

Torrey 1991 Peter's Denial

By David A. Johnson

There's not a time in his life, if we were probably able to have him here and ask him, that he would necessarily want to talk about. Time in his life when he didn't look good at all. It is an incident that we are very familiar with. I'm assuming that we are, especially if you've been in church at all. And if you've been at Biola, you know of the time where Peter having promised vehemently to not deny Jesus. Vehemently does. Passionately promises that 'if everybody else falls away, if everybody else denies Jesus, I could understand that, but never me.' Passionately.

He does deny him, in many respects. If we were to see the parallel of that today in one of you, we would consider the event in your life--if we didn't have a long range view--maybe the ending of your capacity to minister. Because you blew it big time, and you blew it publicly and you blew it significantly and we would maybe consider this the end for you. The truth is this major failure in the life of Peter is in fact what I think is his making, not his undoing.

It teaches him what I've been talking about all week long. It teaches him brokenness in a way that nothing else but hitting the wall could do. The text, at least the part of the text that sets it up is found in Matthew chapter 26. To set the scene we'll start in verse 30, after singing the hymn, that is a phrase there that connects us with what just happened. They are coming right off of the Last Supper. They went out to the Mount of Olives and Jesus said to them, "you will all fall away because of me this night."

For it is written, I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep of the flocks shall be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee," meaning 'there I will regather you to myself.' But Peter heard all this and answered and said to him, "Oh Lord, you don't get it, even though everybody else--all--may fall away because of you, I will never fall away." And Jesus said "Truly, I say to you that this very night before a cock crows, you will fall away.

You will deny me three times." And Peter said to him, "You're wrong again, Lord. Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all of the disciples said the same thing. And the way I picture them is "We won't either." And then we break away to Gethsemane the text and it moves on to the betrayal of Judas. And then it comes to that place that we're all familiar with, where Peter did deny him. And I'll read through that as we kind of get to the drama.

I want to pray as we dig into this text. Jesus, as we culminate this conference, as Ronnie even said earlier we've just heard so much this week, and it's hard to imagine being able to process all of it. I know I'm even kind of tired of hearing my own voice right now, and they've heard other people as well. And I pray God, that you would take all of the things we've heard and give us an ability by your spirit to sort it all out, to apply it by the power of your spirit.

And I pray for this as well, that somehow by the working of your spirit, there would be not just an overload of information, but a working of your spirit that somehow would allow us to see these principles fleshed out among us receive from all of these lessons, your Grace and your life and your truth. I pray it in the name of Visa Men, three things in the text that I want to deal with

and point to. First of all, this little prophecy that Jesus gives about all of them scattering is an important piece, the kind of thing we would normally skip over and get to the meat of the story.

It's part of the meat and also to just touch real briefly on the promise that Jesus gives, that promise of regathering in verse 32. And then we will get to what is really the bulk of the text in our study, the problem that is arising in front of us. And that is Peter's denial. Let's look at the prophecy first. It is set for us, as I said after the singing of the hymn, setting the scene for us being right after the Last Supper, they went out to the Mount of Olives, and then it goes from verse 30 to 31 with Jesus giving them this word.

What's interesting is, as I went through Matthew studying one of the things you're probably aware of is that there are parallel passages all through the other Gospels. In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There are many of the same stories, and the other Gospels give little insights and pieces of information that Matthew doesn't particularly give to us for a variety of reasons. One of the things that's interesting is this that John chapter 14 indicates that between the place of their culminating their last supper together before they did indeed go to the Mount of Olives to hear this, the prophecy of them being scattered.

There is sandwiched in this white space here between the ending of the table and the going to Mount of Olives, the [inaudible] discourse from John 14 through John 17. And in this place I wanted just to have it in your mind setting the context that, at the end of the meal, Jesus, having told these guys that he was about to die, it's going to be a very dark day and you are not going to

understand all of the events, and you are going to be afraid, he in John chapter 14 begins to give them promises, affirmations, things that will strengthen their spirit.

