

The cock crowed

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[0 : 0 0] We thank you that his name was to be called Emmanuel, which means God with us. And Lord God, we thank you for the hymn that we have sung that reminds us not only of the fact that God came to be with us in Christ in these events that we remember in history, but we thank you that you are the God who is with us always. Jesus said, Lord, behold, I am with you always to the very end of time. And we thank you that we are able to sing with the hymn writer of enjoying a walk with God. We thank you, Lord, that you come alongside us in the power of the Holy Spirit. We thank you that you speak into our lives as we open your word. We thank you that we are able to draw near to you in prayer. We're able to pour out our hearts and our souls in prayer as we come to you in the name of Jesus. And we acknowledge this morning that we can come no other way and through no other name. Jesus is the savior of sinners. Jesus is the way to the father. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. And we thank you that when we are coming in the name of Christ and when our faith is in the finished work of Christ, we can draw near to you knowing, Lord God, that you will receive us. Not because of who we are, but because of who Christ is. Not because of what we have done, but because of all that Jesus has done. So receive us in Christ this morning. We pray that you would hear us, Lord, as we confess our sin. We have sung that and we echo that in prayer. We are those who sin. We look back over a year and we think of episodes, we think of things we think of things we've said. We think of things we've done. We think of things which no one knows about except God himself. And we thank you that we can hide nothing from you,

Lord, but we can confess our sin, knowing that you are faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and to purify us of all unrighteousness. So cleanse us in the blood of Christ, we pray, as we confess our sin. And enable us, we pray, to let go of the idols which stifle us spiritually.

Enable us, we pray, to smash them as you would have us do and to worship only you. Because we know, Lord God, that you alone are worthy of all praise and glory and honour. And we know that you are the only one who is able to give us the peace and the rest and the joy that is for our souls in Christ.

So lead us and guide us now, we pray, in this hour of worship. May we know your presence. May we know your peace. May we know the help of the Holy Spirit and that freedom of speech and of thought and of response as we open your word. Be at work amongst us, we pray. Awaken the souls of any who sit here this morning who are still dead in transgression and sin and who see not their need and who see no beauty in Christ. And revive, Lord, and quicken the hearts of your people so that we would walk more closely with you as a result of the encounter we pray we will have with you in and through your word this morning. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. And if we could turn now in our Bibles, please, to Mark chapter 14. Mark chapter 14. We've been in Mark for a while now, just for those who are visiting. And we come to the section where Peter, his fall is predicted and then we will look at how he did fall. So they're in the upper room, the disciples and Jesus, he shares the supper with them, the Lord's supper. And then when they had sung a hymn, verse 26, they went out into the Mount of Olives. And we pick up at verse 27. This is God's word. You will all fall away, Jesus told them. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into

Galilee. Peter declared, even if all fall away, I will not. I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, today, yes, tonight, before the cock crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times. But Peter insisted emphatically, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. And all the others said the same.

[5 : 13] And then if we move on to the next section, the last section in verse 66. Some hours later, in verse 66, while Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus, she said. But he denied it. I don't know or understand what you're talking about, he said, and went out into the entrance. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, this fellow is one of them. Again, he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. He began to call down curses on himself. And he swore to them, I don't know this man that you're talking about. Immediately, the cock crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him. Before the cock crows twice, you will disown me three times. And he broke down and wept. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. If you could turn now, please, to Mark chapter 14. And as we go there, let's pray for a moment again. Heavenly Father, we confess with the psalmist that we are poor and needy in every way.

We are poor and needy in our hearts because of our sin and our inability to save ourselves. But we thank you that Jesus is the rock of our salvation. And we pray that we would know the assurance of that salvation in Jesus. And Lord, we confess that we are poor and needy hour by hour. We needy every hour we often sing. That's not something that we confess at the moment that we are converted and then leave behind. That's something that we say hour by hour and moment by moment. We are constantly in need of your strength and of your grace. And so we pray for that just now. We pray that as we have this passage in front of us now, that you would teach us, that you would guide us. We look at Peter and we see so much of our own hearts. And Lord, we thank you that we do. And we pray as we reflect on all that

Peter shares as he's guided by the Holy Spirit through this passage, we pray that we would see the reality of our own need and that we would see the beauty and the grace of Jesus shown to Peter and also shown to us. So enable us, we pray, to have our eyes upon Jesus as we come to this scripture. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. One thing we tend to do more over the Christmas holiday week than perhaps we do in the rest of the year is watch television. It's on in the background.

