

**John 18:15-27**  
**“Peter’s denial in light of Jesus’ trial”**

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**I. Intro.**

I’m amazed at the ways in which our Lord can strip us of our self-sufficiency and pride. His methods of love always include restoration, but the process includes self-realization which usually will break our hearts. Backsliding is never in a moment, it is always a series of small insignificant decisions that on their own seem harmless but in the end any backsliding is always a denial of our Lord’s goodness. This is what we will focus on as we examine Peter’s denial in light of Jesus’ trial.

**II. Vs. 15-18 The promise of restoration**

Vs. 15 John’s first impressions are not Jesus’ trial before the high priest but Peter’s trial before three servants. In Matthews account we are told that Peter followed Jesus from a distance. But when compared with the other 9 disciples we can say that at least Peter followed Jesus. I believe that we always invite trouble when we follow Jesus from a distance. You will never hear someone say, *“I know when all my problems started, it was right when I became more devoted to Jesus and decided to follow Him closer, without compromise!”* Denial never happens up close, it always happens from a distance! Contrast this with John and there are some things we can glean from. There is a sense of devotion that always accompanies John where he wants to be with Jesus, near Jesus even during the difficult times as we shall see in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter where he is at the foot of the cross next to the Mary’s and Jesus say’s *“Woman, behold your son!”* and to John He said, *“Behold your mother!”*. With regards to John running into the tomb I believe it was because he could look and see Jesus wasn’t there so there was no need to come in.

John records what happened after John went to the gate keeper to gain him entrance as the gate keeper apparently knew of John’s association with Jesus and simply asked Peter if he too was one of His followers. Peter had no reason to fear at this point, clearly John had not been mistreated and was able to move about without any harassment. He had no reason to not openly acknowledge his affiliation but he did. It was Peter’s association with John that made her question if he was a follower and had he said yes he would have been with John during the whole proceedings and never would have denied Jesus. There once was this little Christian boy who his mother caught him in a lie, so she asked him what the Bible had to say about lies and the poor fellow got some bible verses mixed up as he said, *“A lie is an abomination to the Lord, but a very present help in time of trouble!”* I think Peter knew that same verse. There is an interesting insertion by John here with regards to the other *“disciple”* that followed Jesus as John

adds that he “*was known by the high priest*”. This description is a literary one by which John is referring to himself, but just what was his connection with the high priest? John knew the name of the high priest’s servant Malchus as well as the person who kept the door, and that the servant of the high priest was a relative of Malchus in verse 26 are all further indicators that John was very familiar with this family. The Sons of Zebedee had a thriving fish market, in fact on our trip to Israel we spent an afternoon in Capernaum where the sons of Zebedee were from along with Peter. As we walked through the ruins that were alongside the Synagogue the tour guide was describing articles that they had found in the area including a marble plaque advertising the Zebedee’s fish stand. According to history their business was quite successful, and their salted fish were considered a delicacy in Jerusalem but could only be afforded by the wealthy and because of this John and his family became acquainted with Annas and his family.

Vs. 16-18 Jesus had only hours earlier predicted that Peter would deny Him three times but in Luke’s account of this there is a very interesting order that many don’t realize. According to Dr. Luke’s in 22:31-34 Jesus predicted Peter’s return before He predicted his denial.

**Is that not wonderful to realize that Jesus is more into promising our restoration than He is predicting our failure?** From the human standpoint the greater prophetic probability was Peter’s denial not his return and restoration but remember Jesus said, “*But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.*” “*Falter yes, doubts certainly but fail, no way because I’ve got a hold on you Peter.*”

It appears that John was suspicious with regards to Peter’s safety as he left Jesus and went to check upon Peter who was still outside the gate. John tells us that it was cold that night as in Israel that time of year it’s usually very pleasant outside so this was very unusual for this time of year. It’s never a good idea to seek warmth around the fires of the enemies of Jesus as you will never fit in and you will eventually get burned! We read in verse 17 that the first servant girl asked, “*You are not ALSO one of this Man’s disciples are you?*” which seems to indicate that she was aware of John’s commitment to Christ but not sure of Peter’s. Which is worse: Peter denying knowing the Lord or that he wasn’t immediately associated with Him in the first place? And what Peter does is to deny the association which she wasn’t sure that he had in the first place. Now based upon that allow me to draw this application if someone is shocked that you aren’t living up to your profession at least they have at first made the association that you are a follower of Christ.

Peter followed from a distance, warmed himself by the fires of the world and Luke 22:55 tells us that he finally sat in the courtyard of the ungodly. Psalm 1:1 shows the same order when we are told that, “*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful*”. Judas wept the tears of remorse, but Peter cried the tears of repentance, remorse simple means that the outcome of our action didn’t turn out as we intended them to. Ah but repentance means what we lament is not the outcome but the action in the first place as true biblical repentance means a change in what we think, feel and act. Consider the contrast between Judas and Peter.

Peter's distance from the Lord led him to feel a bit cold but instead of drawing near the Lord he sought the warmth and comforts the world offers which just got him burned in the end. It would be good to learn this lesson from Peter's travel from the "*garden of grace*" to the "*court of public opinion*" will always end in denial if we chose to stay at a distance from our Lord.