"You need to know that I am going to go away. But if I go away, I will come again for you. And I'm going to my father's house. And in my father's house are many mansions. And if it were not so, I would have told you and I go away to prepare a house for you. And you need to know that I am not going to leave you orphans."

He goes on into the verses following that, "I'm going to not leave you fatherless. And you're gonna feel orphaned from time to time. But that Spirit, which up until this time has been with you, when this new Covenant happens, will be in you and you will be empowered in ways you've never been before." Lots of promises. And then in John chapter 17, he prays that incredible prayer. I would encourage you sometimes just to pray the prayer. And know this as you pray the prayer. And John seven-- see the prayer of Jesus for his disciples in John 17. But that is not just a prayer for his twelve disciples. It is a prayer that rings down the quarters of history.

It's a prayer for you. I read it this morning. It affected me. I kind of read it, hearing the voice of Jesus saying, "God protect that guy, protect that gal. And God, I'm not going to take them out of the world. I want to leave them in the world. But I want you to protect them in the middle of the world from the enemy and teach them how to love." He said all of that in the hearing of the disciples. Powerful promises: "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Promises. And the reason I want to bring in all of those promises and that affirmation is because they all stand in stark contrast to what he says in verse 31. After all of these powerful, "you're gonna be okay" words he says this: "By the way, you are going to be okay. But you are all going to fall away because of me tonight." Now that had to hit like a lightning bolt, again, especially because of all the affirmation they just heard. I want to land on that little phrase "fall away."

Study that in the Greek, literally what that speaks of is a trap. And literally in the Greek, what is communicated is this: that it is a trap that you cannot avoid. That kind of brought an insight to me. And the insight was this, falling away that they are about to do that Jesus is prophesying is not a falling away because they're so deficient, because they're so defective, because they're so disobedient. You guys are so defective and so disobedient that you're going to fall. No, you are going to fall away.

It is prophesied. You will not be able to not fall away. You will be caught, overwhelmed. You cannot be spared. It is going to happen. In fact, it is written and a quote Zechariah chapter 13 verse 7, to affirm the fact that you will be scattered. And the reason you're going to be scattered is because your shepherd is going down. It is unavoidable. I don't believe that in their scattering there is necessarily any great sin or shame. Their shepherd.--they are sheep--their shepherd is going down.

And when the shepherd goes down, they are gonna do what sheep do when their shepherd goes away. You know what they do. They go, "baaah- what do we do?" And they scatter. Some of

them stay where they are. They--staying where the air would be seen and huddling in the upper room. Why are they in the upper room? "Because we're here to pray."

"No, I don't know where to go. I'm just sitting here, as sheep." Don't--no direction at all. They'd had their shepherd. Jesus, he said, turn right, turn left. Let's go here. Let's go to Jerusalem. Let's go to Nazareth. They followed their shepherd. They did what good sheep do. Follow the shepherd. Hang on to the shepherd. The shepherd goes down. You're gonna be scared. You are going to have a period of time when I go down that you're going to be scared and there's no way for you not to be scared when this happens, there is no way for you not to be scattered. When this happens, it is going to be for you. Terrifying, confusing.

You will feel hopeless and loss. For three days, you will feel that bewilderment here. You will be scattered. You know what? This scattering of them is like it almost needs to be seen, I think, as an historic quirk, because it doesn't happen for you and me. I have a promise that for three days these guys didn't have. I have a promise. And so do you. It's this: "I will never leave you nor forsake you ever. Jesus, to me, Jesus, to you today says you're never gonna have these three days where I go down because I'm not going down. I went down and I came back up."

But these three guys, these disciples, at this time, we're gonna experience on Earth a sense of the shepherd having gone down. "And I can't spare you that. But I can promise you this. The shepherd won't be down for long." And here comes point number two, the promise after that "I will be raised. After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." And then that going before there is implied the regathering of my scattered ones. It is fulfilled in John chapter 21, we

see there in John chapter 21, a marvelous regathering, reconciliation and ultimately a recommission of the--recommissioning of these disciples who just a few days earlier were terrified, didn't know what to do. Their shepherd has arisen again and they know what to do now.

