

JOHN 18:12-27
TRIAL AND DENIAL!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 18 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

We are just hours away from Jesus being crucified. We have seen His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

It is after His prayer that Judas, with 600 soldiers, the Jewish religious police, some of the chief priests, as well as others, maybe upwards of 1,000 people, many with swords and lanterns, come to arrest Jesus!

It is after this we will see two main trials for Jesus.

One will be a religious trial and the other a Roman or civil trial. And each of those trials will have three aspects to it or three times we will see Jesus being questioned.

As we are going to see, what our Lord endured for us, for sinful man, is incredible. And it just shows me how much God loves me, how much He loves you.

I don't care who you are, what you have done, how bad you see yourself; Jesus loves you. If you doubt that, then listen carefully!

One of the greatest theologians that ever lived, Karl Barth, was asked to be a guest lecturer at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

At the end of a captivating closing lecture, the president of the seminary announced that Dr. Barth was not well and was quite tired, and though he thought that Dr. Barth would like to be open for questions, he shouldn't be expected to handle the strain.

Then he said, ***“Therefore, I will ask just one question on behalf of all of us.”***

He turned to the renowned theologian and asked, *“Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest of them all?”*

It was the perfect question for a man who had written literally tens of thousands of pages of some of the most sophisticated theology ever put into print.

The students held pencils right up against their writing pads, ready to take down verbatim the premier insight of the greatest theologian of their time.

Karl Barth closed his tired eyes, and he thought for a minute, and then he half smiled, opened his eyes, and said to those young seminarians, *“The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’”*

How true that is and how important that is for us to understand. Remember what Jesus said in John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

God’s love for sinful man is seen in action, He sent His Son to die for our sins! That is how much He loves us!

Also, in John 15:9 we are told, **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.”**

We know that God the Father loves God the Son, and that love that God the Father loves Jesus with is the same love that Jesus loves us with!

Do you really think God loves us?

Without a doubt He loves us, and He loves us more than we will ever know. Human love is not even close to the love that God has for us.

This morning we are going to be looking at the arrest and the trial before Annas and then Caiaphas. We also will be looking at Peter’s denial of Jesus.

That is why I have called this study – ***TRIAL AND DENIAL!***

I have broken down the verses that we will be looking at this morning into the following points. They are,

JESUS' ARREST – JOHN 18:12

TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS – JOHN 18:13-14

PETER'S DENIAL OF JESUS – JOHN 18:15-18

QUESTIONS – JOHN 18:19-24

A ROOSTER CROWS – JOHN 18:25-27

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 18, beginning in verse 12 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***TRIAL AND DENIAL!***

JOHN 18:12-27

VERSE 12

As we saw last time, the “**detachment of troops**” were the Roman soldiers, 600 of them. And the “**captain**” was the Roman commander in charge of these troops.

We also see the “**officers of the Jews**”, and this was the Jewish religious police.

And they all came to arrest Jesus!

And it is almost funny when you read that they bound Jesus because there is nothing that can hold Jesus, He is Almighty God!

Well, maybe I should clarify that. There is one thing that held Jesus bound with these ropes, with all the beatings and interrogations that went on, with the crucifixion itself with all the mocking's that went on.

Do you know what that was?

It was – ***HIS LOVE FOR US THAT HELD HIM!*** He came to complete the work of redemption for sinful man! Again, do you see how much He loves us! I hope if you take anything away from our study this morning, that you take away how much God loves you. I pray you take more, but if anything, that is so important for you to understand – ***HE LOVES YOU!***

And if you remember, with a kiss by Judas, Jesus was identified as the one that they needed to arrest.

And I believe it was after this, that Jesus looked at all these men who came to arrest Him and asked them this question, “**Whom are you seeking?**” (John 18:4)

And remember what they said, “**Jesus of Nazareth.**” (John 18:5)

The response of Jesus is interesting because He does not say that He is Jesus of Nazareth, but He tells them, “**I AM.**” (John 18:5)

In other words, He is telling them that He is Almighty God and they have come to arrest Almighty God. When Jesus said those words, they all fell backwards to the ground, even Judas!

He was given these men a choice, to either go through with this or not, but they first needed to understand what they were doing.

And yes, God knows the beginning from the end, but I truly believe He was showing them who He was and maybe some of them came to saving faith, we don't know.

