

Trials & Denials

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 June 2022

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] John chapter 18, verse 15 through 27.

Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. 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. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, you also are not one of his disciples, are you?

He said, I am not. Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all Jews come together.

[1 : 10] I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. They know what I said to them. And when he had said these things, one of the officers standing by Jesus struck him with his hand saying, Is that how you answer the high priest?

Jesus answered him, If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong. But if what I said is right, why do you strike me? Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, You also are not one of his disciples, are you? He denied it and said, I am not.

One of the servants of the high priest, the relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, Did I not see you in the garden with him? Peter again denied it.

And at once a rooster crowed. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Any sports fan living in 2010 remembers when LeBron James, one of the greatest basketball players of all time, announced on live television that he was leaving his hometown team, the Cleveland Cavaliers, to take his talents to Miami.

[2 : 32] He was going to sign with the Miami Heat. And I remember after LeBron James made that decision, that the next day, in fact, I think even that night, there were Cleveland Cavaliers fans going out to the streets, and they were taking their LeBron James jerseys, and they were burning them in the streets, and they were so upset.

The next day, all of these billboards in Cleveland that had LeBron James on them were covered. Nobody wanted to be in the presence of LeBron James.

The Cleveland fans wanted to do away with him. His decision was an act of betrayal, and overnight he became the most hated athlete, I think, in the world at that time.

Now, later he did go back to Cleveland, and he did win a championship with them. But, you know, when you are labeled a traitor or a betrayer, that is a label that sticks, and it's hard to get rid of.

In fact, betrayal is one of the most devastating experiences that any person can endure, isn't it? Just thinking of that word makes my stomach churn.

[3 : 47] When I hear it, I'm reminded of those whom I have both been betrayed by and whom I've betrayed. And I'm fairly certain that many of you, if not all of you, when you think about betrayal, it makes you feel the same way.

And I feel certain of that because none of us possess a flawless character that sees us acting totally loyal all of the time. Every one of us has let something slip that we were supposed to keep confidential.

Every one of us has made a promise that we thought that we would keep, but we didn't. Every one of us has had a relationship that has been severely wounded or even came to an end as a result of

betrayal.

As much as we hate it, it happens. It happens a lot. And when it happens to you, when you uncover the betrayal of someone who was close to you, someone who you trusted, someone you loved, your first thought is this.

How could you? How could you? And so as I read, as I've been studying John 18, this passage again this past week, that's the thought that I've been having in my mind as I think about Peter's betrayal of Jesus.

[5 : 15] How could you do that, Peter? How could anyone betray someone as good as Jesus? It's hard to understand.

As we read the Gospels, we see Judas. We know his betrayal is coming, don't we? Judas reveals how close someone can be to Jesus without ever truly believing.

But Peter? Peter? Peter was one of Jesus' first disciples, remember? He was a member of Jesus' inner circle with James and John.

He was one of Jesus' closest friends. The other disciples looked to Peter. The other disciples looked to Peter, to him, to be their leader, to be their spokesman.

He's the one who asked the questions they were afraid to present to Jesus. When Jesus asked the disciples who they believed he was, remember it was Peter, not any of the others.

[6 : 21] It was Peter who boldly and correctly spoke up and said, you are the Christ, you are the Son of the living God. Peter was bold. Peter was courageous.

Peter was a true disciple. Peter was Jesus' friend. Peter believed. When it came to the disciples, he was one of the best.

But even the best men are still men at best. And I believe that's the point that John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is making in these verses as he weaves together these two interrogations.

The interrogation of Peter and the interrogation of Jesus. Jesus was interrogated by those who were powerful in society. Peter was interrogated by those who were powerless in society.

And while Jesus remained true, Peter, the bold, the courageous leader of the disciples, recoiled in treachery and denial.

[7 : 29] And so this passage contains a warning for us all to heed, to be aware of. It also contains a promise for us all to trust.

The promise will come later, but first, the warning. And the warning is the main idea for this morning's sermon. If Peter could fall, so can anyone.

If Peter can fall, so can anyone. John does not record the story of Jesus' transfiguration, but the other three gospels do.

And they make it clear that that was a highlight of the disciples' experience with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Jesus led his closest disciples again, Peter, James, and John, up a mountain.