As family are gathered, we have this constant hum in the background. And it seems to me there's not a night in the week, this week or any other week in the year, where there isn't a chat show on television with two or three barely recognisable guests. And usually the interviews that are being broadcast, usually they're not that interesting. Somebody's wanting to speak about their new book or their new film or somebody's wanting to perform their new single. And so they're on the couch and then they do the thing. And a few people tune in, but most of us, it's just in the background and you're not paying much attention and the viewing figures aren't that impressive.

But if in one of these chat shows, a guest agrees to come on, not with a book to sell or a film to advertise, but if a guest agrees to come on, a guest that once was flying high and was flavor of the month in terms of the celebrity list, but who fell publicly and dramatically from that position of celebrity. When somebody like that comes on and they're willing to share something of their fall from grace, people tune in in their millions. We're interested in what people have to say after they've fallen. But usually they say nothing. Usually they disappear. They go from that place of very, very public fame to their nowhere to be seen. They go quiet. They don't do interviews.

[10 : 21] And you could say that Mark 14 is the exception to that rule. Mark 14, this section here that we've looked at this morning, in a sense it's an interview with Peter, the disciple of Jesus.

It's Peter that's telling Mark what to write in this gospel. Peter was the eyewitness. Mark is the scribe. The Holy Spirit is inspiring them both in what actually goes on to paper. And as Peter and Mark pen these verses, Peter is remembering his terrible, his public, his painful fall. And Peter is sharing some of the lessons that he learned the hard way with us as we go through this passage. So what does Peter have to say to us if we are disciples of Jesus here this morning? Perhaps I should just ask the question before we go there. Are you a disciple of Christ this morning? Are you somebody who has confessed your sin and turned away from that old life and turned to be with Jesus? That's the definition of a disciple. Someone who is with Jesus. There was a day when Peter was fishing.

He had a lucrative family business but he heard the call of Jesus to follow him. And so he left his nets behind and he followed Jesus. Have you left your nets behind? Are you following Jesus? Have you turned from sin? Are you saved by him? And if you and I are, what are we being taught here in terms of discipleship? What can we learn from this passage that might help us not to fall like Peter fell? Or what can we learn from this passage that might help us back onto our feet if we have fallen like Peter did? There's six short lessons here that I want to head through this morning. The first lesson that we can take from this is we are to be aware that we have an enemy. I think Peter is saying that through this section and he certainly says that in his letters. Be aware you have an enemy.

Sometimes you know if you're with one side, automatically that sets you against another side. You know if you wear a Celtic top in Glasgow today on the old firm day, then you might find that some strangers will run up to you and hug you and treat you like a long lost friend even though you've never met them because they say you're with them. But equally you can be walking down the street and strangers may run up to you and punch you in the nose because they recognize you as somebody who is against them. You know if we are with Jesus, which is the definition of the disciple, Mark 3 14, he called them to be with him. If we are with Jesus, then yes we have a saviour, Jesus, but automatically, instantly, we have an enemy. His name is Satan and he prowls around like a roaring lion. Peter's the one who wrote that in 1 Peter 5 8. And very often Satan is most active when we have been close with Jesus.

When we think we're actually in a not bad position. So here we have the disciples in Mark 14. And they've just been at the table with Jesus.

[14 : 20] They've just enjoyed some of the most intimate, precious fellowship that they have ever experienced with Jesus in the upper room. Where is Satan?

He's watching. And he is poised. He is ready to attack. He has designs on these disciples. We're not told that in Mark.

But in Luke's account of this section, Luke takes us behind the scenes and he gives us the comment of Jesus. When Jesus addresses Peter and he uses his old name.

Peter meant rock. Peter's old name was Simon, which meant shaky. And Jesus says to Peter at this point in time, Simon, Simon, shaky, shaky.

Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. See, Jesus wanted his disciples and he wanted especially Peter to be aware that he had an enemy.

[15 : 25] And we need to be aware of this too. We have an enemy. The devil. He is no comic book character.

He is no nameless force. He is a personal destructive enemy of the Christian. He is always on the prowl.

And he is most ready to attack when we have been close with Jesus. When we feel like we're actually doing okay. When we feel like we've just had a blessed experience.

We know Satan is not far away. Whenever I see young Christians especially developing at speed and growing steadily I get nervous.

Because so often you watch and all of a sudden they're entangled in a relationship that seems to stifle them spiritually.

[16 : 35] Or their work seems to absolutely take over their lives. or they develop an interest that goes from being an interest in its right place to being a God that shunts God himself off the throne of their heart.

Now who is behind all that? We see it time and time again. It's a sad story that's told a million times over. Who's behind all that? It's Satan.

The enemy of the believer. So we need to be aware that we have an enemy so that we'll be alert to his schemes. That's the first point.