### **III. Vs. 19-24 Truth in the court lies**

Vs. 19-24 Now John takes us in to Jesus' trial before Annas and we see how differently Jesus acted then Peter. Peter was asked a fair question; one that had no adverse immediate consequences and he responded with a lie. Annas questioned Jesus about two things but Jesus only responds to one of the inquires and does not answer anything with regards to His disciples protecting them at all costs. There was no formal charge until witnesses could be brought in and that hadn't done so. Annas' responsibility was to make sure that the basic legal protection under Jewish law was applied to the accused, but he didn't. Jesus was asked leading and illegal questions and responded truthfully without risking innocent lives He was treated with a stern slap across the face.

In Matt. 5:39 Jesus spoke about turning the other cheek and here we get a practical example of how Jesus applied this, you see He stood up to the truth by saying, "What you guys are doing is wrong" and that got the slap on the face He again stood up again and said, "*On what basis are you hitting Me, if I'm not following the law and truth prove it, but if I am then why are you hitting me?*" There was no retaliation, no name calling, just stating the facts this is a great example of turning the other cheek, stand on your rights without any name calling or slander towards the one doing wrong to you. Apparently this worked as Annas realizes he can't get anywhere and sends him across the courtyard to his son in law Caiaphas.

What Annas did here was completely illegal as Jewish law stated that it was against the law to ask an accused anything that might implicate him. It is what happens when a person is arrested they say, "*You have the right to remain silent and to have a lawyer present with you during questioning, should you speak anything you say can and will be used against you.*" Now Jesus just reminds them of the law by saying, "*Hey, gather your witness I didn't ever say anything that wasn't public, don't ask Me as it is against the law to do so.*" It is clear that Annas understood Jesus words that he was conducting an illegal interrogation as one of the officers struck Jesus. The other gospel accounts reveal to us that it was in this courtyard that Jesus' beatings began as they covered his head and began hitting Jesus in the face while mocking Him by asking Him who it was who struck Him. The covering of the head made it impossible for Jesus to roll with the punch and as such He took the full force of the blow upon His face. They asked Jesus to prophesy as to who hit Him and little did they realize that they were fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 52:14 where we are told that "*His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men*".

The time before Annas was very brief and it appears that his hope was to get Jesus to incriminate Himself by stating things that could be used against Him and His followers later. Jesus would have none of that and refused to answer on grounds that the questions were illegal to ask and that if they truly wanted the answers all they needed to do was call those who had heard His teaching which wouldn't have been hard to do. Annas was not looking for reasons to believe but rather looking for reason to rid himself and the nation of Jesus. There are a lot of folks today that pose themselves as skeptics and seekers, but they are not searching for truth rather than are

looking for excuses to continue in lifestyles that they are addicted too. Notice that Jesus uses the personal pronoun five times in two verses in His declaration before Annas:

1. “**I** spoke openly to the world.”
2. “**I** always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet”
3. “and in secret **I** have said nothing.”
4. “Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what **I** said to them.”
5. “Indeed, they know what **I** said.”

They were the conspirators; they were the ones in back rooms and alleys whispering as they plotted His death, yet they were accusing Him of doing so.

As Peter warmed himself by the fire with those who weren't associated with Jesus; Christ was refusing to indite His followers by protecting them. They wanted to know from Jesus who His followers were, and it should have been obvious as we are told by Jesus in John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus indicated that there was no conspiracy against them as He spoke openly, and everyone had heard what He had said. Jesus is inciting what we call the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment which says that a prisoner cannot be forced or coerced to testify against themselves.

#### **IV. Vs. 25-27 The process of denial**

Vs. 25-27 But it seems that John's focus is back upon Peter. John condenses what most likely took an hour or so and apparently Peter told John what had taken place as John was with Jesus before Annas. Based upon the other gospel accounts it seems that the first denial by Peter happens at the hand of a servant girl, she then apparently brings with her another girl and they question him again, which he denies his affiliation and finally a group come over, one of which was related to the Malchus who's ear Peter had whacked off only an hour earlier and tell him that he is one of them as his accent has given him away. How tragic that the sound of his words indicated a relationship and not the content of them! And to counter this Peter's cursing revealed that he had no relationship with Jesus as well as cutting off a servant ear. It is interesting to realize that Peter's faith remained while his courage departed and but being reminded of Jesus' words Peter wept bitterly because he truly loved the Lord he just overestimated it.

As Peter was warming himself by the fires of the world he was questioned for the third time concerning his relationship to Jesus in which he began to curse and swear that he didn't know Jesus. Let me first acknowledge that I'm thankful that my relationship doesn't hinge on my commitment to Him but rather upon His commitment to me.

Consider for a moment the testimony of the rooster as to the truth of this. Chickens, specifically roosters weren't allowed in Jerusalem during the Passover because they were a **noisy mess** so they would gather them up and put them outside the city. Apparently this rooster got overlooked and upon Peter's third denial of Jesus he let one lose heralding what mess Peter had gotten himself into. But roosters are also known for to signal the start of a new day, and here we have the reminder that even when we have made a mess of things and the world is crowing our mistakes that in Jesus it can be a start of a new day. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Need more proof of this look at the rest of the story of what the Lord did with Peter's cursing and denying only 50 days later. Peter who followed at a distance, stood outside the door and warmed himself by the fires of the world stood up and proclaimed Jesus and 3000

gave their hearts to Jesus. Are you not amazed with our Lord can do with our messes? The world will continue to crow our mistakes, but our Lord will continue to proclaim it's a new day and restore us to fellowship and fruitfulness instead of reminding us of our failures. Hey saint's what kind of rooster are you? **Do you signal person's messes or proclaim to them it's a start of a new day?** Paul told the Galatians in 6:1 that "*if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual **restore** such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*" Paul didn't say remind, rebuke or reveal but restore.