

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

- Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)
- Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.
- Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)
- Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)
- Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)
- Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.
- Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.
- Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.
- Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.
- Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.
- Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.
- Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.**
- Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

The whole of Matthew 26 finds us deep in the dark shadow of the cross.

In this chapter we find the religious authorities plotting to kill Jesus; Mary anointing Jesus for burial; Judas agreeing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; the last Passover and introduction of the Lord’s Supper; Jesus foretelling of the disciples scattering – Peter’s denial that it will happen to him, and Christ affirmation that it will; Jesus praying in agony in the garden while the disciples slept; the arrest of Jesus; the trial of Christ; and Peter’s three denials of Christ.

As I say, in our study we are deep in the shadow of the cross. Matthew 26 showcases human depravity and human weakness. And it shows the exemplary perfection of Jesus. We see His patience in dealing with depravity and His mercy in dealing with human weakness.

We left off last time where the religious leaders that formed the supreme court in Israel had determined that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God. And because of this, they deemed Him to be a false teacher worthy of death. And then they began to abuse Him by spitting on Him, blindfolding Him and striking Him and saying, “**Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?**” (Mt. 26:67).

Now we pick up the narrative at Matthew 26:69. This picks up where the “footnote” of Matthew 26:58 left off.

Slide # 2

Matthew 26:58 (NKJV)

58 But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest’s courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

In this context we see Peter fold like a cheap tent in the pressure context of the high priest’s courtyard. Peter’s three denials are recorded in all 4 gospels although the accounts bring out differing details (cf. Mt. 26:69-75; Mk. 14:66-72; Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 18:15-18, 25-27).

Matthew 26:69–75 (NKJV)

69 Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, “You also were with Jesus of Galilee.”

Understand that the people from Jerusalem in the area of Judea looked down on Galilee.

Slide # 3



The “spiritual” people were thought to be from the Jerusalem area. They were supposedly the spiritually sophisticated people. This is where the priests were, this is where the learned scribes were. Way up north in Galilee was where the uncouth people lived. After all, they lived where they were in close contact with Gentiles.

Therefore, many think this servant’s girl’s statement probably had a derogatory and condescending tone reflective of looking down on the backward and culturally inferior Galileans.

So, the tendency to put Jesus down as a Galilean was indicative of Judean arrogance reflective of the attitude of many of the religious leaders who lived in Jerusalem.

But had they paid close attention to the prophets they would have known that indeed the Messiah's ministry would vitally involve the area of Galilee. 700 years before Christ came on the scene the prophet Isaiah wrote...

Slide # 4

Isaiah 9:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, **In Galilee of the Gentiles.**

2 The people who walked in darkness Have **seen a great light;** Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

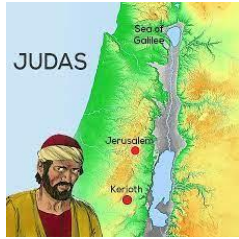
The area of Galilee was called "***Galilee of the Gentiles***" because this northernmost area was the "***gateway***" through which the Gentiles entered the land of Israel either as invaders or traders. It was this Jewish territory that most keenly felt the impact of foreign influence – so much so it was called "***Galilee of the Gentiles***". But this area of "***darkness***" was prophesied to see the GREAT LIGHT of the Messiah which they did.

Christ spent about 85% of His public ministry in the area of Galilee – all in fulfillment of prophecy. But the Jewish folks down south in the area of Jerusalem did not recognize or appreciate the significance of that reality.

Footnote: All of Jesus' disciples were from Galilee with perhaps the exception of Judas. The very name Judas is the Greek name for the Hebrew Judah. Proudly Jews from the area of Judah would commonly name their sons "Judas" which literally means "praised". Really, the name Judas by itself has a beautiful meaning, but then Judas went and ruined it. No clear thinking person names their child "Judas" today.