The second point is as disciples we need to be always listening to and trusting in the word of Jesus. We're about to witness here in the passage the saddest episode in Peter's life unfolds.

Peter who is so full of zeal who's so full of sincerity who's so on fire for Christ he denies his Lord and not just once but three times and we wonder as we think about the Peter that we know and as we think about the circumstances that we've read we wonder how could that happen and Peter of all people and actually we can trace the disaster back to something as straightforward as this he didn't listen to he did not trust the word of Jesus look at verse 27 what Jesus says to Peter and the disciples Jesus says you will all fall away for it is written I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered that's a quote from Zechariah 13 but after I have risen

[18 : 33] I will go ahead of you into Galilee that's what Jesus says to Peter and the disciples there's nothing difficult about it there's nothing complicated about it but Peter he's not listening and the rest of the disciples as well they're not listening see there's a difference between hearing something and actually listening to and trusting in something we could tell the story many times over but it's usually men they're not feeling very well so eventually after a long period of negotiation they go to the doctor and the doctor takes a look at them and says stand on the scales so they stand on the scales reluctantly and the doctor asks a few questions and comes to the conclusion well you're overweight your heart's under pressure your diet's all wrong and you're doing no exercise and so what do you need to do well you need to start walking you need to change your diet you need to look after yourself or your heart will give up and yet we know that many many times after men go to the doctor and hear these kind of things they go home they cut themselves a slice of cake they throw their trainers in the bin and they do absolutely nothing the doctor actually says now why is that

I think it's because we we just don't believe that what the doctor says is ever actually going to happen to us maybe them but not us and Jesus tells these disciples he says you'll fall away you'll fall away you'll leave me but I won't leave you and after I rise I will go ahead of you and meet you in Galilee but they don't seem to get it and Peter not only does he not get it but the one small bit that he actually lapses hold of he won't accept 90% of it goes over his head 10% the bit about him falling he gets hold of that and he says to Jesus no you've got that all wrong not me

Peter declared verse 29 even if all fall away I won't I tell you the truth Jesus answered today yes tonight before the rooster crows three times you yourself will deny me will disown me three times but Peter insisted emphatically even if I have to die with you I will never disown you Peter didn't listen to Jesus he didn't trust the word of Jesus and because he didn't listen because he didn't believe in what Jesus said about him he fell terribly and not only did he fall but he caused others to fall too he led others in questioning the credibility of the word of Christ because in verse 31 it says that after Peter says no no I'm not going to fall all the others said the same too they all agreed with

Peter and said no no we're never going to do that they all doubted Jesus after Peter first doubts Jesus and there's a lesson there for us when you and I stop listening to Jesus when you and I stop trusting in the word of Jesus when our Bible start to close when the evening service stops to be part of our routine when the prayer meeting goes out the window when we're not listening to the word of Jesus when we are not trusting in the word of Jesus not only do we give Satan the green light to fly at us in our lives not only do we head off down the road of spiritual disaster but other people who are following us whether we know or not are led down that same road so we need always to be listening to and trusting in the words of Jesus or we will that's the second point the third point is we are to be humble be aware you have an enemy be always listening to and trusting in the word of

Jesus thirdly be humble Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 3 in humility consider others better than yourselves in humility consider others better than yourselves and that exactly is what Jesus that is exactly what Peter wasn't doing see when Jesus said to all of them you will all fall away Peter he questions Jesus words that relate to him but he's quick to believe what Jesus says about everyone else Peter declared verse 29 even if all fall away I will not you know Peter he's looking around the room all the other disciples and he's saying to Jesus well I can fully understand how they all have the potential to fall all these guys here yet

[24:17] I can see how they can make a right royal mess of things but Jesus remember you're speaking to me here I'd never do that come on you know me better than that I I'm not the kind of guy that's going to let you down even if I have to die with you I'll do that but I'm not going to fail why does Peter say that he says that because he's proud Peter says that because he thinks that he is bigger and better and stronger than all the rest of him he thinks that he knows himself better than than Jesus knows him and so he won't accept what Jesus is saying he wants to argue with Jesus about what he's saying Peter insisted emphatically verse 31 even if I have to die with you

I will never disown you and yet in just a few hours time Peter is choking on his own words Proverbs 16 18 says pride goes before destruction a haughty spirit before a fall I think it was on Christmas day in the evening the dog was protesting that he wanted to head out for a walk so I resisted for a wee while and eventually I took him off down the drive for a walk and it was a nice night it was about four degrees I think quite clear so I went striding off down the drive and I got to just close to the bottom of the drive and I just saw the sheen of ice and I felt my feet starting to go felt my grip starting to I felt the body starting to give way every step along the road and down that call was tentative