Let me pull it together. Those two things, the prophecy and the promise. What I hear is this:

"You guys, I am going down. And in a very strong sense, when I go down, you will go down as well. You will feel lost. But I got a word for you. I will be raised again. And in an equally strong sense you will be raised again. When I am raised again, you will be regathered."

But now comes in the text, the problem: point number three. And the problem is, Peter. Verse 33, Peter answered and said, "even though everybody else is going to do what God prophesied, not me. Everyone else is gonna act like a sheep acts when the shepherd is gone. Everyone else is going to act bewildered and lost and aimless and afraid. But not me. Lord, even though God Himself, through the Prophet Zechariah, says that all of us will be scattered, He's wrong. He got one thing wrong. They will be scattered. He's wrong about this. I won't be scattered. [inaudible] Keep forgetting about me. I am made of different stuff than the common man. What you're forgetting about me is that my priorities are straight. My commitment is set in concrete. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back. I can do it. I won't be weak. I have the right stuff. Jesus said to him, verse 34: "Truly." Stop right there. "Truly" there. Like this. Truly.

"You know what, Peter? You're right. What you just said is true. In fact, is everybody else--all of the other disciples are going to be scattered. They will be like frightened, lost a little sheep

huddled in the upper room. But not you. You know why? Because you are going to be more than scattered. You are going to be shattered. Truly, I say to you that this very night before the cock crows, you're going to do more than scatter. You're going to be shattered. You will deny me three times."

Implied in this text, especially as you get the entire focus of what ultimately happens with Peter, I would insert this: "And by the way, Peter, do you know the reason you're going to be shattered? You know the reason you're going to hit the wall? Because I love you so very much. And I have decided to use you."

"Everyone else is going to be scattered. But you are going to hit the wall." Luke 22 verse 31, it says "Satan is going to sift you like wheat." That sifting speaks of violence shaking. "You're going to hit the wall so hard, Peter, that 2000 years later, they will still be talking about it at Biola College." How would you like to have done something in your life to 2000 years from now they're still talking about it? That's a big deal. "But the reason you're going to hit the wall is because I love you so, so very much.

"And it's because I have determined in the economy of God that you, Peter, you kind of goofball guy, I have called you to be a significant player and the supernatural power of the Kingdom of God advancing in this world. But in order for you to be used at the level of power that I want to see you be used, and that I am going to use you, this business about "I can, I will, I won't"--this self-sufficient spirit has got to go. The fact is, Peter, you are not, in yourself, big enough.

"You are not, in yourself, smart enough. You are not strong, strong enough. You are not adequate enough and you are not as committed as you think you are. You are not committed enough. This 'I will not deny you' commitment is as big as commitment as anybody in this room has ever made at camp to say 'I will never do it again. Ever. And I mean it this time.'" The fact is this: to do the work of the Kingdom, to do the work of God, nobody is adequate.

I don't know how to get into this. My mind thinks somewhat abstractly at times, but I really do make a distinction between "religious work," what I would call even "church work," and "Kingdom work." I really do believe that it is possible to get big churches without the power of God through slick methodology and whatever else it is that we would employ to get great big buildings built, towers that point to heaven. Hundreds and thousands of people coming into the room without the energy of the Spirit.

We could just have a select program. If you want to know if you can draw a crowd without God, go to a basketball game. It can be done. "But Peter, I have called you to do a supernatural work that is going to affect the hearts and lives of people, raising them literally from the dead spiritually. And if you want to move in at arena, you better know day one, you can't do it in the "I can" mode."

And when this blessed guy Peter hits the wall of monumental failure, he learned it. He made the biggest commitment that he ever made in his life. He meant it. I've heard some people deal with this: "he didn't really mean it." He meant it. He couldn't do it. You know what, nobody can do it by trying hard. "When you hit the wall, Peter, you will know it. And when you come up off this

wall you will come up bruised and bleeding. You will come up convinced God can never use you again. You will come up broken and mourning and meek."

