

“Peter again denied it [knowing Jesus], and at once the rooster crowed.” John 18:27 (ESV)

While in the upper room during the Passover Celebration, just before Jesus was arrested and crucified, Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him. You would think that just hours later, Peter would remember this and be able to avoid denying Jesus.

Peter had heard the words of Jesus recorded by the apostle Matthew in chapter 10 of his gospel, *“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father who is in heave, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in Heaven.”* (Matt 10:32-33).

Peter denied Jesus, not just once, not just twice, but three times in the wee hours of the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. Luke records that Jesus was close enough the third time that Peter and Jesus made eye contact, and Peter went out and wept bitterly.

I believe Peter was a big burly fisherman. While perhaps of the lower class of laborers (maybe business owners), he was not likely a sissy. Peter tried to defend Jesus in the garden when Jesus was arrested. Peter was bold enough to step out of the boat onto the water in the midst of the storm.

Peter was utterly dedicated to following Jesus, and yet he denied Jesus three times. He not only failed Jesus, he denied Jesus.

How often are we like Peter? Have we missed opportunities to identify with Jesus, and just turned away for whatever reason? Perhaps at a family gathering? Perhaps at work, when we compromised our integrity? Perhaps we should have given testimony for our behavior like Joseph before Potiphar (Genesis 39). Whatever the reason, we have all been in Peter's shoes sometime or another.

After Jesus was crucified… after Jesus was resurrected, one morning after a breakfast of broiled fish, Jesus has a discussion with Peter (see John 21:15-19). Jesus knew the brokenness of Peter. Peter's confidence had been crushed by his denial of Jesus. Peter recognized his own unworthiness. Yet Jesus planned on using this broken fisherman.

Three times Jesus asked Peter, "do you love me?" Once for each time Peter denied Jesus. Each time Peter reaffirmed his love and devotion to Jesus. And each time Jesus gave him a command "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," and "feed my sheep." Jesus was helping Peter see that Peter was still faithful, even if imperfect, and that Jesus had confidence in Peter to carry out the work he had called Peter to do.

This is what Jesus came to do: give testimony of the Father's love for us, and to restore broken, rebellious sinners to His Father in Heaven.

Regardless of what we have done, even if we, like Peter, literally denied Jesus, Jesus can still restore us to the Father in Heaven. In fact, that is why He come to earth. To make us right with God Almighty.

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