

When the Rooster Crowed Twice

Luke 22:54-62

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for September 29, 2024

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After ignoring Jesus' warning in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray for steadfastness during persecution, Peter now has to put his faith to the test. And he fails. Just hours after swearing to Jesus that he would never deny Him, now Peter swears multiple times that he never knew Jesus. From this painful and challenging story, Stephen Davey unpacks some lessons we can learn from Peter's failure, Jesus' response, and Peter's ultimate redemption.

As an old apostle, Simon Peter wrote a letter to believers who were under pressure to back away from their association with Jesus Christ.

Their testimony had already turned their world upside down and they had lost their property, their homes, their jobs, and their friends.

When Peter writes to them, they've scattered abroad, now living in regions like Galatia, and Bithynia, and Asia, and the pressure is only continuing to grow.

In writing to encourage them, **Peter says this in chapter 3 of his first letter:**

Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking lies ... instead, be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about your hope in Christ.

1 Peter 3:10 & 15 (Paraphrased)

What do you do when **your supervisor** is deciding on whom to promote in the company, and you know you're in the running but, only recently, you learned that he dislikes employees who have conservative views on social issues? Your choice becomes either a promotion or perhaps a personal compromise.

What do you do when your **freshman philosophy professor** spends time in class berating ignorant people who believe:

- that God is in control of the climate?
- or that God created only two genders?
- or that God has a plan in the future for the nation of Israel?

What do you do when he says, “If anyone in the class believes any of that nonsense, raise your hand”?

What do you do when **a neighbor or coworker or boyfriend** says to you, “What bothers me about the Bible is that it seems so narrow. Won’t God allow good people into heaven who are sincere in their religious faith? What do you think?”

Peter is writing to you and me. He’s effectively saying, “Look, I know you will be tempted to think that the best thing you can do to have an enjoyable life is:

- to distance yourself from Jesus.
- to go silent about your salvation.
- to keep quiet about your convictions.

But let me tell you, I speak from experience; Peter writes, the best life you could ever have—even if it brings more pressure—is to keep from speaking lies, tell the truth, give people the reason you belong to Christ.

I believe Peter is writing with the memory of that night when he caved under pressure, when he told a little lie and then another.

Have you ever thought about the fact that one of the most well-known passages in Peter’s life isn’t his sermon on the Day of Pentecost? I wonder how many of us could repeat his main points—no, it his denial of Christ in that courtyard of the high priest. And the Lord recorded it in all four Gospels so we couldn’t miss it, because we need it!

So, let’s gather there today, and watch it take place in Luke 22:54,

Then they seized him [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house, and Peter was following at a distance.

Luke 22:54

The High Priest’s compound—some would call it a small palace—was bordered by a wall with gates. Household servants guarded the gate. We know from **John 18** that John the apostle had come along as well.

John writes in his Gospel account—chapter 18 and verses 15 and 16:

Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple [John]. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

John 18:15-16

For the sake of our study, we will divide what happens next into four scenes.

Scene one opens and we'll call it: **Small Talk at the Fireside. Verse 55 in Luke's account:**

And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

Luke 22:55

We know John has gone further inside with Jesus and the Sanhedrin, but Peter has shuffled over to this fire, it's around midnight and the air is chilly. Peter is just trying to blend in.

Well good luck with that—and I don't believe in luck—because Peter sure won't have any.

Now verse 56:

Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him."

Luke 22:56

According to **John's Gospel**, this is the same servant girl. Ever since she let Peter in, she's had her suspicions. So, she's come over to this little fire.

The Greek expression indicates she's been staring at him in the flickering firelight.

David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 893

And now she's certain of it. She's put two and two together:

- Peter knows John.
- John had her let Peter inside the courtyard.
- John is a follower of Jesus.
- So that means Peter is a follower of Jesus too.

Now you need to understand Peter's life is not in danger; John is openly claiming to know Christ; he's inside the house. The Sanhedrin won't arrest John even after Jesus is carted away. They really don't care about John or Peter.

She's not identifying Peter so Peter can get arrested, she's actually mocking Peter's association with Jesus. Her words are tinged with sarcasm.

Adapted from R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 1087

We get a clear view of that from Matthew's account that records her saying:

"You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

Matthew 26:69

Notice she doesn't say, "You also were with Jesus, the Rabbi; Jesus the Healer; Jesus the Miracle worker."

No. "Jesus the Galilean!"

You need to understand that in these days, to refer to someone as a Galilean wasn't a reference to their hometown, it was a cutdown, a sarcastic slur.

It was the same thing as saying that someone was backward or ignorant. In Jesus' day, the citizens of Jerusalem, and the surrounding region, used the Galileans as the butt of their jokes.

The northern Galileans were considered less refined and less sophisticated than those southern Israelites.

So, the southerners ridiculed the backward northerners for their primitive ways.