And all of sudden I'm here in the Beatitudes. "You will come up with a beatitude attitude. You will come up knowing that your only hope is Jesus. Even to keep the commitment you want to keep, your only hope is Jesus." Stop right here and you're thinking and take a little trip with me. The number of side thoughts that occur to me at this particular time: first thing I want to say is we just kind of leave Peter smashed in the wall and kind of sitting there bleeding. He's not healed yet. We'll leave him there for a minute.

Just look at him. One of the things that dawns on me is this: I need to say out loud, not everybody has to hit the wall going 100 miles an hour. Okay, we're dealing with a lesson on Peter. He hit the walls, going 100 miles an hour. And there is a tendency enough to kind of we're formula people. We want to figure it all out. And so everybody has to hit the wall, just like Peter. Kaboom! Public, painful, in front of every--I don't think everybody has to hit the wall.

In fact, I think it's dangerous to begin to develop some sort of theology and it'll get all of you kind of going out of this conference, looking over your shoulder: I wonder what's going to happen to me. I just know God's going to drop something heavy on me. It'll kill me and embarrass me."

I don't think everybody has to hit the wall to come to dependence. Some people come to dependence without the wall. They do. Some of you have. It's like, yes, I don't think everybody

has to be has to go and flush their life. [inaudible] whatever. Ruin your life, become a prostitute, and alcoholic to understand grace. All you have to do is look inside. Some people don't have to hit the wall. But some people do. You know who does? People like Peter, the Peters of the world. He needs to hit the wall.

To draw you a little profile of Peter, I'm not telling you anything you don't know. But Peter was a very capable person. I think sometimes very capable people have a hard time with depending. Why? They have an incredible capacity to crank it out. So dependence is something that they don't yearn for. They can do it themselves. They've never been in arena in an arena that they couldn't handle themselves. And then they'll do it themselves and go "Well, god gets the glory." God didn't do it. They did it. They're just capable. That's like the rich people who have a hard time coming into the Kingdom because they have so many resources.

Peter was a capable person. In Matthew chapter 10, when Jesus was gathering his disciples, it says that he called first "Peter." And the Greek word there was "prōta." It captured me. I looked at that. And what was interesting about it was that the Greek word "prōta" does not mean "first in order." Like, 'I picked you first, and you 2nd, 3rd, 4th. "prōta" meant "first in rank." He was the leader. We got twelve people. I think we would all agree that the twelve disciples were leaders. He was the leader of the leaders.

He had physical capacity. He would walk into this room and take over.

He would stand in front of everyone else and say, "everybody else will deny, but I won't because I am made of different stuff." There are people who have confidence in their capacity to crank it out. Those are often the people who have to hit the wall. Because nothing less than hitting a wall would convince them that their flesh is weak. And if we're going to have any real impact in the Kingdom, we're going to have to learn this business about dependence and this business about "I can" and "I will" and "I won't." And resting in the power of my PhD has got to go. So not everybody has to hit the wall. I want you to know that.

The second thing I want you to know about this is, we just kind of reflect on this for a minute, is this: that failure isn't final. That's a good word. And it really comes right out of the store. Failure isn't final. It does not automatically eliminate you men and women when you hit the wall from usefulness in the Kingdom. And when you hit the wall, beloved [inaudible] let me just promise you, if you do hit the wall, if you have hit the wall, one of the things you came up believing was this: "I will never be used again. God may love me. He may receive me. I may go to heaven when I die. But this business of ever being used again by God, I, of all men, of all women have blown it big time, never again to be used."

The truth is this: in the life of Peter, this monumental failure was not his disqualification. It is what, in fact, equipped him to begin moving in a lifestyle of dependence that issued in power that made his ministry. It didn't ruin it.

It established in his life, brokenness, that you will see the rest of his life, as you look at his ministry. It established a meekness, a gentleness. Meekness. Peter? Yes, Peter. Gentleness. All of

those things being the necessary ingredients that Jesus laid out in Matthew 5, as being how it as you move into play of power as it relates to the Christian life, how it is that even--you even come into the Christian life.

The third thing, the dawns on me about this drama is an application to ministry or church life. I don't know if it strikes you, but as this kind of scenario developed from me and as I saw Peter saying, "I will not deny you." And I kind of saw him as the guy, well, "I have to decided" that kind of thing, what struck me was how much we even in the evangelical church encouraged that. Think about it. We're gonna sound a little testy here. Come with me here and think how much we in the evangelical church would applaud that kind of thing, indeed would call for it.