Another reason to think Judas may have been from Judea is because he is called Iscariot. Iscariot is thought to be the Greek form of a Hebrew word (Heb. Ishqriyoth) meaning "man of Kerioth" with Kerioth being a town in Judah.

Slide # 5



70 But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are saying.”

Remember that it was through John that Peter gained access into the courtyard because John personally knew the high priest as noted in John 18:16. Perhaps this servant girl recognized John as a disciple of Jesus and therefore suspected that Peter was also a disciple.

Whatever, the case Peter could feel all eyes were on him in a context that was very hostile to Jesus. And in that context, he caved. He started out with kind of a general denial – essentially saying, **“I don’t know what you are talking about”**.

But this caught Peter off guard.

A person’s involuntary response to the unexpected is a more reliable indicator of his character than his planned reaction to a situation he anticipates. It is when we are caught off guard that our true character is most likely to show itself. – **John MacArthur**

It is amazing how we can seemingly be so bold in one context and then suddenly be caught off guard and be shown to be very weak. Elijah on the one hand was incredibly bold as he took on 850 false prophets as seen in 1 Kings 18. But then in the very next chapter, he was terrified by one woman named Jezebel and her threat to kill him. We are all made of the same stuff. Being human we are very vulnerable – we are very fragile and weak – and given the right circumstances we can all easily cave.

Slide # 6

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV)

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Remember that just a few hours earlier Peter had dogmatically told Christ, **“Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”** (Mt. 26:33) But here he suddenly was STUMBLING.

Peter just a few hours earlier had said, “***Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!***” (Matt. 26:35). And yet here he was denying Jesus.

It is good to remember that we are all like Peter. We too are very vulnerable – we too can fall. It is good to be humble and realize that within ourselves we are not strong. We need God’s help!

71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

Feeling the pressure, evidently, Peter decided to move towards the entrance of the courtyard where perhaps the lighting was more dim being further away from the light of the fires by which people were keeping warm (cf. Mk. 16:67). Hopefully, here the focus wouldn’t be on him. But even there another girl recognized him and outed him saying, “***This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.***”

Peter was finding it very hard to hide here.

Again, the way this girl stated it – probably was in a derogatory sense. Nazareth was a city with a bad reputation. It was so bad that Nathanael in John 1:46 said, “***Can anything good come out of Nazareth?***” Nobody expected the esteemed Messiah to hail from such a place as this. So Nazareth was a term of contempt and this was undoubtedly a put-down.

The emphasis on Jesus being from Galilee (v. 69) and being from Nazareth (v. 71) may tie into the idea that the sophisticated religious Jews from Judah generally considered Jesus to be a false Messiah because of where He came from.

Slide # 7

John 7:52 (NKJV)

52 They [the chief priests and Pharisees] answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for **no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.**”

You see they expected the Messiah to come out of Bethlehem which was called the city of David. David hailed from there and the Messiah who was to be the Son of David would also hail from there. And they had a verse to back it up – or so they thought.

Slide # 8**Micah 5:2 (NKJV)**

2 “But you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet **out of you shall come** forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

What they failed to understand is that Jesus the Christ would indeed be born in Bethlehem (which He was) but that He would then grow up in Nazareth in Galilee (cf. Mt. 2:4-11). Thus, they failed to see the full picture – the big picture which prophetically sees Jesus as being born in Bethlehem but then having His ministry associated with Galilee. Thus, they confused Christ’s hometown with His birthplace.

Footnote: By the way the chief priests and Pharisees were wrong in saying that no prophet came from Galilee. Jonah was from Galilee (2 Kg. 14:25). And Nahum may have also been from Galilee (Nah. 1:1) as well as Hosea and Elijah (cf. 1 Kg. 17:1).

Even in referring to Jesus in a derogatory manner as “***Jesus of Nazareth***” they didn’t realize it but they were fulfilling prophecy.

Slide # 9**Matthew 2:23 (NKJV)**

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was **spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”**

Understand that being called a “***Nazarene***” (someone from Nazareth) was essentially a slur. The idea of being a Nazarene is that of being a despised person which is how the OT prophets described the coming Messiah.

