

How Embarrassing – Part 3 – Under Pressure

First Baptist Church Peachtree City

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Luke 22:54-62

INTRODUCTION – Embarrassment (definition)

Today, I would invite you to turn in your copy of the Scriptures to Luke 22:54-62. These events are recorded in **all four Gospels** - Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 18. Jesus has experienced the Passover with His disciples... He speaks of His coming death... and Peter declares that he will follow Christ all the way to prison and even death. (v. 33-35) Jesus told Peter that he will deny Him three times, but Peter remained stubborn and steadfast. The Gospels say that others declared the same, but Peter just gets the credit.

Christ leads His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane (**oil press**) where His disciples did not heed the Savior's warning to engage in fervent prayer. Then the temple guard came to arrest the Jesus. Peter impulsively attacks a guard named Malchus, and we see he how ill-prepared he was because he was **fighting the wrong enemy and with the wrong weapon**.

John 18:8 tells us that Jesus asked the guards to allow His disciples to leave. However, as Matthew describes, Peter wanted to see what would happen. John [18:15] tells us that he accompanied him. However, it was Peter who mingled with the crowd and denied our Lord. It is one thing to fail, while another to declare that you will never fail... only to experience the colossal embarrassment. **Let's see how and why by reading God's Word together.**

TEXT

54 Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was **following at a distance**. **55** After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting **among them**. **56** And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." **57** But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." **58** A little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" **59** After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." **60** But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. **61** The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." **62** And he went out and wept bitterly.

This embarrassing moment did not come with an immediate resolution or reconciliation, nor did it come about in one instant. Dickenson wrote – **"Crumbling is not an instant's act."** Peter's denial did not start at the fireside. His journey to crumbling under pressure began with pride... followed by his prayerlessness... which led to **following at a distance**.

UNDERSTANDING

A. Following at a **distance**. (v. 54-55)

While Jesus had asked the guards to let the disciples go, Peter did not flee. But he also did not follow as closely as he had arrogantly said. He wanted to see what was going to happen to the Messiah whom, he had argued, would never have to suffer. *But now, could all of it be lost?* Things were not turning out like he expected and his response was **distance**.

How about you? When things are not going like you expected, how do you respond?

One sure sign of following Christ at a distance is a statement like: **"I need some space."**

This leads to *sitting among* bad counsel where you do not find positive spiritual support.

Following at a distance & sitting among the world are signs you are sailing to disaster.

B. The response of **deflection**. (v. 56-57)

When Peter gets put under pressure, his first response is to try to deflect the question. [John 18:17] tells us that this was the servant who kept the door to the High Priest's home. She noted that Peter had been one of those **'WITH'** Jesus. Peter's response was to deflect the attention that she brought to him. He did not answer the question, but rather gave an answer to a question that she did not ask. He said, **"I do not know Him."**

How about us? How do we respond when we get put under pressure? What happens when we get asked a direct question about the Gospel or about biblical Truth? Peter was in fear for his life. We can become fearful for reputation or relationship. **What is your fallback?**

Are you confident enough in your faith to be direct? Or do you deflect?

C. The response of **dismissal**. (v. 58)

The second accusation added even more pressure. He was **'one of them'**. Peter's next response was one of dismissal. It was like, **"Man, give me a break. There is no way I am one of them."** Can you sense his attitude? How soon he forgot Christ calling him his friend.

Has anyone here ever been called **'Jesus freak'** or been classified as **'one of them'**? In the first century, believers were called **'those of the Way'** because Jesus clearly stated that He was the only way to God. When you are confronted, especially with the exclusivity of **Christ and biblical truth**, is your fallback response one of embracing identity or **dismissal**?

"When you are pleading for sympathy, and not praying for victory – it is almost over."

D. The response of **denouncing**. (v. 59-60)

The text says that about an hour passed and center stage of Jesus' trial and suffering moved to the courtyard. Maybe Peter thinks he has personally survived. But then a third accusation comes from a servant of the high priest who, based on [John 18:26], was a relative of **Malchus**, the guy whose ear Peter had cut off. The evidence against Peter is mounting and the pressure he was under was increasing. How would he respond? **Anger!**

Two of the Gospel writers describe how Peter began cursing and swearing. The road of **deflecting and dismissing** has led to full-out **denouncing** of Christ... with a ton of emotion.

Peter's greatest embarrassment was not accusation, but Christ's disappointment.

E. The look of **disappointment**. (v. 61)

How gracious was Jesus to even think about Peter while being beaten? The glance of Jesus was full of tender pity; it was not angry, only sorrowful. Peter could not see it yet, but His look of disappointment would lead to repentance and restoration [Mark 16:7] that would prepare him for incredible things. He did not recall it, but Jesus had told Peter. (v. 33-34), that when he had come back, Peter was to **strengthen his brothers**. In the midst of Christ suffering, we see He was Sovereignly still at work in the lives of His followers.

To Peter's credit, the Lord only had to look at him to bring him to repentance.

F. The response to **failure**. (v. 62)

Peter had two choices: **rationalize** or **repent**. He chose to recognize his wrong and experienced genuine grief over his failure. He did not have [1 John 1:9], but he experienced it in his own heart. **"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"** [Ps. 51:17].

"Repentance is the most beautiful word in the Bible" – Dave Edwards

APPLICATION

- (1) Have you been living under pressure? Jesus told us to expect it. [Luke 6:26]
- (2) Are you following at a distance? **If you ask God for space, He might give it to you.**

- a. Are you actively on mission with Christ or simply waiting to see how it turns out?
- b. Are you sitting in the counsel of the ungodly or among those who will encourage your faith? More space is not needed to figure it out. We see where that got Peter.

Therefore, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall! [1 Corinthians 10:12]

- (3) Have you been experiencing the failure of deflection, dismissal, or denouncing?
 - a. How did you get there? It did not happen overnight... but repentance and forgiveness can be experienced today... right here... right now.
 - b. How are you going to respond?

Rationalizing leads to disaster. Reflection and Repentance leads to Restoration.

"All moves to the left come slowly and incrementally over a long period of time – all moves to the right come in one fell swoop." [James MacDonald]

Forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration are all the work of God's grace as we respond to Him in faith. [1 John 1:9] says, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** [Psalm 34:18] encourages us that: **"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."**

In case you were wondering what this could look like in the U.S. in 2017, I thought I would show you an example from the news just this week. **WATCH THIS VIDEO.**

VIDEO - Bernie Sanders Berates Robert Vought in Senate Hearing for his faith. (Encouraging)

In case you are wondering what happened to the disciple who crumbled under pressure in Luke 22, read Acts 2-4. He was not only restored in relationship with Christ, but became the primary spokesman in the early church. He was the Gospel preacher on Pentecost. He was the bold messenger in the Temple and declared to the same men who delivered Jesus to be crucified: **"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."** [Acts 4:12]

RESPONSE

If you are a follower of Christ... and you have experienced this failure yourself, **will you respond as Peter did and let the Savior restore your relationship and confidence today through repentance and faith? Would all of us recognize our personal weakness and need for the confident faith that only can come through humbly following closely our Savior and expressing our daily deep dependence on Him?**

If you are not yet a follower of Christ... whether you say it out loud or not, all people who reject God's love and grace in salvation are denying Christ. **Would you today embrace Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior through repentance and faith?**

Peter could have chosen to remain in the chains of guilt and defeat. But through repentance and faith, Christ broke his chains...and He wants to do it for you today.