People who sound like "Peter, we would love that. I would love that." And in subtle ways without maybe thinking through all the ramifications, very often the goal of much of our ministries, of many of our camps, our conferences are retreats. It's to rack up numbers of people who will walk out the door of the camp or the retreat or the conference saying, "I can." "I will." "I won't." "I promise." "This time, I mean it."

Have you ever been to camp? Even as a pastor, as a speaker who goes around and has a chance to share his heart--my heart--with various people. Sometimes I don't feel it here at all, by the way, but sometimes I'll even feel pressure like that is my job. My job is here to get you all pumped up. To try a little harder. I need to just say real straight. My goal is not to leave you--at least my piece in this conference--is not to get you to go out that door trying a little harder.

In fact, if I had a goal, if I could wave a magic wand and have [inaudible] in my heart, is that I would like to have affected it would be that in a sober way, not enough "rah-rah," but in a sober way, some of you would be more convinced than ever as a result of this ministry that in your flesh, you can't crank it out. And then I would love to gently, if you've been convinced of that, I would love to gently point you to the One who can.

And it may be the result of a conference like this. At least my piece of it would be that people would walk out the door, hanging on a little tighter to Jesus. Not trying a little harder, but hanging on a little tighter to Jesus. You know what, he's your only hope. You want to be saved? He's your only hope. You want to be really sanctified, not just working on the outside, but really sanctified, holy on the inside? You can't. He's your only hope.

Do you want to serve God? You know what, if you didn't have any desire to serve God love, a lot of you wouldn't be here. This is a school where they train you for that. But here's the deal. You can't. You can't. I'd like to see you walk out that door hanging a little tighter onto to Jesus, saying "God, I really want to serve you, but you're going to have to give me me stuff that I don't have. You're going to have to empower me. I don't know what that looks like. I don't know what that feels like.

I want you to hear for balance here as I blow up this "I can, I will, I won't" stuff. I want you to hear for balance. Hear this. A heart that says 'I will follow Jesus. I can. I want to follow' is a good heart. It is a redeemed heart. In fact, let me make it a little more practical. I have four children. If

one of my kids goes to camp and comes back and begins to walk in the door and tells me all about his camp experience.

And I always ask my kids what happened at camp and they walk in. And if it's one of my boys and they say after they get all the frog stories out of the way and all the bug stories and all the-- you know, all the gross things that happen at camp, which is stuff that really matters. And we start talking about what the speaker said and what did God do in your heart--if one of my kids comes back to me, I promise you that if they say to me, 'Dad, they gave an invitation and I just decided that I'm going to follow Jesus. And I'm gonna and no turning back for me, and I will. And I won't. And I can.' I can guarantee you that I'm going to embrace that.

And I'm going to say, 'I'm so glad, Caleb.' 'I'm so glad, Christopher and Andrea and Erica, that you've decided to follow Jesus.' [inaudible] Yeah, it's great. But I have some insight that I didn't have when I was their age. And I have a lot of people around me when I was their age. They're telling me this, that in two weeks they might hit the wall and all this firm resolve they got at camp is going to be worn down.

And they might not even come to me. But I got a telegraph for this now, so I might go to them in two weeks. I'm going to go "Where's all that firm resolve, what happened to that?" And they might be ashamed to put their head down and go 'I guess I really didn't mean it. I must not have meant it. Next time I'll go.'" You know, we ought to live in camp. You know, to keep it up. But see, two weeks later, maybe where the real ministry is, where I get that little kid and put them on my lap or stick him in a chair.

And I'd say, "Caleb or Christopher, Andrea or Erica, here's the deal. You know what? When you said you want to follow Him, God knew that. And He believed that. And I believed that. And He "yes"ed it. But two weeks later, you're worn out because you're trying to do that "I will follow Jesus" just on the strength of your little heart. And your little heart's a good heart. But I'd like to talk to you."