Although the word “Nazarene” is not found in the OT, Matthew 2:23 simply presents a general truth found in various prophets that show the Messiah would be characterized as a Nazarene which is to say as a despised person associated with contempt. Thus, Matthew 2:23 appeals to a prominent descriptive theme in the OT rather than to a specific text.

Slide # 10

Psalm 22:6 (NKJV)

6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

Psalm 118:22 (NKJV)

22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

Isaiah 53:3 (NKJV)

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

To be rejected and despised like Christ was – was in effect to be labeled a Nazarene. Corinth had a similar reputation. To be called a Corinthian was in effect to be called an immoral person because of its notoriety for immoral behavior.

To be called a Nazarene was to be labeled a person of bad character. This is the sense of He “***was numbered with the transgressors***” (Isa. 53:12) because they saw Him as an evil rebel. This is the sense of “***they made [assigned] His grave with the wicked***” (Isa. 53:9) because they considered Him wicked and thought He should be buried as an evil-doer.

Being from Nazareth they assumed He too was a person of bad character for which the city was known. So in the mind of the average Judean Jesus had two strikes against Him. 1) He was from Galilee which was a boorish place to begin with, and 2) He was not only from Galilee but from one of the worst places there - from Nazareth a place of shame and disgust. Surely, with this background He could not be the Messiah – or so they reasoned!

So in associating Peter with “***Jesus of Galilee***” – with “***Jesus of Nazareth***” they were identifying him with One they considered to be a false teacher from a compromised place with a bad reputation. And in the heart of the high priest’s courtyard, Peter felt tremendous pressure to disassociate from Jesus! And so in response verse 72 says...

72 But again he denied with an oath, “I do not know the Man!”

This time Peter intensified his denial. He went from merely saying, “***I don’t know what you are talking about***” to now stating with an oath that he did not know Jesus. He was not even willing to use His name – simply saying, “***the Man***”.

In taking an oath, Peter was saying something like, “**So help me God I do not know the Man**”. In effect, he was invoking a solemn curse on himself if he was lying. This showed a total lack of reverence for God in the moment!

Any time one lies it is serious, but to lie under oath is even more serious. And to lie under oath about not knowing Jesus was a horrible sin of unfaithfulness.

There are two Greek words used in the NT for “to know”.

Slide # 11

“to know”

Ginosko – “objective knowledge” (what is learned experientially)

Oida – “inward/intuitive knowledge” (what is known intimately)

The emphasis here is not merely that Peter vowed he didn’t know Jesus experientially as an acquaintance (ginosko), but rather that he had no intimate knowledge (oida) of Jesus at all! Peter is vowing that he knows absolutely nothing about Jesus!

Earlier Jesus had taught...

Matthew 5:34–37 (NKJV)

34 But I say to you, do not swear at all...

37 But let your **‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’** For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

The Jews tended to play word games with oaths. They might regularly stretch the truth, but if they said “I swear” then they were claiming they were really telling the truth. And they had a system that allowed for certain loopholes. For example, if they swore by heaven that would not be as binding as if they swore by God’s throne.

Certainly, Jesus allowed for the proper dignified taking of oaths in appropriate settings but playing verbal games with vows as a common way of life is hypocritical (cf. Mt. 23:16-22). Jesus said, His people should as a way of life tell the truth. “**Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ No.**”

To have to strengthen your common ordinary everyday speech with an oath shows that something is seriously wrong.

The person who is constantly saying, “*I swear it is true*” probably has a problem with telling the truth.

Peter fell right back into the Jewish way of trying to make himself look like he was really telling the truth by strengthening his denial with an oath – the very thing Jesus said not to do. And he was indeed lying on top of it.

Not only did Peter not strengthen his word with an oath – he intensified the lie that he was telling. People who lie under oath are the most serious kind of liars. In our context this is called perjury!

