

We move on from the account of Jesus submitting to that Father's plan to be the Lamb of God. The arrest of Jesus would not have been possible had it not been for Jesus taking control of the situation and commanding the cohort to take Him and let the rest go. Had He not done so, legions of Roman soldiers could not have arrested Him for the Hosts of the Lord were standing by for a mere word from either the Father or the Son and they would have been defeated in their attempt. Even Satan in his power and deceit had no claim over Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The next part of this section is a mixture of sadness and a wonderful example of the grace and mercy of the Lord – the account of Peter's denial of the Lord. The purpose of this lesson is not to establish a historical account of each denial – rather I want to take a look at Peter in his action and Jesus in His mercy and make application to today. Let's turn to the passage that tells of Peter's denial according to John.

**<sup>15</sup>Simon Peter followed along behind, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the courtyard with Jesus. <sup>16</sup>Peter stood outside the gate. Then the other disciple spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. <sup>17</sup>The woman asked Peter, "Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?" "No," he said, "I am not." NIV.<sup>2</sup>**

### **The Wrong Place at the Wrong Time.**

Peter had been told by the Lord that he would deny Him but in his arrogance, he rejected Jesus' prediction. He had also tried to blot out Jesus' own warning. See [Matt 26:31-32](#). Also Zech 13:7-9 ([NIV](#), [NASB](#), [TM](#), [AMP](#), [KJV](#)). Based on both Jesus' prophesy and Zechariah's it was clear that Jesus expected the disciples would scatter. Not only for fear of their lives but for their own protection. John clearly disobeyed Jesus' warning as did Peter thereby placing them both in a compromised situation. John was an acquaintance of the High Priest and so was allowed entrance into the courtyard. Peter was not and was outside the entrance. Both had placed themselves in a position of compromise, especially Peter. Had they not been told what was going to happen?<sup>3</sup> Yet instead of fleeing as Jesus said they would (make that should) to await His meeting them in Galilee<sup>4</sup> after the resurrection, John and Peter followed Jesus - from afar but

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<sup>1</sup> See [John 14:30](#), lit. "he has nothing in me." A difficult phrase to catch in the translation. I like "[The Message](#)" (TM) translation best. Satan has no claim on Jesus Christ, he has failed completely in his attempts to shake Jesus from redemption's course.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> See Lenski [The Interpretation of John](#), page 1194, ¶ 2 on this.

<sup>4</sup> See [Matt 26:32](#).

close enough to place them within the sphere of Satan’s attack. What follows is covered both in the synoptics and John’s account where Peter progressively denied association with Jesus including with curses. Here is a breakdown of the account by way of harmony:

Matt	Mk	Luke	John
<a href="#">26:58</a>	<a href="#">14:54</a>	<a href="#">22:54</a>	<a href="#">18:15</a>
			<a href="#">18:18</a>
<a href="#">26:69-75</a>	<a href="#">14:66-72</a>	<a href="#">22:56-62</a>	<a href="#">18:25-27</a>

The whole point of this narrative was that both disciples should have fled but they did not thereby placing them in the wrong place at the wrong time and so, Peter’s denial.

Temptation is like that. Please turn to [Proverbs 7:6-27](#). The story is that of a young man taking a walk into a neighborhood where he did not belong. There he was tempted into an illicit affair that typifies committing sin after being tempted. Note that this place of sin is called “...<sup>Prov 7:27</sup> **Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.**” Sin is not to be taken lightly – as in the case of Peter (and John’s complicity). James picks up on this subject in 1:13-15. I like the Amplified for insight into the original:

<sup>13</sup>**Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one.**  
<sup>14</sup>**But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions).** <sup>15</sup>**Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death.**

There are two word-pictures here regarding sin. First, from the fisherman’s experience, we have the enticing of the bait found in verse 14. Second, we have (by way of looking back to the results of Proverbs 7, perhaps) - we have the word-picture of adultery. Peter had violated all these principles and had done the very thing he said he wouldn’t – deny Christ.

We need to draw from this lesson in our own lives.

- We shouldn’t loiter on sin’s doorstep. If we do we can expect that we will not succeed in resisting the temptation to sin.
- We need to realize that part of the temptation process is the deadly rationale that leads us into sin. In the case of Peter, he wanted to see the outcome of Jesus’ trial (see Matt 25:28 [TM](#)). Jesus had already predicted the outcome. It was Peter’s job to stay out of harm’s way, which he did not.
- The result of temptation to sin when we violate these principles is as sure as the outcome of illicit sex as found in our James passage – there will be “fruit” of the act – sin.

