particulars, yet both accounts might be true. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times," but Mark tells us that He said, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." Yes, but there is no real contradiction, and the incident introduced by Mark shows how, to the very letter, both of those utterances of our Savior were fulfilled, So is it with regard to those who spoke to Peter. When we come to another

account, you will see that they differ very considerably, yet they are all true, for all that.

Luke 22:54-56. Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. Then Peter followed afar off And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire. The flickering light helped to reveal his features to this maid "as he sat by the fire,"

56-58. And earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him and said, You are also of them. Then Peter said, Man, I am not. Both Matthew and Mark say that it was a maid, and another maid who spoke to Peter. And now Luke mentions a man— but there is no reason why all three of them could not have united in bringing this charge. One maid began the accusation, and the others joined with her, so the whole story is correct.

59-61. And about the space of one hour later another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. Then Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are saying. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. The Savior had been standing in the upper part of the room which was, probably, roofed over, while Peter and the rest were down below in the courtyard, which was open to

the sky and, therefore, they needed a fire to warm them. Jesus had been standing before His judge, but all of a sudden, as the cock crew, He "turned and looked at Peter."

61. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crow, you will deny Me three times. That cock-crowing had come at the very moment Christ had foretold, for Peter had already denied his Master thrice.

62. So Peter went out and wept bitterly. Now hear what John has to say about this matter. He wrote after the other three Evangelists and he generally supplies their deficiencies. He it is who tells us how Simon Peter got into the hall.

John 18:16. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. You know who that was, for John always hides his own name as much as possible.

15, 16. 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 outside. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. No doubt she had a lamp in her hand, that she might watch the features of those who were admitted. So, when Peter came in, she had a good view of his face and, afterwards, when he was at the fire, this is the woman who went and showed him up.

17. Then the damsel that kept the door said unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples? She evidently knew that John was one of them, so she put this question to Peter, "Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?"

17, 18. He said, I am not 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 Matthew tells us that, at first, he sat with them, but now he is standing, as though he was uneasy, or going out and coming in again. And now he is questioned again.

25-27. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. John does not say anything about Peter's oath, or about his cursing because that had been told by the others, and John had no desire to write anything that would reflect upon Peter. Indeed, he tells us that it was he who went and spoke to the maid that let Peter in—he seems as if he wished us to know that he had been the means of introducing Peter to the place of temptation! And it is interesting to remember that he was the man who was with Peter on the morning of the Resurrection, so that no doubt he had been the first to find him after his fall.

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