It is now that they will take Jesus to Annas, and we will be looking at this – ***TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS!***

VERSES 13-14

Keep in mind that it is still very early in the morning, before sunrise and we are told that Jesus was first brought to the house of Annas, who was the High Priest from 6 to 15 A. D. And then he was removed by Rome. Who was he replaced with? I will get to that in a minute.

First let's look at this man and what he was about. Annas was a member of the sect of Judaism known as the *Sadducees*.

And we have covered this before in our study of John, but these Sadducees were liberals and materialists of their day. They did not believe in angels, spirits, miracles, immortality, the resurrection of the dead, or anything else supernatural.

In about the year 15, Annas came into disfavor with the Roman government. So they removed Annas from being High Priest and the Roman government had his five sons serve as High Priest, each for a period of time. Each one, as they were serving, also fell into disfavor with Rome and they were replaced as well.

Finally, the position of High Priest was given to his son-in-law, Caiaphas!

Keep in mind that things had gotten so bad during this period of time, there was so much corruption, that they often would use bribery and purchase the office of High Priest.

So they brought Jesus first to Annas and John tells us of the trial there, it really wasn't very much before they sent Him over to Caiaphas.

Even though Caiaphas was the High Priest, the power behind the position was still Annas; the people looked to him more than Caiaphas. The main reason is that Rome appointed Caiaphas as the High Priest and the people did not acknowledge what Rome established!

And like I have said, Annas was not a good man. He was a Sadducee; a materialist and he made his wealth by setting up booths in the court of the Gentiles by the Temple to sell the certified animals for sacrifice at outrageous prices and they exchanged the Temple money for high rates.

They were loyal to the Roman government and cared nothing for rabbinic tradition and had no problem making religious, cultural, or political compromises when it suited their purposes, which consisted primarily of lining their pockets.

It was Annas and the Sadducees that ran the very lucrative business of the Temple concessions in Jesus' day.

When Jesus began and ended His ministry it was in this area of the money changers, throwing out those who were ripping the people off who came to worship God.

It was the men of Annas who were overseeing this, and they were well aware of Jesus and what He did!

In fact, He told them that the house of God is to be a place of prayer, a place where people can be touched by God, and they have made it into a den of thieves!

So, you can see why Annas didn't like Jesus as well as Caiaphas!

From there Matthew tells us that Jesus was taken to Caiaphas who was the High Priest.

Also, with Caiaphas were the chief priests, the elders and the whole council. Now they had a problem because before they could even bring Jesus before the secular courts, the Roman authorities, they had to have a reason and they didn't.

Now here is the amazing thing to me. They had no charges that they could place against Jesus so they "**sought false testimony**" to convict Him and they saw nothing wrong with this. I guess it was for a greater cause, at least in their mind.

We are told of this in Matthew 26:59-60a, **“Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.”**

So many came by to testify of the wrong that Jesus did, they gave a false testimony to try to convict Jesus as I have said, and they all could not agree on anything.

I am sure at this point they began to get frustrated, but they did not give up. They found two men who said that Jesus claimed that He was going to destroy this Temple, something He said some three years earlier, and that was a capital offense. They could have put Him to death for that.

This is what we are told in Matthew 26:60b-61, **“But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, ‘This fellow said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.””**

But even this false statement couldn't be agreed upon by the false witnesses according to Mark 14:59.

And Jesus was not talking about a building but His body, which would be destroyed and yet rise on the third day.

John 2:19-21 makes this very clear, **“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.”**

Again, this was a false charge against Jesus, but they were desperate to find anything to charge Him and sentence Him!

Also keep in mind that this second religious trial here in Matthew was illegal, for it occurred during the night, as well as the one with Annas. And yet these religious leaders felt very comfortable in breaking their own law to put Jesus to death for breaking their law, or so they said. They had no problem in finding false witnesses to make false charges against Him.

Keep in mind that the Sanhedrin was the seventy-one-member Jewish Supreme Court. From the very outset, however, the trial was illegal, since Jewish Law forbade evening meetings of the Sanhedrin.

Now John does not record for us this third trial that was before the Sanhedrin. We see this spoken of in Matthew 27:1-2 where we are told, **“When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”**

It was kind of a summation of what had transpired already and the delivering of Jesus to Pilate!

Please understand that this trial that the Jewish religious leaders had against Jesus was illegal as well! I know that is shocking to some, but I want you to see that what they did went against their laws.