There he pulled back for a minute the veil of his flesh, and he let them see his glory. And if you recall, Moses and Elijah also appeared with Jesus.

[8 : 27] And Peter and the other two fell down and worshipped, and Peter came up with the idea, you know what? Let's never leave this place again. We'll build tents for all of you.

Forget about Jerusalem. Let the people come here. But at that moment, you have to understand, Peter was wanting to be as close to Jesus, more so, I think, than he had ever been.

Let's just stay here. I don't want to leave this place. So what changed? Between that moment and this one recorded in John chapter 18, where Peter denies Jesus.

John will explain. But what you and I need to understand is that, again, if this could happen to Peter, one of Jesus' most devoted disciples, it can happen to you.

Why did Peter betray Jesus? Why did he deny him? Well, I think it comes down to this principle, this core thought in Peter's mind. Peter denied everything to save himself.

[9 : 39] Peter denied everything to save himself. Look again at verses 15 and 16. Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. 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.

So again, if you remember, Jesus has just been betrayed by Judas, arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, and as he was taken to Annas, the other disciples scattered.

But at some point, Peter, as he was running, stopped, and he turned back to follow Jesus.

And so did another disciple John mentions. He doesn't mention who that disciple is, but I believe, as do many other scholars, that John is the other disciple.

[10:39] He doesn't like to mention himself in his own gospel, but it's most likely that it's John. And then we might ask, well, how did John come to know Annas?

Well, biblical scholars suggest that John's father was a fisherman, and we know that from the text, and fishermen were entrepreneurs. It wasn't like they were on the low rung, necessarily, of society. They were entrepreneurs. And so maybe, John used to deliver fish for his father to Annas' house. That's a possibility. Also, John's mother was of priestly descent, and so there may have been some kind of relationship there.

Whatever the case was, I believe this was John, and it was John who granted access for Peter through this servant girl. But again, while all the other disciples ran for the hills, let's give Peter some credit.

Let's give Peter some credit. Even though he failed, he failed somewhat courageously, didn't he? I mean, he turned back. That indicates that he loved Jesus.

[11:46] Why else would he stop seeking safety in order to come back and follow Jesus? Why else would he seek interest into Annas' house?

He loved Jesus. He was concerned about what was going to happen to him. And so this, again, though he failed, he failed in a situation that his love for Jesus brought him to.

But once he was inside Annas' house, Peter began to become undone by a question asked by a powerless, unassuming servant girl who took notice of him as she led him through the gate.

In verse 17, the servant girl at the door said to Peter, you also are not one of the man's disciples, are you? And Peter said, I am not. In the Greek, the question is posed with an expectation of a negative answer.

She expected that his answer would be, no, I'm not. But Peter, taking her cue, followed course and he blurted out, I'm not. Not one of the disciples. Why? It's interesting, isn't it?

[12:56] Peter, not long ago, was pulling out a sword and cutting off a servant's ear, ready to start a fight with a cohort of about 200 Roman soldiers but now here, there's this servant girl and he's all of a sudden afraid of her question and he begins to backtrack.

I don't know who this guy is. You know, and then you wonder, well, why didn't he just keep running if he was so afraid? Why did he turn back to Jesus at all to follow him?

Why didn't he just stay outside of the gate instead of go inside? What led Peter to this denial? I think there's at least a few things.

Probably more things. But first of all, Peter was overconfident in himself. And as we read the Gospels, that's an issue that Peter continually struggled with, isn't it?

Earlier, Jesus had warned his disciples that they would all abandon him. But again, it was Peter who spoke up and said, even if they all fall away, Lord, not me.

[14:04] I won't. And then when Jesus said to Peter that he would in fact deny him three times, verse 31 records of Mark 14, Peter's response. He said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And all of the other disciples said the same. I think it's as if Peter is saying there, look, Lord, I can understand you're thinking that these other guys, these bench warmers, these guys that bat at the bottom of the lineup, I can see why you might be concerned about them, but I'm a starter.

I'm a star player. You can depend upon me. I'll produce. When things are on the line, you can trust me with the ball in my hands, I will deliver.

