

FOUNTAINS OF REPENTANT TEARS

NO. 2735

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 14, 1901
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 1880

“And when he thought thereon, he wept.”
Mark 14:72

TRUE repentance is always the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Man, left to himself, continues in sin. If he turns from his iniquity, it is because God turns him. By nature, his mind is set on mischief and if that mind be changed, as it is in genuine repentance, it must be because the Lord Himself has changed it. That repentance which a man works in himself, without the Spirit of God, will turn out to be a repentance that needs to be repented of. But that godly sorrow for sin which the Spirit of God produces in the heart is a sure indication of spiritual life and the constant attendant of saving faith. Whosoever truly repents of sin, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved man—he shall be among the blessed ones in that day when Christ comes to judge the quick and the dead—and he shall be among the glorified.

Yet, while repentance is wrought in men by the Spirit of God, He generally makes use of means to produce that result. In the case of Peter, the agency employed was thought—thought about his sin, “When he thought thereon, he wept.” There is no doubt that multitudes of sinners have been led to repentance in this way and in some respects, this must be the universal way by which the Spirit of God conducts men to the goal of true penitence. As long as they live carelessly and thoughtlessly, they go on in their evil ways, but if they are stopped in their mad career, if they are made to consider, if they begin to think over their sin—if God, the Holy Ghost, convinces them of the guilt of it—He uses that thought and conviction to lead them to trust in Jesus Christ. The remembrance of sin committed is the Holy Spirit's frequent, if not constant method of bringing men to weep over their wrong-doing and to turn from it.

I find that the Greek word, which is here rendered, “he thought thereon,” is rather difficult to translate in order to give the full meaning of the original. There is, in the expression used by Mark, some idea of throwing or casting, so that some have even read the passage, “When he muffled up his face,” as though they thought it was implied that he cast something over himself so as to hide his face for shame at his great transgression.

But others, and I believe much more correctly, think that our translation comes near enough to the idea of the writer, who wanted to convey the impression that Peter cast his thoughts concerning what he had done one upon another, brought before his mind the circumstances in which he stood, and heaped them up one upon another, and as he did this, and considered his sin in detail, and brought out its true and gross guiltiness—then it was that he began to weep. Without, however, insisting upon the absolute accuracy of this particular translation, we take the text as it stands, “When he thought thereon, he wept.”

I. First, LET US STUDY PETER'S CASE AND USE IT FOR OUR OWN INSTRUCTION.

The details of this sad story are familiar to you, yet I may remind you of them in order that we may see in how many points we have been like him.

As Peter heard the cock crow, he thought, first, that he had actually done what Christ had said he would do—*he remembered that he had denied his Lord*. That which had seemed impossible to him had, nevertheless, been done three times. He would not believe even his dear Lord and Master when He told

him that it would be so, but now it was literally the fact that Peter, one of the first to follow Christ, one who had even walked on water to go to Jesus, one who had seen Christ's miracles—Peter, the most earnest and enthusiastic of Christ's followers, always to the front, ready to brave anything for his Lord—Peter, who, with his sword, cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest—he realizes that he is the very same man and that he has actually denied his Master, declaring positively that he was not one of Christ's disciples. "When he thought thereon, he wept," as well he might. Ah, what castles in the air had vanished! What self-confidence had passed away!

Then, as he looked to the end of the hall where he could see his Master, *he reflected upon the excellence of the Master whom he had denied.* Ah, Peter! You have denied the best, the most loving, the most lovely, the most tender, the most generous, the most compassionate, the most self-denying, the most pure, the most heavenly of leaders. If there had been some fault in Him, if He had played you false, if He had been unkind to you, if He had promised you a wage and had not paid you, or if He had lied unto you, and you had found Him out, or if you had seen some infirmity or imperfection about Him when you watched Him in His privacy, you might be excused. But to deny such a Master—well may you weep and cover your face for very shame.

He is perfection, yet He permitted you to follow Him—you who are such a poor untrustworthy creature. How could you say, "I am not his disciple"—and say it three times over, so positively and so plainly, when, but a little while ago, it was your joy, your glory, your delight, humbly to follow in His footsteps, and to call Him Master and Lord!

Then, next, *he recollected the position in which his Lord had placed him.* Peter, you are not only a disciple, you are one of the twelve apostles. Your Master singled you out, at least on one occasion, and spoke to you words that put you in a place of great eminence in His church. You were endowed with the power to work miracles, you were exalted above the seventy evangelists, and called to be one of the twelve pillars of the future church to be built upon Christ Jesus. Yet you have denied Him.