Can you talk to a twelve year old kid about dependence? Yes. Talk to them when they're twelve. "Your only hope for doing what you want to do is Jesus. Your only --hear that--your only hope for doing what you want to do is Jesus. At the camp, you got the want to. Praise God. Peter had a want to. Hallelujah, that's a huge step. The power to do what you want to do comes from Jesus. It's the power of the Spirit. Realizing that results in a lifestyle that's panting after dependence. And I need to get my life from you, not from me, cranking it out.

The answer to these kinds of things isn't to get big. "I will." The answer actually is to get little and say, "I want to but I can't." Peter, however, verse 35 got big. Jesus said "you're going to deny me three times before the cock crows. You'll deny me three times." Peter, and he's so wonderful. He's just all out there. All of his mistakes are like in a neon sign. I mean, he doesn't even skip a beat and go, "really?" You know, when you think a reasonable person would go, "Whoa, what?"

He. Doesn't. He gets bigger. He goes, "Oh, even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you." He got better at Mark 14:31 says of this incident, "he vehemently kept on insisting." "I really mean it! All of you, listen to what I'm saying."

We break away in verse 37 to the garden, and then the betrayal of Judas. We pick the scenario up again as it relates to Peter in verse 51, the soldiers have come to arrest him. And behold. Verse 51, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword and struck a slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. "One of those who were with Jesus." Oh, who could it be?

Yeah. Peter. You know what that tells us about Peter? At this point, this self-confident adrenaline is still pumping through his veins. "I can handle this. I will save you, God. Aren't you glad you got me to protect you?" Yeah. His plan was to take the whole bunch on. I mean, I remember when I studied this. The ratio here is, you put the whole Roman cohort and what a cohort was. And the Chief Priest of the Sanhedrin. The ratio here was like a thousand to one.

You look stupid, Peter. And he cut off his ear. You ever picture what that looked like to cut off his ear? You know, we have this little picture. Maybe have a little dagger, you know, Zoro, like that. "I cut off your ear." No. Sorry. He's got a sword. He's swinging for his head. The guy ducks, he hits his ear. That's what happened. He's a maniac, this Peter. I get all sorts of permission to be a maniac from these guys, anyway.

Okay, but he's still full of in verse 51, this "I can, I will, I won't" attitude. In verse 56, what was prophesied happens and all this has taken place to the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left and fled. Here, the disciples are scattered. Verse 57, look what happens. Those who had seized Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, and, literally Caiaphas here. Where they're taking him is the Caiaphas' personal home.

It's a very large home with a huge courtyard in front. But this is an illegal trial. This trial should have been taking place at the temple where people could see what's going on. All of this is undercover. So it's in his home. The high priest were where the scribes and elders were gathered together. But Peter also was following him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest and he entered in. So he's entering in to the compound, if you will, of Caiaphas' personal home.

He's in the courtyard of the home. Jesus is in probably a room right about up here where Peter could maybe not hear everything that was being said. But he could see. We know that because they made eye contact. Remember? After the cock crowed, Jesus looked and they saw each other. So he could see. By the way, at this point Peter is saying to himself, "See? Told ya!" What is he talking about? Well, I'm talking about this. Verse 56, all the disciples scattered. Where's Peter? He's following.

"I'm still here. They all left. You were wrong, Lord. I didn't fall away. I'm still here. They all left, those weaklings. What if--" This guy's committed! This guy has more personal energy to keep his commitment than anybody. You know, we're talking discipline. He's there. He sat down with the officers, end of verse 58 to see the outcome. Now, the other writers of the Gospels kind of bring to bear information about this picture that helps us see a little bit better. He is literally sitting by a fire according to the other Gospels.

The temple police are there. The Sanhedrin members are bustling in and out of this courtyard and Peter is kind of sitting in the middle of it. It is 01:00 in the morning when these things happen,

the trial of Jesus taking place and Caiaphas room is going to last 2 hours. And in those 2 hours, everything that Peter has ever put his confidence in is going to be shattered. And what Peter put his confidence in was himself.