Sort of like today, only reversed. The northerners tend to look down on the southerners as being less sophisticated. The northerners talk about those hillbillies down south who talk funny.

And just for the record, northerners talk funny too. New Englanders tell us you're "Gonna go pahk the cah in the yahd." Or you tell us that you're from "New Joisey."

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *The Darkness and the Dawn* (Word Publishing, 2001), pp. 45-46

I could get into trouble here if I keep going!

We know from history that Galileans talked with a different accent, they found it difficult to pronounce some of the gutturals in the dialect spoken in Jerusalem at the time. They were viewed as ignorant.

Ibid

So, this little servant girl is making fun of Peter. “Aren’t you’re following that backward, ignorant man? You’re one of them?”

Verse 57:

But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.”

Luke 22:57

Now at this point, Mark’s Gospel inserts this very interesting result in chapter 14 and verse 68:

*But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.”
And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.*

Mark 14:68

The other Gospel accounts only record the rooster crowing once, after the third denial of Peter.

If you compare the gospel accounts, Jesus says this in **Matthew’s Gospel:**

“I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”

Matthew 26:34

Luke writes:

“I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”

Luke 22:34

John writes:

“I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”

John 13:38

But Mark records Jesus saying:

“This very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”

Mark 14:30

Now there are several ways to understand this.

First, the rooster crow was a Roman expression for the changing of the guard. The official Latin term for that trumpet call was **gallicinium**, which translated means, “**a rooster crow.**” That rooster crow took place at the end of third watch, which was 3:00 a.m.

The Romans divided the night watch into four segments:

- The first watch: 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.
- The second watch: 9:00-12:00.
- The third watch: 12:00-3:00 a.m.
- And the fourth watch: 3:00-6:00 a.m. They called this “the morning.”

Mark’s Gospel actually spells it out for us, back in chapter 13 where Jesus says to His disciples:

“Therefore, stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning ...”

Mark 13:35

Some would say that Peter’s denial occurred at that trumpet blast which signaled the end of the 3:00 a.m. watch.

This viewpoint discussed in Charles R. Swindoll, *The Darkness and the Dawn* (Word Publishing, 2001), pp. 45-46

I think that’s a fascinating possibility, except for the fact that the rooster crows, not just **at** Peter’s third denial, but after his *first* denial.

And I’m pointing this out because somebody at work, or that liberal professor you have—or will have—who loves to point out discrepancies in the Gospels to his freshmen religion students—he’s going to use this passage.

So, remember, putting the Gospel records together gives you the fullest account. They each heard or saw something they would later recall.

Mark is the only Gospel writer to add this, but get this: Mark was discipled by the apostle Peter and he received much of his information from Peter’s own personal testimony.

Peter closes his first letter, **1 Peter**, by referring to Mark as his son, much like Paul referred to Timothy, on four occasions, as his son.

Early church fathers like Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian wrote that Mark was Peter’s traveling scribe, what we might think of as an administrative assistant who wrote everything down.

Mark gives us this detail about that night which Peter never forgot. And it's a significant detail that I want to come back to later.

Now with that, the second scene takes place. We'll call it: **Denial at the Back Gate.**

Now, back to Luke 22 and verse 58:

*And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."
But Peter said, "Man, I am not."*

Luke 22:58

Mark's Gospel informs us that Peter has moved away from the fire and he's back over by the gate. Attendants are still there, both young men and women; one of them basically makes the same accusation.

Now at this point, it isn't so much mockery as it is a demand for honesty. The idea is, "C'mon man, fess up, admit it; you're one of His disciples. Tell the truth."

Matthew's account adds:

And again he denied it with an oath...

Matthew 26:72

That's like someone swearing on their mother's grave. This is calling down God's judgment on you if you're not telling the truth. In our court system, this is someone putting their hand on the Bible and swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but then proceeding to lie.

Peter puts his hand on the Bible, so to speak, and says with an oath: "I am not one of His disciples!"

But now he's getting cornered, and the pressure is heating up.

And by the way, keep in mind that these three denials didn't happen like popcorn popping—one after another all of a sudden. **Luke compresses into 9 verses** these four scenes which took several hours to unfold.

Adapted from Dale Ralph Davis, *Luke: The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 188

Now scene three takes place. We'll call it **The Meltdown in the Courtyard.**

Luke 22 and verse 59:

And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.”

Luke 22:59-60a

Matthew’s account adds that Peter not only added an oath, but **he began to swear**. Why would Peter do that?

Well, **John’s Gospel account** gives us a clue. He writes that this wasn’t just anybody accusing him, it was now becoming dangerous to Peter’s future. John writes that:

One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?”

John 18:26

Hey, you’re not only one of Jesus’s disciples, you’re the guy who cut my cousin’s ear off! You tried to kill him!