He was overconfident. And following away from Jesus is a result of overconfidence in yourself. If you think that you are invulnerable, if you trust too much in your talents and in your abilities and what you have to offer, then like Peter, you are in danger of falling away.

Sometimes overconfidence shows up in you like this. You're reading your Bible. You're studying God's Word. And all you can think about is all the other people that what you're reading applies to without thinking first about how this applies to me.

[15:46] Because you're aware of everybody else's shortcomings and sins, but not your own. It's like you're reading God's Word and you're thinking of all these people and you just have these thoughts.

Like it's just me and you, Jesus. You know, if they would just listen to us, gosh, if they would just be more like us, things would be so much better.

Peter was overconfident in Annas' house, that unfamiliar setting. all of a sudden, his confidence was shaken as he was caught off guard by a simple question.

Peter was overconfident. I think he also fell in this situation because he failed to pray. There was a lack of prayer in his life. Matthew 26, 36 through 46 records Jesus' time with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, just moments before this denial, moments before Jesus was arrested. In verse 37, if you remember, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him a little bit further away from the rest of the disciples and he instructs them to pray and then Jesus himself goes on a little bit further to pray by himself.

[17:03] But then when Jesus returned to where those three were, what did he find? They were asleep. They were asleep. But notice it's Peter.

Peter. It's the leader of the disciples who Jesus addresses in verse 40. And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping and he said to Peter, so you could not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And you know, if ever there was someone who we think wouldn't need to pray, it was the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Yet, we see him in the Garden of Gethsemane pouring out his soul to his heavenly Father. All the while, Peter is sleeping.

Even after Jesus went back to wake him up from his slumber when he returned, Peter was still sleeping. Overconfident people don't often see the necessity of prayer in their lives.

[18:16] Ephesians 6.8, 1 Thessalonians 5.17, Philippians 4.6, and others command God's people to pray continually. And the Gospels record Jesus praying continually, don't they?

Often, they tell us about how he would go out into a desolate place in the morning and then in the evening just to be by himself to be alone to pray to his heavenly Father.

And if Jesus felt like prayer was a necessity for him, how much more so than is it for us? Peter's denial of Christ was a result of overconfidence, his prayerlessness, and also as a result of those whom he chose to take company with in verse 18.

Now, the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them standing and warming himself.

Now, jump down to verse 26 and there's something that you need to see here. In verse 18, it says, Peter stood around the fire with them. Then in verse 26, after Peter's association with Jesus was being challenged by the relative of the man whose ear Peter had chopped off, he asked him, didn't we see you with him?

[19:44] With them? With him? Peter, who had been seen with Jesus, was now in the courtyard! He was with him of the high priest warming himself next to those who were Jesus' enemies.

He was with him, now he's with them. It was cold in the shadows, in the courtyard of Annas' house. Peter was by himself. Maybe he thought, not only am I cold, but if I'm over here by myself, I'm going to, I'm going to be noticed. And so he creeps over to the fire.

And in bitter irony, like Judas a little while earlier, Peter takes company with the enemies of Jesus. Now who you take company with matters.

1 Corinthians 15, 33 says, do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. In the context of that passage, it refers to those who are denying the resurrection of Jesus and teaching other destructive things in the Corinthian church.

[21:03] And so Paul's point was that those who think wrongly will eventually behave wrongly. And to continually associate with such people will result in their being contaminated by their false wrong ideas.

And so as Christians, we know that we are not of this world, right? And that we are not to associate with many of the things in this world, that there are many things that we are to avoid.

But we also know that we are called to make disciples. And so we must engage the world. we must have activity within the world, with the world.

But you know, often what I see happening in the life of a Christian is they develop a relationship with an unbeliever. And this is their thought.

I'll witness to them, I'll be a positive influence in their lives, and God will use me to lead them to Christ. And you know what?

[22:11] That is all very well and very good. But what I see happening a lot, especially in relationships between a guy and a girl, is that before long you find yourself more immersed in their

lifestyle and being less of an influence in their lives.

people maybe even liking and loving them more than the people that you share your faith with. I like these people more than Christians.

I like these people more than the people that I go to church with. All the while you're confident that you are being the influencer, but failing to realize the influence maybe that they are having on you. Now I once heard John Piper talk about this very thing and he said something really interesting. He asked, are we loving these people for their sake? That is that they would come to faith and they would become godly?