That's what should happen. Verse 69: "now, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard in a certain servant girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all." Meaning he did it loudly so everyone could hear. "I do not know what you're talking about." Verse I'm sorry, not verse, but Mark adds "I do not know him." John adds, "I am not with him." Put that together, what he said was, "I don't know him. You don't know what you're talking about. I am not with him."

So there's this kind of run-on denial. It's a big denial. And Luke 22 verse 58, it says after a little while, verse 71 happens. "After a little while when they had gone out to the gateway--when he had gone out to the gateway." Most of the speculation about the gateway here is that he's trying to get out of here. While he was trying to get out of there, another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied it with an oath this time. "I do not know the man." "With an oath" means simply this: that he added, "I swear to God I don't know him. I'm gonna bring God into this. I put God's name on my promise to empower the fact that I am telling the truth. I don't know this guy." A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Surely you two are one of them for your talk gives you away."

By the way, "the way you talk." He had a Galilean accent. I mean, it wasn't that he was sitting there testifying. "I see what you are preaching about Jesus." No. It was a Galilean accent. That's how they knew that he was with them. And then he began to curse and swear. So the swearing there is not cursing. Cursing is the cursing. Swearing is "I swear to God, I swear to God," blankety blankety blank. The profanity giving power to and creating distance from the purity of this Nazarene. "Obviously I'm not with him."

And immediately to Cock Road and Luke 22, verse 61 adds this poignant reality. But at that moment Jesus turned in Caiaphas' room. And by the way, by this time from the text we know that verse 67, the soldiers had already spat in his face, beat him with their fist. So Jesus is turning, now that his face is bleeding, his face is swollen. He turns and looks at Peter. They make eye contact. Freeze frame it there.

What could have gone on in the heart of Peter at this moment? Only Peter can know. As soon as they made eye contact. Verse 75, Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said: before the cock crows, you will be shattered. You will deny me three times." And he went out. And wept bitterly. There is no indication of where he went. There's no indication of what he said when he-- what he said in his lamenting. And that's okay. That's a good thing.

I think there are times when we need to be alone with our pain. There are times we need to be with people. But this was the time he needed to be alone. See, when someone comes to grips with the sinfulness of their own heart, there are times we want someone to be there. There are

other times we need to be alone. He needed to be alone. He wept bitterly. Literally in the Greek, it means he was racked with sobbing.

"I have denied the one I love. I have failed beyond belief. This is the consummate failure." Now the text leaves him there. He leaves them there. In chapter 27, it goes on to the trial of Jesus. But the fact is, we can't leave Peter there. And it's not because of sentiment that we can't leave him there. The reason we can't leave him there, wracked with sobbing, totally defeated, is because Jesus doesn't leave him there. And he doesn't leave you there either. See, back in 32, Jesus made a promise.

Verse 32: "After I have been raised and you have been scattered, I will go before you to Galilee and I will regather you." Including Peter. "I will regather you." John 21, as I said earlier, is the fulfillment of that regathering. That incredible scene where, among other incidents, we see the incident of Jesus and Peter face to face. Peter at this moment is full of what you and I would be full of at that time. He's full of shame. There is no arrogance left. There is no talk at this moment of "I will."

"I'm not going to make any more big promises, God. No arrogance." Jesus built a fire and he asked him a question. "Peter, do you love me?" A few days previous to this question, how would Peter have answered that? "Yeah." Answers it three times. There's a lot of sermons on this. A lot of directions we could go. It says, You know I love you. Jesus asks him again. You know I love you. You know I Love you." Part of what I think is that, you know I love you is "I have nothing else to appeal to."

"I don't have a track, Lord. You know I love you! Look at this!" No, don't look at that. Any of you feel like that? "You know I love you! Look at--" No, don't look at that. "Lord, the only thing I can possibly rely on that you would know I love you is that, you know, somehow you know my heart because I love you." Asks him three times. I don't know the significance of that. It is significant to me that Peter denied him three times. And Jesus asked him three times and three times, Peter affirms, "You know I do. You know I do."

The final word to Peter were these words. After the three questions, the three affirmations, Jesus said something to Peter that when he denied him, Peter would have never expected: it was this. Feed my lambs and follow me.