All of a sudden, this becomes dangerous to Peter’s own life. He’s now possibly in trouble with the law, he could be charged not only with following a deluded rabbi but charged with attempted murder.

So, Peter reverts to his old life and pulls out his old vocabulary to prove he has nothing to do with that crazy rabbi. He’s not the kind of guy who would follow a religious man around, are you kidding?

And to prove it, Peter starts cursing like the sailor he used to be.

And Luke writes here at the end of verse 60:

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

Luke 22:60b

Luke uses an article, **“the” rooster**, which indicates it’s an animal. He doesn’t use the more official term for the trumpet call—for the changing of the guard.

Garland, p. 893

In fact, Luke’s emphasizes that Peter’s memory is stirred, not by the rooster, but by what happens next – **verse 61:**

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:61-62

Scene four could be titled: **The Look that Spoke Volumes.**

For several hours, the Lord has been in a room, surrounded by bloodthirsty, infuriated, insulting men. They're outraged by His claims, they are screaming at him and punching Him and mocking Him, even pulling out His beard. He's now bloody and bruised.

J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke (Evangelical Press, 1879, reprint 1975), p. 358

But He's still God the Son; He's still in control. He's actually been listening in as Peter denies Him.

The text indicates that Jesus purposefully turned and looked at Peter. Perhaps it was through an open window, perhaps Jesus is just now being carted in chains across the courtyard, but their eyes meet.

He looked at Peter and Peter remembered his boast that he would never deny the Lord.

I remember reading some time ago the true story of a young mother who rescued her little baby girl when their house caught on fire. She fought her way through the flames into her daughter's nursery and grabbed her and ran to safety. In the process of saving her daughter's life, her hands and face were burned and permanently disfigured.

That little girl grew up to become a popular teenager. When her senior class took a daytrip on a large yacht, her mother volunteered with other mothers to come along and help in the galley prepare the meals. That afternoon, the girls were on deck and began talking about the woman they'd seen with scarred hands and face. One girl asked, "I wonder who that ugly woman is?"

Not knowing her mother was just around the corner and close enough to hear, her own daughter said, "I don't know!"

I don't know who that woman is.

The words are barely out of Peter's mouth, his face contorted in anger and frustration and denial, his cursing is piercing the air as the Lord turns and looks at him.

What was that look like? Disappointment? Sadness? Anger? "I can't believe you did it, Peter!" Maybe it was a look that told Peter, "Just wait until I rise from the dead!" Maybe it was that kind of look: "Peter, you are in deep trouble!"

Your mother had that kind of look, and so did mine. She could look at my 3 brothers and me with that look—especially in church, she'd lean up and look at us and we'd freeze, our blood would freeze, the pastor would freeze, birds would freeze outside. You get the point. We knew we were in deep trouble.

We're not told what kind of look this was, but I do not believe it was some kind of withering glare.

Garland, p. 892

Remember, Jesus already knew Peter would fail in the courtyard. He predicted it. "Peter, you're going to deny me three times. But I have already prayed for you" (Luke 22:32).

Before we leave this scene, let me draw from it some reminders for us today.

First:

Remember to be on guard for that sin you are convinced you would never commit.

Just a few hours earlier, ask Peter, what's the one thing you would never do? "Oh, man, let me tell you, the one sin I would never commit is denying that I know Jesus."

And remember, beloved, just a few hours earlier, Peter took on 800 armed soldiers with his little sword.

That leads me to the second lesson learned:

Remember that being courageous in one moment does not guarantee courage in the next moment.

Never view yourself as impervious to defeat, as if you've got some kind of spiritual force shield. You have no guarantee to victory over any sin.

We are all capable of committing the worst of them.

Third:

Remember that you rarely walk into sin without plenty of warning.

That rooster crowed after Peter's first denial. That was a gracious warning from God.

But Peter had already set himself up to fall down. Hours earlier, the Lord had invited him into the garden to pray. He said back in verse 40, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." What He meant was, "Pray so that you may not enter into temptation unprepared."

Jesus knew temptation was coming.

Warning after warning went unheeded.

Have you ever thought about the fact that we have the same warnings from God about sin in print, in black and white? You can read them over and over again.

Fourth:

Remember that one sin usually leads to another, so confess quickly before it spreads.

So don't hold on to it, confess it quickly. Don't let it spread.

No one gets up in the morning and says, "I think I'll start living a lie. I think I'll say farewell to my integrity."

So, watch out for those little steps, that lingering look, that first click of the mouse, that little urge to follow through this afternoon and place your bet on that ballgame—it's only \$5 dollars—what can that hurt?

You end up like a man I know who had to tell his wife that he'd gotten so deeply involved with online gambling that he'd just gambled away their home.

J.C. Ryle wrote more than 100 years ago, "Beware the beginnings of backsliding, however small!"