Oh, how this thought must have struck his heart, like the point of a dagger, for, by so much as Christ trusts us, by so much is it a shameful thing for us to betray that trust. By so much as Christ puts honor upon us by using us, by just so much is it an intolerable shame that we should put Him to shame and grieve Him by denying that we are His.

We can do this by our actions as well as by our words. You can deny Christ quite as much by acting inconsistently as by standing up and boldly saying, "I know not the man." O brethren, if Christ has highly favored any of us, and used us in His service in any degree, and yet we have denied Him, the recollection of our sin ought to cut us to the quick!

Moreover, *Peter remembered that his Lord had favored him with very special communion with Himself.* Christ took only three of His followers into the silent chamber where the daughter of Jarius lay dead. When he took the damsel by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cumi," and the maid arose, there were only three pairs of eyes, out of all His disciples, that saw that miracle, for "He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John."

Then, up on the mountain where the Lord was transfigured and His garments became whiter than any fuller could make them, and the glory of the Lord shone upon the Well-Beloved, there were only three disciples who were permitted to be there—and Peter was one of those who "were with him in the holy mount."

And in the Garden of Gethsemane, when eight of the apostles were left as a picket to watch at the gate, there were three who accompanied the Savior to within a stone's throw of the place where He agonized and "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." And amongst the three who constituted the innermost body-guard of their suffering King was Peter. Yet, with the memories of Tabor and Gethsemane upon him, he had denied that he even knew Christ. Do you wonder that, as he thought thereon, he wept?

Ungodly men, if they make a confession of sin, speak of it in the mass, as Pharaoh did when he said to Moses, "I have sinned." But godly men are not content to act like that. They enter into details and in

their confession they dwell upon the minute particulars of their guilt. They seek out that which will aggravate the sin or rather, will set it in its true light when they are making confession of it before God. And I have no doubt that Peter mentioned this as a great aggravation of his iniquity, that he had seen the Savior in those choicer moments when only the elect out of the elect, the very *elite* of the apostolic band, were permitted to be present—and yet he had denied his Lord.

There was still more for Peter to think of—*he recollected that he had been solemnly forewarned by his Master*. Jesus had said to him, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” And He had also said to him, “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” No warning could be more explicit than that.

If a man plunges into a ditch when he is told where it is, or puts his foot into a trap when it is pointed out to him, or being warned of his weakness in a particular direction, nevertheless takes no heed, he really doubles the guilt of his offense, for he has sinned against special light. You do not often have the full light of the bull’s eye lantern turned upon a weakness as Christ turned it upon Peter’s. He told him plainly what he was going to do—yet the boastful man declared that he would not do it and then went straight ahead and did it.

This thought might well make him weep. The tones of his confident affirmation that he would never deny his Master must have still lingered in his ear, yet he could also hear the sad echo of the denial which he had so grievously made, and therefore, “when he thought thereon, he wept.” Why, it must have come to his mind that he had flatly contradicted Christ and that he had put himself before all his brethren, and claimed to be better, more steadfast than they were, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,” and further, he said, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” He had to eat his own words and to confess that he had proved false to his own most solemn declarations, and that might well cause him to weep as he thought over it.

Yet there was something even worse than this—*Peter mourned that he should have denied his Master under such circumstances*—that he should have left Him when He most needed a friend and companion. When everybody else forsook Christ, Peter not only forsook Him, but he denied that he even knew Him. If a man is really a friend, he certainly will stand by his friend when others turn away from him—yet there stands the blessed Lamb of God, buffeted, mocked, delivered up by cruel men to be crucified, and it is at such a time that Peter denies Him—denies Him when He is about to lay down His life for Peter and for all His loved ones—denies Him when He is owning us as His own and standing before the tribunal in our stead to suffer for our sins.

O cruel Peter, if you did meant to deny your Master, why did you do it just now when He has no one to cling to Him? Surely, it would have been more noble on your part to have said, “I am one of His followers. Nail me to a cross at His side, and let me die faithful to my Lord.” That would have been a speech more worthy of Peter at his best.

He also thought of the repetitions and aggravations of his offense, and this made him weep. In addition to denying his Master, he told a positive lie, and repeated it again and again. He said to the damsel, “I know not what thou sayest.” And twice he said, “I know not the man.” Now, that was an altogether unnecessary lie, because I would think that a very large majority of the Jews knew Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth must have been so famous as a Teacher and as a Miracle Worker that many a man who was not one of His followers, could not have said, “I do not even know Him.” It was bad enough for Peter to deny that he was Christ’s disciple, but to say, “I know not the man,” was a needless aggravation of the falsehood that he had uttered. What is worst of all, “he began to curse and to swear.”