"After I denied you? After I failed you? After I've been disqualified, you want to use me?"

"Yeah. Feed my lambs and follow me. Hang on to me." You know what that's called? What Jesus would say to him? You know what that's called? It's called amazing grace. That's what it's called. My mind goes back at the end of the scene to three years previous to this scene of Jesus reconciling Peter to himself. Three years previous, he preached the sermon that I've been doing in the electives. He preached the beatitudes.

And what he said to them on that hillside at the very beginning of his ministry was, "you know, I got some good news and some bad news. The good news is the power and the authority and the glory that you just saw that made the multitudes come, is real. The bad news, it's not going to

come to the people you think. It's not going to be coming to the performers. It's not going to be coming to the highest and the self-right. It's going to come to the broken. Blessed are the broken. Blessed are the poor in spirit who recognize they can't save themselves. They can't sanctify themselves, and they can't, in the power of their efforts, serve with any effectiveness.

"And blessed are those who mourn who get out here what's in here. Who quit pretending about the stuff in here, and I start telling the truth. They're the ones who get comfort and blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness that they've figured out they can't produce themselves, because they start hungering and thirsting for righteousness that comes from God alone. Blessed are those guys. You know, when they originally heard that sermon, I think very possibly they were moved by it. I think, more, they were mystified by it. It's the first time they ever heard him talk like that.

Blessed are the broken. They might have even gone good, good, good. You know, I get that. I could see how that would work. I might have even done that. But you know what? I don't know. I hope I'm not minimizing what I do preach. I hope it's anointed. But I don't think preaching makes people broken. I don't think preaching about brokenness produces brokenness.

Somewhere along the line, the preaching needs to intersect with our lives. And that's where we kind of think the preaching does because some of you are going through things and these words are connecting with your life.

It's not the pretty thing. You're hearing the truth, and hopefully the truth sets you free. And it reveals some things about your life. But when it intersects with your life is when the reality

explodes. In John 21, as he's gathering the Twelve, what do you see in the Twelve? My mind at this point is I took three years to go through Matthew verse by verse. And at the end of Matthew, where he's regathering them all and about to Commission them. I have a catalog of their behavior.

Sometimes they believed God. Sometimes they didn't. But one of the things that consistently was going through them was arguing about who is the greatest. Remember that? Who's the greatest? Who's the greatest? We can do it. I want to be the greatest.

They didn't get it. They didn't get it. They didn't get it. They didn't get it.

And now at the end, we got a Peter who denied Jesus. And we got the other eleven who experienced, even though they couldn't help it, but it had to happen. They had to be scattered. They felt a pain of what it felt like to be on your own. Absolutely without the shepherd. They're not real confident right now. And to these people, not terribly confident in their capacity to do anything for God, Jesus says this: "go Ye into all the world."

If there was ever a time that they were not, in their flesh, ready to receive that work, at another time in their life you would've said that they would have gone: "Yeah. Okay. We'll do it."

They're wasted now. Now is when he says, and "now go in all the world." And now that they have been scattered and felt the pain, and he has felt a pain of his own denial and the weakness in his own flesh. You know what? They will hear that Commission: "go into the world" and they

will go into the world with an overwhelming sense of "if God doesn't empower this, we can't do a thing. And we're hungry for working with the spirit."

"God, You're going to have to do this. I will go and I will speak and I will obey. But you have got to energize because I can't make it happen. I know I can't. I haven't done it there. And I haven't done it there." Blessed are the broken. They get the kingdom. Blessed are those who mourn. They get the comfort. Will you walk with me? Hope you know failure isn't final. Grace is extended to be broken. Forgiveness is [inaudible] God uses broken people. It's all we've got.

Let's pray. Jesus, I'm affected by the reality that redeemed people have the want to already in their heart. When we got redeemed, we got a new heart. With our new heart, planted by the Spirit, came in the desire. The want to obey, serve and live in a pure way, is there. The want to is there. We so need you, Spirit. We desperately need your power. Make us a hungry people. The workings of your spirit energizing our want to.