Or do we really love them because we love what they enjoy and really like being with them in their worldliness? It's a question we all need to keep in mind, right?

[23 : 36] Yes, we are called to make disciples. Yes, we are to have relationships and seek to develop them with unbelievers in the hopes that they will come to faith in Jesus Christ, but could it be that that relationship that you have with them is really more a result of not that I want that person to come in faith in Christ, but I enjoy so much the things that they're doing and I just want to have an excuse to be a part of it.

If Peter thought he'd avoid stares by mingling with the crowd by the fire, he was wrong, because two quick questions are shot at him in succession.

First, verse 25, now Peter was standing and warming himself, so they said to him, you also are not one of the disciples, are you? And he denied it, and he said, I am not. 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?

Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed. Matthew reports that Peter issued this second denial with an oath, and then when he was asked the third time, Matthew records that Peter got ugly in his denial, that he was cursing and he was swearing, I don't know Jesus.

So not only did he deny him, Peter cursed him. He was overconfident, he was prayerless, he was with the wrong crowd, and he stumbled, and he fell to protect himself, to spare himself from being associated with Christ.

[25 : 19] He fell. Peter's denial of Christ presents us with the truth that we would rather not see, the darkness of the human heart.

It shows us what the best of us are capable of. even after making a bold confession, even after swearing allegiance to Jesus, John 13 38, Peter said, I'll lay down my life for you.

Peter failed in the moment of truth. You know, so often such as the fallen human condition, even the best of us, even at our best, we are sinful and we're fallen.

Let me ask you the same question that Peter was asked. Didn't we see you with Jesus? Have you been seen with Jesus?

Have you been with him in prayer? Have you been with him in his word? If so, you've been seen with Jesus, and if you've been consistent in those things, people will notice that.

[26 : 53] They'll see it in your conduct. They'll see it in your character. They'll hear it in your conversation. If you have been with Jesus, isn't it true then that certain things should be expected of you by others in your church?

Unbelievers as well? You know, for me, in my profession, people know that I'm a Christian. You know?

I mean, it's what, I'm a pastor. One of the questions that people often ask one another is this, what do you do for a living, right? And people ask me, what do you do for a living?

I'm a pastor. And instantly it changes the dynamic of whatever the conversation might have been, you know? But people know that of me.

And a requirement of an elder is that they be above reproach, that they have a good name within the community. All things that I'm aware of, and I know that people have an expectation of me as a pastor, that I should act a certain way and talk a certain way, and I'm keenly aware of that during Jack's baseball games.

[28 : 07] When there's an inconsistent strike zone, when the umpire blows a call, you know, there's a lot of times where I am tempted to deny Christ on the baseball field.

And for the most part, I think I've done a pretty good job. They have a right. Everyone has a right to know if you're a Christian, that you should be expected to be a certain way.

If you follow Christ, his priorities should be your priorities. His values should be your values. And Christians should be those who practice what they preach. The world has a right to assume that you will if you claim to be a follower of Christ.

But if, like Peter, you begin following Jesus from a distance, if you start to become overconfident in yourself, if you cease to pray, if you keep company with those who don't know, don't believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, you may be setting yourself up for a fall.

If it could happen to Peter, it can happen to you. But this passage also reminds us of the kind of people Jesus was willing to die for. He had no need to die for people who were sinless.

[29 : 31] There are no such people. He gave himself, he gave his life for people who have it in them to betray him, to deny him thinking that they could save themselves by doing so.

So we see Peter denying everything to save himself and what we see from Jesus in verses 19 through 24 is this, Jesus denied nothing to save others. Jesus denied nothing to save others.

So in between Peter's interrogation and denials, John inserts this testimony of Jesus, testimony in which he acts in ways that are the exact opposite of Peter.

Let's read those verses again, 19 and 21. The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world, I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together.

I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. They know what I said. So first of all, what we need to understand is this trial, as will all the other trials of Jesus be, they are shams.

[30 : 44] The fate of Jesus had already been sealed. John 11, 47 through 50 record that. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, what are we to do? For this man performs many signs.

If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

they were after him. Now they had him. And in a formal Jewish hearing, charges had to be presented against the accused and then substantiated with evidence and witnesses.