I was having to watch carefully because I knew if I didn't watch I was going to be on my backside there's a lot of spiritual black ice you could see in this world we are a people who are not steady on our feet we're more like daddy pig than the big round ball to use the children's illustration so we need to be careful you and I need to be humble we need to realize that we could fall at any point and we need to be praying for each other I'm always thankful when I see our big burly elders come in to a meeting we should be thankful that God has given us these men of God in the congregation but keep praying for them keep praying for the elders keep praying for the deacons keep praying for each other because we could fall at any moment any of us

God God says God tells us that in the Bible 1 Corinthians 10 12 so if you think you are standing firm be careful that you don't fall and God shows us time and time again that the best of men are men at best think of David a man after God's own heart he falls into adultery he falls into murder think of Noah the whole world is against him saying you're a fool as you're building this this ark and yet he believes he's faithful he's resolute in God's call to him and he goes crashing into drunkenness one night think of Abraham heading off in obedience to God's call not knowing where he's going and yet a little bit down the road he's telling lies to save his own skin and put his wife in danger think of Peter all these men of God they fell we can fall so we need to be humble we need to be kind to each other we need to be praying for each other

J.C. Ryle says let that man condemn Peter let that man condemn Peter who never broke a promise you point your finger at Peter today you better not have broken a promise in your life Ryle again says let us learn to pass a charitable judgment on the conduct of professing believers let us not set them down in a low place and say they have no grace because we see in them much weakness and corruption let us remember that our master in heaven bears with their infirmities and let us try to bear with them too the church of Christ is little better than a great hospital we ourselves are all more or less weak and all daily need the skillful treatment of the heavenly physician there will be no complete cures until the resurrection day be humble pride is one of the most self blinding sins that we can allow to fester within us and it's one of the most unattractive traits for the world to see there are few things as damaging as proud

[29 : 58] Christians who point long judgmental fingers at each other we need to be humble 1 Peter 5 5 this is what Peter wrote years later all of you clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble it cost Peter to write that be humble be always listening to the word of Jesus and trusting the word of Jesus be aware you have an enemy fourthly be ruthless with your besetting sins besetting sin is a sin that we keep tripping up on all of us have particular sins that we find hard to shake all of us have patterns of behavior that we hate and yet we seem to to digress into

Romans 7 the apostle Paul in that honest diary entry says the good I want to do I don't do the evil I don't want to do I've done it again we need to be ruthless with our besetting sins I think for Peter his besetting sin was that he liked to be liked and he feared what people thought of him you might not think that as you look at Peter but we know ourselves that some of the most confident people are actually the most the most timid people in their own hearts it's all a mask it's all a mirage and actually they're very shy in spite of in spite of all the all the bluff and bluster and I think Peter is somebody who's struggled with fear as do some of the commentators who are cleverer than me the first words of Jesus to Peter that Luke records as he calls Peter to be a disciple in Luke 5 10 is don't be afraid first thing he says to Peter don't be afraid why did he say that because he saw fear

Galatians 2 Peter comes under fire because he's eating with the Gentile believers the Jewish believers don't like the fact that he's eating this this non-kosher food they don't like the fact that he's he's sitting with with these these non-Jews at the table so what does Peter do when he starts to feel a bit of growing antagonism towards him he changes tables he draws back from the Gentiles and Paul tells us in Galatians 2.12 that he did it because he was afraid of what the Jews would think of him and here in verse 66 to 72 it wasn't a commission of of men from the general assembly that put the fear into Peter it was a little servant girl while Peter was below in the courtyard verse 66 one of the servant girls of the high priest came by when she saw Peter warming himself she looked closely at him you also were with that

Nazarene Jesus she said but he denied it I don't know or understand what you're talking about he said and he went out into the empty lane and so it goes on we've read it why did Peter react the way he reacted I think it was because of fear fear seems to have been the sin the besetting sin that Peter struggled with that perhaps he wasn't allowing God to deal with but he was allowing to have some space in his heart and it might be that that's your fear and mine maybe like Peter sometimes when we should speak up for Jesus we go silent maybe the reason that we're not seeing new people coming into church is because nobody's asking them and maybe the reason no one's asking them is because we're fearful of what they might think of us if we do ask them maybe the reason we don't share our faith maybe the reason there's a growing number of people in Harris who don't know anything about the gospel is because we're too scared to tell them or maybe our besetting sin is greed or gossip or lust or anger or a bitter critical spirit