Listen carefully to all that they did wrong and yet, they had no problem breaking their own laws to condemn a man of breaking the law, which Jesus did not do!

The Law of Moses included many rules of law for guiding a fair trial. The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the highest religious court of the time - consisting of seventy priests with a high priest in charge. It held court cases in the Court of Hewn Stones near Herod's temple.

The trial of Jesus was a “capital” trial; the crimes He was accused of were punishable by death. There were even more rules for capital trials to make sure they were fair.

Scholars say Jesus' trial broke at least 18 of the Mosaic laws that were meant to protect the accused. Here are some:

- The testimony of an accomplice was not allowed. Therefore, Judas could not accuse or witness against Christ.
- The accused could not be questioned by a private individual. Christ was taken to Annas (Caiaphas' father-in-law and the former high priest) and then Caiaphas.
- No legal proceedings could take place at night.
- The Sanhedrin (Jewish judges) could not bring charges. Witnesses had to do that. But indeed, the Sanhedrin brought charges. Then they sought for and brought in false witnesses.
- Capital offenses could not be tried on a preparation day for a Sabbath or high holy day and the Passover began the next evening.
- Capital trials had to last more than one day to allow for great consideration on the part of the judges.
- There had to be two or three agreeing witnesses and they had to cast the first stones at the criminal. If witnesses were untruthful, they were to receive the same punishment themselves.
- The accused had to have a "friend in court" to defend him. Jesus had none.
- No one can accuse himself. Jesus agreed that He was/is who He claimed to be.
- The high priest is not allowed to grandstand. Caiaphas rent his clothes and accused Christ of blasphemy.
- The accused must be given ample time to defend himself of any accusations.
- If with a capital crime the decision is unanimous against the accused, the case is actually thrown out. Any members of the Sanhedrin who may have defended Christ were not invited to this court session. The court found unanimously against Jesus, so He should have walked free.
- The trial was held at Caiaphas' palace instead of at the proper court. The next morning part of the Sanhedrin convened at the proper place to make things look legal.
- Any sort of bribery disqualifies a member of the court. The court bribed Judas to turn on Christ.

- The judges are not allowed to assault the accused.
- When the Sanhedrin took Jesus before Pilate hoping for a death sentence to be carried out according to Roman law, they changed the charges from blasphemy to treason, illegal under the Law of Moses.

- <https://bit.ly/3GwaLV9>

Isn't it amazing what people will do, even break their own laws, to destroy another person and feel that they are justified in doing it! That is what we see here.

Also, in John 11:49-53 we read of this man named Caiaphas and the prophecy that he spoke forth.

We are told, **“And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.”**

An amazing statement he made, and how true it was!

So we first see this – ***TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS!***

Then Jesus will be sent before Caiaphas and then the whole religious body, the Sanhedrin before He is sent to Pilate!

Now, when Jesus is brought before Caiaphas, we also see what is going on in the life of Peter, something that Jesus warned him about – ***PETER’S DENIAL OF JESUS!***

VERSES 15-18

Remember that a short time before this, in the Garden of Gethsemane, while Jesus was praying, what was Peter doing?

Peter fell asleep.

Then, as they came to arrest Jesus, Peter and the rest of them fled. And maybe they did not go too far away because they saw where they were taking Jesus, and Peter and John followed them.

I am sure Peter felt guilty of falling asleep and we know his great love for Jesus, and nothing was going to stop him even though he was a little nervous about going into the courtyard of the High Priest.

Now how do we know that it was John that went with Peter or Peter went with John is probably the way it was?

Because whoever this other person was, he knew the High Priest.

But again, why do I think John is the one who had access to the home of the High Priest?

Keep in mind that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were in business with their father, a fishing business that they operated from the Sea of Galilee.

As they gathered in the fish, they would salt some to preserve and send to Jerusalem where they had a shop in the market to sell them.

Also, the High Priest, being wealthy from ripping people off, would purchase these fish from the Zebedee's and maybe John was one of the businessmen that helped to make these deals.

That is why John was allowed into this courtyard while Peter is outside the door waiting for the okay to get in.

And notice what happens here in John 18:15-16 as Peter is outside the courtyard of the High Priest. We are told, “**. . . Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.**”

That tells me that John’s connection to the High Priest and his servants allowed Peter and John access to the property of the High Priest.