It's important to note that I am not saying we have no power to overcome temptation. I am saying that if we deliberately disobey the Lord and *place* ourselves on the pathway of temptation, we will likely fulfill the passages in Proverbs 7 and James 1.

Judas, having regretted his action hanged himself. Not by way of godly sorrow but in a final act of rejecting the mercy of the Lord. Peter, however, was a different case. I like Luke's account:

**<sup>60</sup>Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup>The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." <sup>62</sup>And he went outside and wept bitterly. Luke 22:60 - 62. NIV.**

Finally, Peter had to face up to his arrogance and utter weakness. He left the scene where, indeed, he should not have been in the first place weeping bitterly – not so much pointing to the physical uncontrollable sobbing but to the true godly sorrow that leads to forgiveness<sup>5</sup> (see also [2 Corinthians 7:8-13](#)). Let us not forget the look of mercy that Jesus cast on Peter – NIV has it "**The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.**" Nothing was said – the look spoke volumes. Instantly Peter recalled what the Lord had said and the conviction was complete – he left the place of his sin immediately.

### The Right Place and the Right Time.

Let's turn to the next scene where we find Peter in the right place.

**<sup>3</sup>So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup>Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup>as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup>Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) John 20:3-9.**

I don't want to spend much time on the details of this passage only to say that Peter had not left the company of John. What happened in the three days during the death of Jesus holds little detail except that they were hiding from possible arrest. I can imagine John comforting Peter. I can imagine Peter "kicking himself all over town" because of his denial but I can also imagine that Peter found forgiveness.

Let's just step back from these events and make an application. It is the height of arrogance that we, as children of God imagine that we will not make serious blunders and sin. It is also a fact that the Holy Spirit within us will counsel us, comfort us so that we will have the strength to NOT yield to sin's temptation. Avoidance of circumstances

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<sup>5</sup> See Lenski on this.

that might lead to sin is important.

Another lesson we can draw from this passage is that Peter kept the company of fellow believers even though he had failed the Lord miserably. It must have been the height of the humbling of Peter that he kept company with the others but he did. That's important. We need to realize that we are not islands unto ourselves and need the ministry of our Christian friends. This is the right place at the right time for all believers. Being transparent with others in our faults when appropriate and accepting that others *might* have something to offer by way of ministry is very important to any recovery from sin and for growth in discipleship. Peter's right place and right time led him to the discovery of Jesus' empty tomb – the epiphany that would serve him well when he preached that Christ was, indeed risen, and that He offers forgiveness to all – a very personal experience for Peter.

I wish to bring up another point in this passage: we may not always have an answer for everything. Please note John's comment that he along with Peter did not fully understand the significance of the empty tomb. Bible commentators differ on this comment. Lenski says that John *began to believe*.<sup>6</sup> What? That Jesus had been resurrected – yet the other disciples did not. We may face circumstances for which we do not have all the answers and yet the Lord will gently lead us along and *meet us in our unanswered questions eventually*.

### **Picking up the Pieces.**

When we make major blunders, as did Peter, we should not give up in despair. I completely reject the saying "a bird with a broken wing will never fly as high" referring to pastors who sin can never return to ministry. With the right counsel – with repentance and the restorative ministry of the church, pastors can return to ministry after a major blunder in sin. Later on Jesus restored Peter in ministry (see [John 21:15-19](#)). Peter was restored in ministry because he rejected his arrogance and sought the forgiveness and restoration of the Lord and, I believe, the counsel of John and others. I have personally experienced the unfortunate result of pride getting in the way of a restoring pastor in ministry. I offered counsel that was rejected and will always wonder what would have happened to that man had he followed Peter's course. Be that as it may, restoration to ministry is the imperative of Grace and Mercy. David was restored despite a hideous sin. Paul was saved in spite of the fact that he personally persecuted the Lord through the murder of the saints.

We *can* pick up the pieces in a life that has been messed up by our own arrogance and sin. Restoration in ministry is the Lord's specialty as we have witnessed in Peter's life.

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<sup>6</sup> Ingressive Aroist – he began to put things together about the resurrection.