But Annas throws all that out. He begins questioning Jesus right off the bat in an attempt to get him to incriminate himself. And in Jewish law, much like our Fifth Amendment right, the accused were protected from having to testify against themselves.

It was Annas' responsibility to inform Jesus of the charges against him and then to present witnesses. And so Jesus' answer back to him was not an attempt to avoid his questions but further unmasking Annas' hypocrisy.

[32 : 11] Jesus was saying in effect, I know the law. I have nothing to hide. My teachings are well documented and there are plenty of witnesses.

So if you want to try me, have the decency to do it the right way. Let's not pretend as if this is something that it isn't.

Present your charges, bring your witnesses, I'll deny nothing that I've said or that I've done. And so embarrassed by his master's loss of face, verse 22 continues saying, then when Jesus had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand saying, is that how you answer the high priest?

Now this too was a violation of the law. To strike a prisoner who had not been formally accused or formally charged was illegal.

But again we see Jesus maintain his composure in verse 23. Jesus answered them, if what I said was wrong, bear witness about the wrong, but if what I said was right, why do you strike me?

[33 : 19] His logic was impeccable. If he was wrong about the proper legal procedures, they should have corrected him instead of hitting him.

But if he was right as he was, there was no reason for him to have been hit. Jesus would not deny who he was, but he would continue to point out the unfairness of this trial.

And so verse 24 says, Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Only Caiaphas, the reigning high priest at that time, could bring legal charges against Jesus before Pilate.

And so Annas sent Jesus, thus sealing his fate to Caiaphas. All the while, Jesus was taking this bold stand, Peter was denying him.

Jesus was making his way to the cross, making no attempt to escape it, making no attempt to save himself, denying nothing, willing to endure the cross to save his people.

[34 : 28] As Isaiah prophesied, in Isaiah 53, verse 7, he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

And then as Jesus is led out of Annas' house, Luke records a heart-wrenching exchange between Jesus and Peter, one that John does not record.

After Peter's third denial, when his betrayals were complete, a rooster crowed, just as Jesus predicted, and then Luke 22, 61 through 62, records this exchange.

And the Lord turned and he looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he said to him, before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.

And Peter went out and he wept bitterly. You know, we've all been betrayed. We've all been hurt.

[35 : 51] And so you can imagine to an extent the heartache of Jesus maybe you've been the betrayer and you've seen the grief that you have caused someone you loved.

In either case, you think, how could I ever forgive that person if you've been betrayed?

Or if you've been the betrayer, you might think, how can that person ever forgive me? how can I ever forgive myself? You know, you and I are a lot like Peter.

You've sinned in big ways. You've betrayed your confession of Christ by those sinful actions. And you've asked forgiveness.

And then you continually fall back into those sins that you've sought God's forgiveness for. And you might be tempted to wonder in those moments, is God's grace great enough to continually put up with someone like me?

[37 : 04] Will he still forgive me? Does he still love me? Maybe you share Peter's grief this morning over your denials, your betrayals, your sins.

Jesus. If Peter could fall, so can anyone. So can you. But you know what? That wasn't the end of Peter's story.

And it doesn't have to be the end of your story either. After denying nothing to save others, having atoned for the sins of his people on the cross, having borne the sins of those who betrayed him, Jesus rose again victorious over sin, death, and Satan on the third day.

And before long he appeared to his disciples and then he set up a meeting with Peter. I don't think Peter was quite ready for that, but Jesus was ready to meet with Peter.

In chapter 18, where we've been, Peter is cold, Peter is lonely, Peter is left out. He's seen swarms by a fire that is kindled by the enemies of the Lord.

[38 : 24] But in chapter 21, in John's gospel, there's another fire. This one was kindled by Jesus as he prepared breakfast on it for his disciples.

And the same Lord, now risen, who had been denied by Peter in chapter 18, forgives him and recommissions him in chapter 21.

The fire that Jesus kindles in chapter 21, around which he forgives and around which he recommissions Peter, reminds me of another fire described in Isaiah chapter 6.

