

A CRACK IN THE ROCK

Sunday, June 13

Reading: Luke 22:54-62

Luke 22:61 *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."* **62** *And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

During 1978's fireman's strike in England, the British army took over emergency firefighting. On January 14 they were called by an elderly lady in South London to retrieve her cat. They arrived with impressive haste, very cleverly and carefully rescued the cat. The lady was so grateful she invited the squad of heroes in for tea. Driving off later with fond farewells and warm waving of arms, they ran over the cat and killed it.¹

Peter had the best of intentions in following Jesus, but it was probably not the smartest idea. Jesus had already told him that he would deny his Lord three times. Now Peter is putting himself in a situation that tempted him to do so! Peter had already started down this path in the garden. While Jesus asked him and the others to pray, they instead fall asleep. Perhaps if they had spent time in prayer as Jesus had asked they would not have been so despondent and unbelieving after His death. They had not prepared spiritually for what lay ahead. When Jesus is arrested, it is Peter who swings the sword that cuts off the servant's ear - yet another example of Peter not understanding what God's plan was for Jesus.

On trial for His life, Jesus stands boldly before His enemies. Meanwhile, Peter fails his test out in the courtyard. Peter's life does not appear to be in danger. The apostle John ("another disciple") was known to the high priest and he does not deny.² But instead of being the rock Jesus had called Him to be (John 1:42), Peter crumbles under the questions of a servant girl and a few minions around the fire.

Luke tells us that after his third denial the rooster crowed and Peter turned to look directly into the eyes of Jesus. What kind of look did Jesus give Peter? Was it a look of anger? Was it a look of disappointment? We cannot know, but that look broke Peter's heart. I believe it was a look of love and forgiveness. Jesus looked at Peter as if to say, "I know what you've done and I still love you and I forgive you!" This look broke Peter's heart and he went outside and wept bitter tears of repentance.

We all are prone to deny the Lord. Whether out of fear or indifference, every time we refuse to share Christ when God brings an opportunity across our path we are in a sense denying the Lord. But Jesus' loving and forgiving look is still there for us today. Jesus is in the business of turning failures into victories. Like Peter, we can sorrowfully repent of our sin and be restored. May our eyes see people the way Jesus sees them and may we answer those who ask about our faith with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹ <http://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/2152/bumbling-firefighters/>

² John 18:15-18 - John was known to be a follower of Jesus is implied by the servant girl at the gate when she asks Peter, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" (emphasis added)