Now here is something I want to pick up on, John does not speak of this but in Luke 22:54, where we are told, “**Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance.**”

Did you see that?

Peter was following Jesus at a distance, which is always a mistake and I believe it is the starting point for trouble.

Let me be clear on this. You can’t follow Jesus at a distance and expect good things to happen. Like Peter, you will move so far away that you begin to deny what you said you believe!

I have seen this in people before. They are actively involved with the Lord, serving Him, and then something happens, and they begin to drop back.

Farther and farther they go until pretty soon, they too are following Jesus at a distance and may even deny Him, as we will see here with Peter.

If that is where you are at this morning, drifting away, following Jesus when you can or really when you want to, then Jesus is calling you to return to Him, return to your first love.

Remember the letter that Jesus wrote to the church in Ephesus, rebuking them for leaving their first love.

This is what He said, “**Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.**” Revelation 2:5.

Jesus is calling them to do three things to return to that intimate relationship that they had with Him.

The first is to – **REMEMBER!**

Remember what it was like when you first got saved. The love you had for the Lord. The time you spent with Him. The joy it brought to your life.

From remembering that love you had for the Lord and where you are at now, then Jesus calls for them to – **REPENT!**

In other words, you were moving away from the Lord, you were following Him at a distance, and they needed to repent or turn around and return to the Lord.

And then He tells them that they need to – **REPEAT!**

Repeat or do what?

Repeat and do the first works or those things that you did when you first got saved and were in love with Jesus. All you could do is talk about Him.

What does that look like?

You spent time reading the Bible!

You spent time in prayer!

You spent time in fellowship with other believers!

You spent time going to Bible studies, learning about the Lord!

How important that is and as we will see with Peter, when you follow Jesus at a distance, you are not going to stand up for Him or even acknowledge you know Him.

I know, some of you are thinking that is foolishness, you would never do that.

But it is a warning not to go down that path, because, like Peter, you will.

Think of a drug addict. Do you really think when he does drug's the first time he is thinking, ***"I can't wait to do this. I am going to be addicted and never be able to set myself free from this drug!"***

Of course he does not say that or he would never do it.

But once you start moving in that direction, there is trouble ahead and the same is true with following Jesus at a distance!

Now notice what this servant girl, the one who opened the door for Peter, said. We are told in John 18:17, **"Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?' . . ."**

Did you notice that she does not ask John if he was a disciple of Jesus. Why is that?

Because I believe that John was already known to her as a disciple of Jesus. He did not hide it. He did not follow Jesus at a distance!

Bruce put it like this. He wrote, ***"The servant-girl presumably knew the 'other disciple' to be a follower of Jesus, and when she saw him bringing in Peter, she said, in effect: 'Oh no, not another!'"***

So she questions Peter if he was a disciple of Jesus, and what was his response?

" . . . He said, 'I am not.'" John 18:17.

Can you imagine that!

Peter flatly denied knowing Jesus, that he was a disciple of Jesus.

Where was John at this point?

I don't think he was close by, and Peter thought that it was better to deny Jesus than to say he was a disciple of Jesus.

That is never a good thing to do!

That is the first denial, and as we read on, Peter moves farther and farther away from Jesus!

Why do I say that?

Because now he is trying to fit in and he goes by this fire that was made and he sits down with them, looking like one of them!

Now I know it says here in John 18:18 that Peter “**... stood with them and warmed himself.**”

But if you look at that word it simply speaks of being stationary and if Peter was sitting, like Luke and Matthew tell us, then he would be stationary. I think that is what John is telling us here, that he was sitting down with them, keeping warm by the enemies fire you might say!

How does that apply to us?

Let me ask you this.

Where do you go when you feel cold, where do you go to get warm, to fit in you might say?

Many go to the fires of this world when they are confused, hurting, lonely and that is never a good thing. You see, anytime you try to warm yourself by the world's fire, you will get burned!

May we learn that lesson.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

When we need that warmth in life, when we want to feel that love when we are feeling cold, Jesus is telling us to come to Him for He is the One who can give us rest, comfort!

I find it interesting that when people are in states like Peter, being drawn away from the Lord, feeling alone, they don't return to the Lord, but they go to the enemies fires to get that warmth once again.

And that warmth will eventually burn you!