If you recall, Isaiah has a vision of being in the throne room of God. He's in the presence of holiness. And in God's presence, Isaiah became aware more so than ever of his own sinfulness. Isaiah 6, 5 says, And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

[39 : 32] And how did God respond? What happened to Isaiah? Isaiah. He sent an angel with a coal that was taken from his altar, and he placed it on Isaiah's lips, purifying them.

And then verse 8 records, I heard Isaiah saying, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? Then Isaiah said, Here I am, send me.

And so Jesus does the same for Peter here in John 21 around this fire. He asks him, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He asked him that three times.

And Peter answered, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And then what does Jesus say? I doubt it. I just doubt it. I can't forgive you. I just, I'm afraid you're going to do it again.

Is that what Jesus says? No, he says, feed my lambs. Jesus. Peter betrayed Jesus, but he was forgiven.

[40 : 43] And he was given another chance. And he did not fail in that second chance.

Was he sinless? Absolutely not. Go on reading. You'll see. But did he deny? Did he betray Jesus ever again? No.

So it is for many people today. Time and time again they have denied Jesus in many, many ways. But like me and like so many others, they have found the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ over and over again in the midst of those betrayals, in the midst of those denials, and have been purged of their sin.

then in a sense of their own weakness, but with an even greater awareness of Christ's strength, they go on to live for him, to make much of him.

And so the warning again, if Peter could fall, so can anyone. But now the promise, and it's the main point of application for this sermon. if Peter could be restored, so can you.

[42 : 02] If Peter could be restored, so can you. Now I remember being in Latvia and our tour guide was giving us a tour through the city, and he pointed out that on a lot of these beautiful churches, on the steeple, you remember Amy, you went, was a rooster.

And he pointed us out and he said, you know why the rooster is on top of all those churches? And he said it's meant to be a consistent reminder to Christians, no matter where they are in the city, they see that rooster on top of the church and they know that like Peter, they are capable of doing the same.

So yeah, if Peter could stumble, anyone can. But if Jesus was willing to forgive Peter for what he did and restore him, he'll do the same for you.

Three questions of application for you to take and look at this today or later this week. Number one, what does Peter's betrayal teach us about the most committed disciples?

I think one thing is it teaches us that we need to first and foremost be followers of Christ, not followers of some pastor, some theologian, or some author. As good as they are, as great men and women of God as they may be, we first and foremost are a disciple of Jesus.

[43 : 40] He'll never fail us. Question number two, what does this passage teach us about the commitment of Jesus? Jesus, but he was willing to endure what he did for people who betray him and deny him?

And then question three, read John 21, 15 through 19. What hope does this passage give to those who have betrayed or denied Jesus with their words and actions?

Take time to read that passage and answer that question. But you know, if today you realize that you are very much like Peter in this moment, you've denied Christ, you've betrayed him, then I encourage you to come forward and pray.

If you want me to pray for you, I'll be standing right here and I would love to pray for you. Please know that as great as your sins may be, Christ is greater.

And so is his grace. And so is his mercy. And if you turn to him in forgiveness and repentance and faith, you'll receive his grace and his mercy and his love.

[44 : 58] Let's pray. Lord, you are such a great Savior. God, each one of us no doubt has been in the position of being betrayed by someone who we just couldn't imagine forgiving.

And yet, Lord, all of our sins are committed against you. It was for our sins that you died on the cross in our place continually with our lives and with our words, with our actions.

Lord, we say things and do things or don't do things that serve as denials of who you are in our lives.

Lord, forgive us and we thank you that you do forgive us. We look at Peter who was a great disciple who fell in the moment of truth.

And yet, Lord, when you came back to him, you did not throw it in his face, you did not humiliate him, you did not add to his pain, but you forgave him and you restored him.

[46 : 08] And so, Lord, for any of us who are feeling that way this morning, we feel like there's just no hope for us. We've let you down for the last time and you're ready to give us the boot. Father, remind us of your grace and your mercy.

Remind us of the hope that we have always in Jesus Christ. God, may we live our lives in service to you. May we, like Peter, take advantage of those second chances that you give us to go out and make much of you and to make sure that in our lives you are the one who gets the glory, you are the one who gets the praise.

Lord, use us in our church to make much of who you are, how great you are. And we thank you for your love and we thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your forgiveness.

You are so good. It's in your name we pray. Amen. .