73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”

Those from Galilee had a unique northern type of accent.

Kind of like in America we talk about a southern drawl or a New England nasal tone. The New England accent has no “r”. They don’t have cars they have caws. They don’t really speak English – do they?

One of the things you get here is that Peter must have been doing some talking. If you want to remain incognito perhaps you should keep quiet – which I think Peter found it very hard to do. It seems he always had to say something. You know that guy... who always has something to say.

The fact that they thought Peter’s accent proved him to be a disciple of Jesus serves to show just how prominent was Christ’s ministry up north in Galilee and how few followers He had down south in the area of Judah.

Luke brings out that this third confrontation about Peter’s identity happened about an hour later after the second confrontation (Lk. 22:59).

John brings out that the main individual pushing the issue with Peter was a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off (Malchus – Jn. 18:10) when they came to arrest Jesus in the garden (cf. Jn. 18:26).

Having lied twice, the second time with an oath, Peter now goes full bore on denial!

74 Then he began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.

The idea of “curse” here is not that of profanity. It is the idea of calling down a curse on himself if he is lying. Peter was saying something like, “**May God strike me dead if I am lying**”. And he was compounding the situation by calling down curses on himself and piling oaths on top of it. I mean Peter was verbally making it as strong as he could claiming that he absolutely did not know Christ.

As I say lying is always serious. Proverbs 6:16-17 says God hates lying and that it is an abomination to Him. How much worse to lie under oath – which in effect is to lie straight in the face of God and dare Him to hold you to it by way of an oath.

To lie in God’s name is a severe form of using the Lord’s name in vain.

Slide # 12

Exodus 20:7 (NKJV)

7 “You shall **not take the name of the LORD your God in vain**, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

To use the Lord’s name in vain as a cuss word is blasphemy which called for the death penalty in the OT.

Slide # 13

Leviticus 24:10–12 (NKJV)

10 Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite woman’s son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp.

11 And the **Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed**; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother’s name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.)

12 Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them.

Slide # 14

Leviticus 24:13–16 (NKJV)

13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

14 “Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

15 “Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.

16 And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.

God made it clear that He is HOLY and that the penalty for using His name in vain as a cuss word was the death penalty.

In our day people constantly use God’s name in vain either as a cuss word or irreverently just as a filler word – not even realizing what they are doing. It might be something as simple as “*Oh my God*” which always triggers me to want to ask them, “And who might that be?”. Any flippant or irreverent use of God’s name is using it in vain.

So serious did the Jews take this prohibition that they completely stopped using the most sacred name for God in their reading of the Holy Scriptures.

This was the name YHWH which the Jews considered to be the most holy name for God. The Jews to avoid using God’s name in vain didn’t want to use the name “God” at all – but especially the most holy name of YHWH.

So in their reading when they came to the name YHWH they would insert another name for God (namely His name Adonia which means Master). Consequently, the Jews eventually forgot how to even properly pronounce the name YHWH. Even to this day we are not totally sure how it should be pronounced even though we say “YHWH”.

However, using God’s name in vain is more than verbally misusing it in a profane way or as a cuss word. It is that, but it is more than that. Any time a person claims to represent God and yet misrepresents Him they are in effect dragging His name through the dirt.

Such a person is using His name in vain. To claim to be a Christian and yet dishonor Him in what we say or how we live is to in effect use His name in vain.

Slide # 15

We
misrepresent
God when we
wear his name
but not his
character.

Early in the Church Age a man named Ananias along with his wife Sapphira decided to lie to the whole Church about their giving. They claimed to be sold out for the Lord and that they were giving everything they had to the Lord. But they were lying about it. Peter then confronted Ananias about it.