Liars generally seem to think that they will not be believed upon their bare word, and they fancy, that if they will swear, then they will be believed. This is not the case, by any means, for, if you are wise, the moment you hear a man swear, you will know that he is telling a lie, for a profane swearer practically says, “I need not mind telling a lie to man, for I am not afraid to swear in the presence of God.”

You never need believe a man who swears—you may know that he also lies. But Peter, having the common notion that to blaspheme and to use strong language would be convincing, began to curse and to swear. Do not alter these words, so as to make it appear that Peter used gentle and polite expressions. He did nothing of the kind—he used the strongest form of cursing that he could, for the Greek word is tantamount to “anathema.” He anathematized himself, invoked upon himself the heaviest curses—as profane people usually do—in order that those who stood around might believe him when he said that he did not know Christ.

This cursing and swearing shows how very low Peter had fallen. When a man swears, you may, as a rule, be quite sure that he does not know Christ. Peter may have thought within himself, “There never was a disciple of Christ yet who took to swearing, so, if I swear, they will think at any rate that I am not one.” So he borrows, out of the mouth of the profane, language which did not belong to him and he utters it in order that they may really think that he is no disciple of Christ. When the cock crew, and he thought of all this, he might well weep.

Why, this is the man who said, on the Mount of Transfiguration, “Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles.” This is the man who said to Jesus, across the stormy sea, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” This is the same man, yet he has been cursing, and swearing, and denying Christ. When he turned all that over in his mind, it is no wonder that he wept.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US STUDY OUR OWN LIVES AND USE THE EXERCISE FOR OUR FURTHER HUMILIATION.

I will begin with *the backslider*. There are, alas! many who have denied Christ in this way. After having followed Him for years, they have gradually grown cold and have turned aside from Christ, their Lord and Master. I want you, dear friend, once a member of this church, yet now a backslider, to turn this matter over very carefully and prayerfully.

You were converted in a very remarkable manner. You were, by divine grace, kept for years from sins into which you had formerly plunged. You had much joy and peace in believing and sometimes, in the services of the Lord’s house and especially at the communion table, you have felt as if you could sit and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss. You have often talked to your friends and kinsfolk about the bliss that dwells in the name of Jesus, your Savior—yet now you are a backslider!

I cannot go into the details of your sins—perhaps it would not be right or profitable to mention such matters in public—but will you think thereon? I pray you, my brother—my brother Peter—think of it. Turn over all the details in your mind. This may seem to you to be a very bitter task, but the result of it will be sweet one day. You do not like to remember your sin, but if you remember it, God will forget it—whereas, if you forget it, God will remember it against you.

Possibly you were not only a member of the church, but you were a teacher in the Sunday school. Do you remember how earnestly you used to teach the children, how anxious you were to lead the little ones to the Savior, and the intense joy with which you heard their first expressions of confidence in Christ? You remember what zeal and devotion to your Lord and His service you manifested in those happy days which have long gone by?

But what a change has come over you! Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you departed from Christ—and in going astray from Him, you have turned aside from happiness and from peace. You know that you are not happy, you also know that you can never be happy while you continue in your present condition. You have tasted so much of the joy of true religion that you are quite spoiled for the world. A man who lives in sin and loves it, may get some sort of pleasure out of it, but if, by divine grace, you have once been brought out of the City of Destruction, you cannot go back to it—the place would be a house of bondage to you.

There is nothing for you but to go forward, because as John Bunyan says, there is no armor for the Christian warrior’s back—and if you turn round, you will quickly be wounded by the great adversary. You must go forward. There is something within you which tells you that you must, and I believe you

will find that it will help you to go forward if you think over the sin that led to your departure from the right road, and that has made you, who used to teach others, now need to be yourself taught.

Is there, in this great throng, one who used to be a preacher of the Gospel, a minister of Christ, and who has turned aside? Such men are not as rare as one could desire. I can, at this moment, recall one who used to be prominent in Christ's service, but who now spends his life in serving Satan. We sometimes meet with men who have the drunkard's brand upon their face and they tell us that they were formerly ministers at such-and-such places.

O my brother, my brother Peter! How sad it is that after having preached Christ, you have denied Him! Were you sincere in your preaching or was it a lie? Did you do it for the sake of the loaves and fishes? God have mercy upon you if you were a whitewashed hypocrite! But now have the whitewash removed and appear in your true colors.