Ryle, p. 357

Here's a fifth reminder:

Remember your testimony is not determined by what you say about Jesus to believers in here, but what you say about Jesus to unbelievers out there.

The test of Peter's commitment to Christ wasn't what he'd said in the upper room, his test was what he said in the courtyard of Caiaphas.

So, take a realistic look at what you say at the Christmas office party, or to an unkind neighbor, or to an agnostic professor, to unbelievers *out there*.

Finally, one more lesson to remember:

Remember the mercy and grace of Jesus who already knew you would commit that sin.

Peter is now a foul-mouthed, deceitful disciple, but he wasn't kicked to the curb by Christ.

His failure was not final. Because of his tears of repentance, he will be more eager than ever to serve His Lord.

And when Jesus rose from the dead, I love this text that, again, only Mark records. Peter evidently never got over the Lord's mercy and grace; an angel at the tomb instructed the women who'd come to anoint the body of Jesus, he said to them that Jesus was not there in that tomb, here it is: "But go, tell His disciples **and Peter** that He is going before you to Galilee."

Jesus wasn't finished with Peter, and beloved, He's not finished with you or me either.

Think of it, He already knows. He's already died for your next sin.

So why not sin? Why not live a lie? Why not tell lies in order to get ahead?

Well, Peter told us why in that opening verse we looked at from his first letter. As an old apostle, he's learned a lesson he's passing on to us, here it is again:

Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking lies ... instead, be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about your hope in Christ.

1 Peter 3:10 & 15 (Paraphrased)

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Study Guide

Summary

In this sermon, we explored the story of Peter's denial of Jesus as recorded in Luke 22:54-62. The sermon began by setting the context of Peter's letter to believers who were under pressure to distance themselves from their faith. Peter's own experience of denying Jesus under pressure serves as a powerful lesson for us today. The sermon broke down the events of Peter's denial into four scenes, highlighting the gradual progression of his denials and the eventual realization of his failure when Jesus looked at him. The sermon emphasized the importance of staying true to our faith, even under pressure, and offered several key lessons drawn from Peter's experience.

Key Takeaways

1. **Guard Against Overconfidence in Your Spiritual Strength:** Peter, who once boldly declared he would never deny Jesus, found himself doing exactly that. This teaches us that we should never be overly confident in our spiritual strength. Instead, we should remain humble and vigilant, recognizing that we are all susceptible to failure and sin.
2. **Courage in One Moment Does Not Guarantee Courage in the Next:** Peter's initial bravery in the Garden of Gethsemane did not carry over to the courtyard of the high priest. This reminds us that spiritual courage must be continually renewed. We cannot rely on past victories to sustain us; we need to seek God's strength daily.
3. **Heed the Warnings God Provides:** Peter ignored several warnings, including the rooster's crow after his first denial. God often provides us with warnings and opportunities to turn back from sin. We must be attentive to these signs and respond quickly to avoid deeper entanglement in sin.
4. **Confess Quickly to Prevent Sin from Spreading:** Peter's initial lie led to further denials and deeper sin. This illustrates the importance of confessing our sins quickly. Unconfessed sin can grow and lead to more significant spiritual and moral failures. Immediate confession and repentance are crucial for maintaining spiritual integrity.
5. **Your Testimony is Proven in Difficult Circumstances:** Peter's true commitment to Jesus was tested not in the safety of the upper room but in the hostile environment of the high priest's courtyard. Our faith is most authentically demonstrated in challenging situations. How we speak and act in the face of opposition reveals the depth of our commitment to Christ.

Discussion Guide

Bible Reading

- Luke 22:54-62
- 1 Peter 3:10 & 15
- John 18:15-16

Observation Questions

1. What were the four scenes of Peter's denial as described in Luke 22:54-62?
2. What warnings did Peter ignore during his denials, and what was the significance of the rooster crowing?

Interpretation Questions

1. What does Peter's overconfidence in his spiritual strength teach us about our own vulnerabilities?
2. How does Peter's experience illustrate the need for continual renewal of spiritual courage?
3. In what ways does God provide warnings to us today, and how should we respond to them?

Application Questions

1. Reflect on a time when you were overconfident in your spiritual strength. How did that situation turn out, and what did you learn from it?
2. Think about a recent situation where you needed courage to stand up for your faith. How did you handle it, and what could you do differently next time?
3. Identify a warning or sign from God that you may have ignored in the past. How can you be more attentive to such warnings in the future?
4. Is there a sin in your life that you have not yet confessed? What steps can you take to confess and repent quickly to prevent it from growing?
5. How can you prepare yourself to give an answer about your hope in Christ when asked by others, especially in difficult circumstances?
6. Reflect on the mercy and grace of Jesus in your life. How does knowing that Jesus has already died for your next sin impact your daily walk with Him?