Draw close to Jesus and enjoy that rest and that comfort, that peace that only He can give!

Now I know, you are thinking you would never do that!

Remember what Peter said to the Lord. Peter was willing to die for the Lord, cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest!

Peter would never deny the Lord, right?

No, as we have seen, he did, and he is not done.

But what we see here is that now he can't even admit he knows the Lord before this servant girl.

How his life was a contradiction – what about yours?

We will look at Peter and what was going on in this courtyard as we move on to our last point and it is an interesting turn of events in the life of Peter as we will see.

Now, keep in mind while this is going on outside, inside Jesus is on trial, is being beaten, so these two stories go hand-in-hand as we are going to see.

But what we see here is – ***PETER’S DENIAL OF JESUS!***

As we move on, we will see Jesus on trial and – ***QUESTIONS!***

VERSES 19-24

As I have said, Jesus faced three religious’ trials. There was one before Annas, which we see here. Then there is one before Caiaphas. Finally, we see the last one before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

Now some might be confused here. Who is this before, Annas or Caiaphas because he is called the High Priest?

Since Annas was the High Priest at one time, that title just stood with him. Just like our Presidents. They may leave office, but they are still called the President. Annas was also considered the High Priest by the people because Rome put Caiaphas into that position.

So this is Annas and he basically asked Jesus, “***Tell us all what You’re guilty of and everyone who is with You.***”

What is interesting to me is the question that Annas asked Jesus and how Jesus responded.

You see, Annas “**... asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.**” John 18:19.

In answering his question, Jesus does not mention His men at all, why?

Because He wanted to protect them. He did not want them to come after His disciples. So we see Jesus protect His men every way possible, He doesn’t even mention them in His answer!

And notice what He says to Annas.

As Jesus stands there before Annas He tells Annas that He has spoken freely, openly in the Temple, in the synagogues and if he didn't hear Him in any of these places, then ask others who have heard Him speak.

Jesus did not hide His ministry and they knew exactly what He taught. They just refused to accept it.

The biggest issue for them is that He being a man made Himself equal with God and they could not accept that!

Listen to what they said in John 10:33, **“The Jews [Jewish religious leaders] answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’”**

And as we have seen in our study of the Gospel's, the Jewish religious leaders tried to catch Jesus in breaking the Law, doing things that they felt were wrong and to expose Him as a fraud.

That never happened. And in the end, they were the ones who looked foolish!

Again, this trial was not according to the law, but to them it didn't matter.

You see, it was the High Priest's duty to call forth the witnesses first, beginning with those for the defense.

And what we see here is that these protections for the accused under Jewish law, were not observed.

As Bruce put it, ***“Jesus therefore claimed that, if his teaching was in question, evidence should be heard in the normal way.”***

They broke so many of the Jewish laws with these trials and yet, they said Jesus was the one who broke the law.

Not at all, not even one little law did Jesus break, He was sinless!

So as Jesus is done with His answer, one of the officers struck Jesus in the face, he hit Him very hard and he said, “... **‘Do you answer the high priest like that?’**” John 18:22.

Please understand that Jesus was not sarcastic here. He was not putting down Annas, He just laid it out and they did not like it so one of the officials struck Jesus.

And that is what happens when you have nothing to stand upon, you resort to violence and that violence is just beginning.

And the response of Jesus in John 18:23 puts the ball back in their court.

Jesus basically tells them, “***Look, if I did evil, tell Me the evil that I did. But, if I did no evil, then why did you strike Me?***” But He did no wrong and thus, they had nothing to say.

Therefore, Annas is done with Jesus, and he sends Him on to Caiaphas and the second religious trial. Caiaphas was the High Priest and thus, had more power than Annas, at least with Rome.

And at this trial they brought false witnesses to speak against Jesus and none of their stories agreed with each other and thus, without two witnesses who were in agreement, they should have let Him go, but they didn't!

And more abuse upon Jesus, as Matthew tells us.

What we are going to look at next is – ***A ROOSTER CROWS!***

And what I want you to keep in mind is that as this is all going on in the house of Annas and attached to this house was probably the house of Caiaphas, his father-in-law, this trial of Jesus, Peter is outside and there is another story taking place, as we shall see!

VERSES 25-27

Remember what Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:31-32, “**. . . ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’**”

And we should not be surprised about this because our Lord knows Peter and us better than we know ourselves.