Possibly, however, you can say, "Yes, I did serve the Lord sincerely. I did long to do good in His name." Then, how did you get down to your present condition? A more important question is—Do you not wish to get out of that sad state? Oh, I beseech you, seeing that you have disgraced the name of Christ and put Him to open shame, to come back to Him at once!

May He make you to hear the cock crow this very hour, awakening your slumbering conscience, and may you go out to weep bitterly over your terrible sin! It is by that Watergate that many find entrance into the Haven of Peace. It is by deep conviction of guilt and by true contrition of heart that they come, at last, to the feet of Jesus and find salvation there.

Out of such a congregation and such a church as this, it is not possible for anyone to know all that goes on, but we cannot help hearing of one here and another there who gradually turn aside. Grey hairs are upon them, but they perceive them not, and at last they slip back almost imperceptibly, and by-and-by, they fall into some open sin. Return, O backsliding daughter! Return, O weeping one, to your Savior! Return, O prodigal child. Come back to your Father's house and heart! The door of His house is open to receive you, and His heart is waiting to welcome you! Return, return, return!

But now I must speak to another class of persons, *those who never did come to Christ*. I wish I had the power to make them think of their past lives until they wept over them. Shall I try to recall some things to the remembrance of careless ones who are still unconverted? I should have to go back a long way with some of you—back to the old house at home, and to your dear mother—oh, how she prayed for you and pleaded with you while you were a curly-headed boy!

You recollect the name that was written in your Bible, and the request that you would read a portion out of it every day when you first went away from home? You little thought, then, that you would ever be a swearer, that you would grow up to be a drunkard, that you would be a Sabbath-breaker and a companion of the wicked. If anybody had foretold that concerning you, in those days, you would have said, with Hazeel, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing!" Yet you have done it.

Then, do you remember the feelings you had in your early days, those childish prayers that were sincere in their way—those simple hymns that you delighted to sing—the time when you used to get alone and cry out to God? In those days, if you had had a portrait of yourself as you now are, shown to you, and it had been said, "That is what you will grow to be," you would not have believed it, would you?

They were happy days, but they are gone, never to return. For years after that, you had a very tender conscience, had you not, my brethren? I want you to recollect that fact if it was true in your case. Then, when you first went into overt sin, you were very frightened and alarmed—you can do a great deal that is evil now without being at all troubled, but it was not so with you then—you could not feel easy while engaged in wrong-doing.

Why, sometimes you have been sitting in the playhouse when there has been some lewd word or action, and you have felt that you ought not to be there. You have wondered that the place did not tumble about your ears. But you do not feel like that now. Recollect, too, how you used to start in your sleep through some alarming dream, and how you awakened in terror and sat up in bed, and wondered

how you could live as you did live, without God and without Christ, and in constant jeopardy of being cast into hell. I want you to recall all this and to remember how you seared your conscience, as with a hot iron, till you had burnt out of it the possibilities of sensibility.

I want you also to recollect another thing—and that is, *God's mercy to you*. Try and think about that for a little while. God has been very gracious and kind to some of you. You have prospered in business beyond all your expectations, or you have been helped in times of trouble when you could not have thought that God would aid you. For which of these things do you now neglect Him? What has God done to you, or for you, that you should remain His adversary?

You recollect that long sickness, when you were brought very low? “Don't talk about it,” you say. But I must talk about it, because there was something that happened then, which ought not to be forgotten. In the middle of that illness, you vowed that if ever you got well again, you would lead a very different life. You recollect that you promised that? God registered the vow, though you have broken it.

I do not know how to say all that I have in my heart, because there are certain things which I want some of you to think upon, yet I can only just mention them in the public service. Recollect the sins which you committed in which others were involved—sins which have ruined their souls, and which you never can undo. A man may sometimes sin by himself, as Peter did, but some men sin with others, and drag down others as they sink themselves.

It is sad enough to go to hell alone, without having one's arms clasped about others to be the means of their ruin also. Yet there are some men, and some women, who have dragged scores down to hell with them. O God, have mercy on them for this dreadful crime! If any here have been so guilty, I entreat them to think of their great sin, to look it steadily in the face till their eyeballs burn, and to keep on looking at it until the blessed drops of penitential grief shall distil from their eyes.