Slide # 16

Acts 5:3–5 (NKJV)

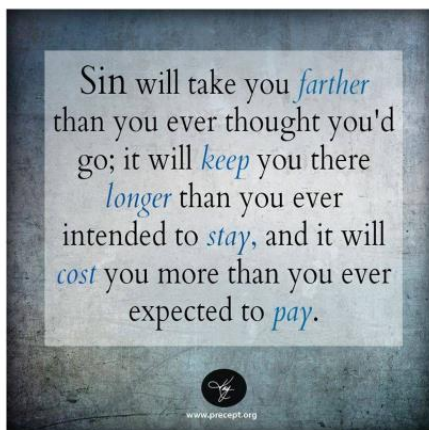
3 But Peter said, “**Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit** and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?

4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**”

5 Then Ananias, **hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.** So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

It is a serious matter to blatantly lie to God, which is what people are doing when they lie under oath. It is a most serious sin! Peter didn't just fall a little bit – he fell flat on his face in a most flagrant manner.

Slide # 17



And just that quick the crowing of a rooster cut through the early morning air. What is that sound? “Immediately a rooster crowed.”

Slide # 18**Matthew 26:34 (NKJV)**

34 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that **this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.**”

Footnote: Matthew, Luke and John have Jesus recorded as saying, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times” (Matt. 26:34; Lk. 22:34; Jn. 13:38). However, Mark has Jesus saying, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” (Mk. 14:72)

It would seem that Matthew, Luke, and John were only concerned about the sign of the rooster crowing in general – which was true. But Mark as a disciple of Peter got his information directly from Peter and he added the detail that the rooster specifically crowed twice. In the moment of it happening the precision of Christ’s prediction grabbed Peter by the heart.

And also happening at that very time was that the Lord made eye contact with Peter which instantly broke him.

Slide # 19**Luke 22:61–62 (NKJV)**

61 And the **Lord turned and looked at Peter**. Then **Peter remembered** the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

62 So Peter went out and **wept bitterly**.

Perhaps at that very moment Jesus looked through a courtroom window or He was being led across the courtyard – whatever the situation, their eyes in the moment locked. And just one look from Jesus brought Peter to repentance.

What sort of look was it? Jesus was battered and bruised terribly, perhaps with the spittle of His enemies still on His face. As Jesus looked at Peter was it the look of disappointment, the look of rebuke, the look of conviction, the look of pity, or the look of love? I think it was probably some combination of all these. And it shook Peter to his core.

When John the apostle saw the risen Lord in His glory in Revelation one he said His eyes were “***like a flame of fire***”. One look from Jesus and He sees right through you. This look from Christ penetrated Peter’s soul and instantly he was broken.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly.

One look from Christ and the memory of what Christ had said about Peter denying Him came flooding back into his mind. And he “**went out and wept bitterly.**”

This was the brokenness of repentance. The Bible talks about godly sorrow in keeping with true repentance which is in contrast to worldly sorrow that is self-oriented (2 Cor. 7:10). Judas too was sorry but it was a worldly sorrow that feels bad for self (Mt. 27:5). Peter truly was broken with godly sorrow.

David too fell into gross sin but in repentance, he said this...

Slide # 20

Psalm 51:17 (NKJV)

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.

It is not that Christians never sin – that they never fail – that they never fall. We do! James says, “**we all stumble in many things**” (Ja. 3:2). And yet when we do we hate it. In Romans 7 Paul says that when he sins he hates it (Rom. 7:15). But in our failures, God is at work – even as He was in Peter’s life. God brings about conviction and brings us to repentance. Hebrews 12 says God disciplines all His children to build holiness into their lives.

Judas felt remorse but there was no true repentance. Peter failed miserably but then he was truly repentant. The fundamental difference between Judas and Peter was that Peter had a true faith, whereas Judas did not.

Recall that earlier in the night when Peter was emphatic that he would never deny the Lord – at that time Jesus pulled back the curtain a little bit on the spiritual realm and said this to Peter...