I don't know what's in your heart and you don't know what's in mine but if we give these besetting sins that we know about ourselves even just a little oxygen to breathe they will explode in our hearts the second Satan strikes the match of temptation so be ruthless don't harbor sin in your heart don't play with the fire of these besetting sins be ruthless with the things that the Holy Spirit puts his finger on and says that needs to stop fifthly be prayerful and you might say well where is prayer here in this passage and the answer is it's not that's the point put yourself for a moment in Peter's position imagine Jesus had just told you that you would fall terribly before the morning not in three weeks time but before the morning imagine Jesus had said to you you were going to deny him three times now what should you do you should lock yourself in your closet maybe take two or three trusted Christian friends alongside you get on your knees watch and pray don't go clearing off out into the the main street get on your knees and pray

[35 : 46] John Bunyan says prayer is a seal to the soul a sacrifice to God and a scourge for Satan and it's because Peter doesn't pray that this disaster unfolds he stands best said somebody we don't know who the author was he stands best who kneels most because Peter was not willing to kneel before the authority of the words of Christ because Peter was not willing to kneel before God in prayer he doesn't stand for long but he falls as Jesus said he would and for you and for me as individuals as a congregation if we want to stand up for Jesus if we want to try and walk steady if we want not to fall but to progress and to walk with God we need to be prayerful we have a we have a intimation sheet that gives lots of cause for encouragement it's jam-packed with various things and that's encouraging but when this is full and that room is empty

I worry be prayerful and finally be encouraged this is not the end whatever happened to Peter you know we leave him at the end of this chapter in verse 72 and he's broken and he's weeping just as Judas was actually at this same point on this same night there's actually no difference on the outside between Judas and Peter at this point both had sinned both were broken both were weeping but what next for Peter was his name erased from the Lamb's book of life because of this offence no it wasn't was he disqualified as a disciple and sent off to the scrap heap no he wasn't was ministry finished for him no it wasn't

I'm sure there wasn't a day where Peter didn't remember how badly he let his Lord down we're told in the other gospel of how when Peter he denied Jesus for the third time Jesus looks eyes on him I don't know how many times Peter remembered that that look from Jesus Peter didn't forget this but because Peter repented his Lord determined that he would remember Peter's sin no more and this is the God we worship that's the good news this is the God we worship he's the God who says in Hebrews 8 12 for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more the little ones I'm quite sure when I was asking them about sins they've got all kinds of little things flying through their heads and I know for a fact as you and I if we're listening and are thinking about the things we need to confess and repent of we've got all kinds of things flying through our heads because there's none righteous not one we're all sinners and Peter sinned terribly and Peter sinned publicly and it's hard to imagine a bigger more public more catastrophic sin than to deny

Jesus three times in his greatest out of need and yet that's what Peter did and Peter wants us to know that's exactly what he did this is not airbrushed out of the gospel this is all included here so we will see the dark side of discipleship Peter sinned but in just a few hours Jesus would go to a cross to pay the price for Peter sin in just a few hours Jesus would be hanging on a cross to pay the wages of sin which is death for Peter sin and after Jesus rose he would come as he said he would come to Galilee to look for Peter and to reassure him of that forgiveness and to restore him to ministry it's a staggering thing to think that within six weeks of this absolutely catastrophic fall

Peter's preaching in Pentecost and thousands are coming to Christ through him Derek Thomas says no amount of failure should force us to conclude that we must now live the rest of our lives experiencing only the second best no amount of failure should force us to conclude that we must now live the rest of our lives experiencing only the second best what an encouragement that is for failures like us with Jesus if we are repenting of our sins and failures failure is never final is it a sin that lurks deep within your heart that haunts you that you think there's no way back from you know that cripples you that causes you always to step back and say no

[41 : 54] I can't do anything for Christ is it a sin that is causing you to be stalled spiritually and to never take a step forward the good news of the gospel is that if you repent like Peter did Jesus will forgive you as he forgave Peter so come to him be encouraged to come to him this is not the end your sin your failures and mine does not mark the end but maybe as we realize them and as we repent of them it marks the beginning or a new beginning for a close walk with God and effective service of Christ let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for the power of your grace we thank you that you tell us about it in scripture and theological terms and and you show us in the life of those who fell and who were forgiven and who were restored like Peter we thank you that in these gospel accounts we are we are created we are given a picture of the of the disciples the good the bad and the ugly and we thank you Lord that in that picture we are given such hope as we see ourselves and as we see the wonder and the power of the the grace of Jesus so help us we pray each one of us to come to

Jesus to know that forgiveness to turn away from our sin and to know the the wonder of his grace in our lives and we ask this in Jesus name amen and I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore amen