Why should you not think of what you have done? Do you fancy, because you forget it and draw a veil over it, that it is destroyed? Nay, sirs—you may blot out your memory of the crime, but it is as fresh in God's book of remembrance as if it had been committed only yesterday. “But” you say, “this wrong was done fifty years ago.” That does not make any difference—in the sight of God it is just as though you did it tonight—and it will be the same with you, one of these days, when stern Justice, like a grim chamberlain with black hands shall draw back the curtains of the bed on which you now securely sleep—and wake you up to see that your sin, unless Christ has buried it in His tomb—is still alive to curse you forever. Oh, may God help us to think over our sin until we shall realize its guilt and bow before the thrice-holy JEHOVAH in true penitence!

Some of you, who have been living in sin, and living without God, are *doubly guilty, because you have sinned against light and knowledge*. You are not like the ignorant multitude, for you have been well-taught and trained from your very childhood. Moreover, many of you have been endowed by God with good common sense and sound judgment, and it has been a difficult matter for you to continue in your evil course while your own conscience was accusing you. Think of this, because it aggravates your sin and makes you more guilty than those who have not had such privileges.

Some of you have heard the Gospel till you know all about it. I cannot tell you anything fresh and I never try to do so. When we have seen the old truths exercising all their possible power over our hearers, then will be time enough to think of something fresh—but they have not reached that point yet, so we still continue telling “the old, old story.”

Oh, that the Lord would cause you to remember the sermons that you have heard, the prayer meetings you have attended, the revival services you have passed through, and the resistance to your own conscience and to the Holy Spirit which some of you have dared to carry on! O my God, I cannot break the rock. I cannot make the water flow from it, either with a rod or by speaking to it! You must do the work, O blessed Spirit, if it is to be accomplished! Will You now constrain these people to think of their past lives, until they shall go out of this building to seek a quiet place where they may weep in penitence before the Lord?

III. I have set before you the example of Peter and have tried to transfer it to your own experience. I must now close by asking you to OBSERVE THE RESULT OF THESE THOUGHTS UPON YOURSELVES.

Alas! *there are some who can think of sin without emotion.* I have tried to make you think of your past sin. Do you find that such thoughts lead you to repentance? Has God blessed this meditation to the breaking of your heart and the humbling of your spirit? If you answer, “No.” If you can think over all your past life and still say, “No, I do not weep. I do not repent,” I am afraid that you are like Judas rather than Peter. I fear lest I have met with the son of perdition and not an heir of glory.

What can be said for the man who is aware of his sin, but who tries to father it upon somebody else? I have known some who have charged the guilt of their wrong-doing to their constitution. They were so constituted, they say, that they could not help sinning as they did—this is trying to pass upon God the guilt of their transgression.

“Oh!” says one, “it is my trade that has made me sin. If you had been in my position, you would have been no better than I am.” Perhaps so, but you mean that you are not the sinner, it is your trade that is guilty? It does not appear that you are one of those whom Christ came to save, for He came to save sinners, the lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, and I do not think His call will be extended to your trade—it is you, yourself, who must be saved—and none but Christ can save you.

“Oh!” says one, “my sin is the result of my circumstances.” Whatever your circumstances may have been—whether you were rich or poor, or whatever your condition may have been—if you try to lay the blame of your guilt on your circumstances, I have little hope concerning you. There is no mercy for you and there will be no forgiveness for you, until you take the blame of your sin upon yourself.

“Oh, but I was so tempted!” Yes, I know—that was the old excuse of Adam and Eve. “The woman gave me the fruit of the tree,” said Adam. “The serpent beguiled me,” said Eve. Perhaps you also lay the guilt of your evil-doing upon the devil—he is a beast of burden that carries many saddles that never belonged to his back.

But I must tell you that, as long as you lay your sin at the devil’s door, there is no mercy for you. Plead guilty, I implore you, for you are the guilty party, and then shall you receive the pardon of your transgression. It is the sign of a sad condition of heart when a man, instead of confessing his sin, and owning straight away that he is guilty of it, and lamenting before God that he should have been so wicked, turns round and casts the blame upon chance, or upon anyone but himself.

I hope, however, that I am addressing *some who are moved to penitence by thinking of their sin.* I hear one say, “As I think over my sin, I am moved to great sorrow. I desire to have that sin put away, for I long to be wholly delivered from it, and I do want to be reconciled to God.” I am glad to hear you say that and I will tell you something that ought to move you even more than the thought of your sin, something that ought to make your heart leap within you.