Slide # 21

Luke 22:31–32 (NKJV)

31 And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

32 But I have prayed for you, that **your faith** should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

The point is that Peter did have REAL FAITH. Yes, it was weak, but it did not completely fail because behind the scenes Christ was praying for him. As believers Christ ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). This is the secret to our prevailing faith. Even in failure, Christ is there for us ensuring that ultimately our faith will not fail.

Peter had two interrelated problems that caused him to fall. 1) He had a pride problem, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble” (Mt. 26:33). And, 2) He had a prayerless problem.

Slide # 22

Matthew 26:41 (NKJV)

41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Peter was well-intended but he did not realize how weak he was within himself. He had to learn to depend upon God instead of depending upon himself. And he learned the hard way in a hard fall. The key to victorious Christian living is learning to walk humbly in dependence upon God which expresses itself in prayer. As Jesus said, “without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

When we depend upon ourselves we get failure. When we depend upon God as Paul says He “always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14).

But failure is not the last word in Peter’s experience. In his brokenness the Lord restored him. After His resurrection, Christ appeared to Peter restoring Him privately (cf. Mk. 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:5) and then publicly before all the other disciples as seen in John 21 (cf. Jn. 21:15-19).

Peter played the denying coward in the courtyard, but after he was restored and empowered with the Holy Spirit he boldly proclaimed the truth of the risen Lord in the heart of Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and 3000 people got saved. Unashamedly, Peter filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 4 addressed the rulers in Israel telling them of the risen Lord and rebuking them for what they had done.

Slide # 23

Acts 4:13 (NKJV)

13 Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

According to early church tradition in the end Peter was crucified for his faith. However, he said he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord and requested that he be crucified upside down. Thus he died as a faithful martyr for the Lord Jesus Christ.

True story: Thomas Cranmer was an early English reformer who lived in the 1500s. When Mary I (“Bloody Mary”) took the throne she immediately put a halt to the Protestant reforms.

Cranmer was imprisoned with his Christian friends Hugh Latimer and Nichols Ridley. All three were condemned for treason. Latimer and Ridley were immediately taken to be executed and Cranmer was forced to watch them be burned to death.

Then in a weak moment Cranmer gave way to pressure to recant his Protestant faith and to submit to papal authority. After privately signing a recantation he was required to publicly explain himself. Much to the shock of everyone he then publicly denounced his private recantations and denied papal authority. And he declared that his hand that had signed the recantations would be the first that would go into the fire.

Pulled from the pulpit where he was speaking he was immediately taken and tied to the stake to be burned. In fulfillment of his words, he stuck his offending hand in the fire first and as he died he cried out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...I see heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

Sometimes God’s people fail. But that is not the end of the story! We need to take a lesson from Peter. Jesus told Peter, “**when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**” (Lk 22:32). Peter did this (in part) by giving us the letters of both 1st and 2nd Peter.

There we find Peter emphasizing the importance of prayer saying, “**the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers**” (1 Pet. 4:7). We find Peter saying, “**be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**” (1 Pet. 5:5).

And we find Peter giving this solemn warning...

Slide # 24

2 Peter 3:17–18 (NKJV)

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, **beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;**

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Peter recognized that God’s people can fall – they can potentially be led away in error. So the exhortation is to be steadfast and grow in grace.

God help us to take a lesson from Peter. We are only as strong as our dependence upon God. We are ever vulnerable to falling. Stay prayerful and humble – this is the KEY to walking in victory.

If as a Christian we have fallen then let us remember 1 John 1:9.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Acknowledge your sin like David did, like Peter did. Repent and get back on your feet. You can’t go back and change what has been done but you can accept the Lord’s forgiveness and restoration and go on to be used of the Lord – even as Peter was. Jesus is in the business of restoring His servants regardless of their past failures.

And if you are not a Christian Peter explains that we are redeemed (set free from sin) by “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19). Jesus paid it all – all to Him we owe. It was Peter who said, “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) And it was Peter who said that our hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9; 1 Pet. 1:22).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

May God have His way in all our hearts today!