Do you ask, “What is that?” Why, it is this—that, though you have denied Christ, as Peter did, with many aggravations of your guilt, He still loves you and He bids you come to Him, for He has blotted out all your transgression. God told Jeremiah to say that when a wife treacherously departs from her husband, when she commits adultery and falls into all manner of wickedness, he cannot be expected to receive her back again—yet God says to the soul that has gone astray from Him, “I am married unto you, saith the LORD; come back to me, and I will forgive you, however much you have defiled yourself.”

It was not many days after Peter had denied his Master, that the Master, having died and risen from the dead, sent a special message to him. The angel said to the women, “Go your way, tell His disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” And it was not many days after that that Peter stood by the seashore and his Master said to him, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” And Peter was able to answer, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Christ had always loved him, and He loves you, too, poor penitent soul. You have denied Him, but He has never denied you. No, backslider, you have been false to Christ, but He has never been false to you. Come back to Him who still loves you. The marriage tie is not broken. The covenant of peace is not cancelled, though you have so grossly transgressed.

What a mercy it was for Peter that, within a short time of his great fall, his Master gave him work to do. And that same Peter, who had shamefully denied his Lord, was standing up in Jerusalem, filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching to the multitudes, and bearing the standard of the cross in the very front of the battle, the bravest of the brave!

And Peter ended his career by dying for his Master, as Christ foretold that he would, by being crucified upside down, thinking himself unworthy to die in the same position as his Lord had done, and asking as a favor that, if he must be crucified, it might be in that fashion, yielding up his whole being, in life and in death, to Christ out of intense loyalty to his Lord who had so freely forgiven him his great transgression.

That same Master is here, at this moment, seeking you poor prodigals. And He would have you come to Him and receive this gracious message from His lips, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Behold, I have cast all your transgressions behind my back, and will remember them against thee no more for ever. Go forth, and serve me, and rejoice in me all thy days. Love me much, for thou hast had much forgiven."

God grant that many of you may have grace given to you to enable you to obey that blessed word, and to the name of Jesus shall be praise for evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

MARK 14:27-31; 53-54; 66-72; JOHN 18:15-18; 25-27

Mark 14:27-29. *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*

There was love in that utterance and so far it was commendable, but there was also much self-trust in it and there was great presumption, for Peter dared even to contradict his Master to His face. And at the same time, he contradicted the inspired Scripture, for Jesus had told the disciples that it was written that the sheep should be scattered. Yet Peter boldly denied both what God had written and what Christ had said. Alas! there is nothing of evil which proud self-confidence will not make us do. God save us from such a spirit as that!

30-31. *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.*

See how positive he was, how reliant upon the strength of his own love. It was well to feel such love, but it was ill to mix with it such self-confidence.

31. *Likewise also said they all.*

Whenever a man, who is called to be a leader, goes astray, others are pretty sure to follow him. It was so on this occasion, for when Peter made his boastful speech, "Likewise also said they all"—all the rest of his brethren chimed in and so shared in his sin, but he was chief in the wrong-doing, for he led them all.

In the fifty-third verse we read what happened after Christ's agony and betrayal in Gethsemane.

53-54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

Meanwhile, Christ was being put to the utmost derision and contempt. In the sixty-sixth verse, we are told more concerning the boastful apostle.

66-70. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.*

He could not hold his tongue, you see. He was always fast and forward in speech—and no sooner did he begin to speak than the people said, “That is the Galilean’s brogue. You come from that part of the country, your speech betrays you.”

71-72. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

John 18:15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple:*

That is John, of course. He never mentions his own name if he can help it.

15-16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

I always fancy that John had a greater tenderness for Peter because he was the means of getting Peter into the palace of the high priest. Peter could not have got in if he had been alone, but John was known to the high priest, and so secured his admission. He must always have felt sorry that he took Peter into a place where he was so strongly tried. Hence John sought him out after his great fall when, perhaps, the other apostles were inclined to leave him by himself. John cheered him up and brought him back to the faith.

17-18. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*

That was a very dangerous place for Peter to be—he would have been safer out in the cold.

25. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.*

Twice over, we are told that while his Master was being buffeted, Peter stood in the midst of the ribald throng and warmed himself.

25-27. *They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.*

Thus was Christ’s prediction literally fulfilled and thus, by what seems the humble instrumentality of a cock crowing, was Peter brought to repentance. There is many an eloquent divine who has missed the mark when he has been preaching, but God has spoken by a very humble voice.

You, dear friend, though you have no gifts of speech, may go and tell the story of Jesus Christ to someone and God may bring him to repentance through you, as he brought Peter back to himself through the agency of this bird.

May God make us all useful and keep us from falling into transgression as Peter did! Amen.

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