Now I want to share with you what Matthew tells us about this incident because as we look at what Matthew tells us; he fills in some more of the details of that night and what Peter did.

In Matthew 26:69-75 we are told, “**Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee.’ But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are saying.’ 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.’ But again he denied with an oath, ‘I do not know the Man!’ 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.’ Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. 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.**”

What Jesus warned Peter about is coming to pass, and Peter is shocked by his failure, the Lord wasn’t!

I think we can put ourselves in Peter’s shoes and we have such a desire to serve the Lord and then, all of a sudden, we do something that is not honoring Him, and we are shocked by it.

As we are going to see, the Lord loves Peter and He loves us!

And what we see here is that Peter was not only questioned if He knew Jesus, but now there is an eyewitness that was able to pick Peter out, and he still continued to deny the Lord.

Who was this eyewitness?

It was a relative of the guy who had his ear cut off by Peter, so I think he recognized him.

We saw this in our last study in John 18:10-11 where we are told, **“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?’”**

It is hard to try and deny you were with Jesus when this relative of the servant of the High Priest, Malchus, was an eyewitness of what Peter did. But Peter denies the Lord anyway, and at this point we see – ***A ROOSTER CROWS!***

Keep in mind that as this is transpiring, Jesus is sitting in a room, looking out the window, after He was beaten and blooded in these illegal religious trials, and He is seeing all that is going on with Peter, what he was doing!

As He is sitting down in the house or one of the rooms of the High Priest and Peter denied the Lord for the third time and the rooster crowed, we read in Luke 22:61-62, **“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.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”**

It was at this point, in his third denial of knowing Jesus, that the rooster crowed and the eyes of Jesus met the eyes of Peter and he was broken and went away and wept.

I can imagine the pain, the hurt, the disappointment Peter felt when that rooster crowed. I am sure we have all experienced similar things in our life where we feel we disappointed the Lord, as I have said!

Now this is important, because if we don't understand this, then our conclusions of this incident are going to be off, way off.

When it says that the eyes of Jesus met the eyes of Peter, how do you think the Lord looked at Peter?

Maybe with disdain and disgust. Have you ever felt the Lord looking at you like that?

Maybe He said, ***"I told you Peter!"*** Or ***"Peter, how could you do that?"*** Or maybe ***"Peter, you are a failure!"*** And again, I am sure we have felt that way before.

Maybe it was just plain anger that Jesus had toward Peter. I am sure we have felt that the Lord was angry with us at times!

And if we feel that way, what is the outcome of that?

We basically say, ***"Lord, I'm hopeless, I'll never amount to anything as a Christian! Why don't You just give up on me because I've given up on myself!"***

If you are feeling that way – ***STOP!***

What did Paul say in Philippians 1:6, **"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."**

If you still don't get it, let me share with you what The Amplified Bible says regarding this verse, **"And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you."**

And lastly, if you are still struggling with this, ***STOP*** and listen to what The Living Bible has to say regarding this verse, **“And I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns.”**

What work did God start in us?

It is the work of salvation!

What work will He complete in us?

It is the work of salvation; it will be completed!

What work is He doing in our lives right now?

It is the work of growing and maturing us in the Lord!

And this is all based upon His grace. We are part of the family of God and God will not lose us and He will not forsake us, He will always be with us! May we not forget that! The work that He started He will, not might, complete!

How can I be so sure?

For one thing, I know my Lord and His love.

But here is another important point. The ancient Greek word for **“looked”** ***“usually signifies a look of interest, love, or concern.”*** (Liefeld)

I believe that Jesus looked at Peter with such love, such compassion that it broke Peter and he did need to be broken of self. Can I be sure of that? Absolutely.

Again, how can I be so sure?

It is simple, you see. Jesus already told Peter that this was going to happen. So, this is not a surprise to Jesus.

And, again, I know the love of God for us, and He knows how frail we are, and He is always working in us so that He can work through us.

In John chapter 21 we see Jesus restore Peter and really, we see that here in Luke chapter 22 as Jesus said in verse 32, “**. . . and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**”

I love that. I think the same is true for us. As we fail, as we stumble, as we are broken of self, when we return, we can help those who are dealing with these same issues just as the Lord has done with Peter. May we look upon them with the love of God and not disdain!

I want you to have a picture of what the Lord said to Peter, and I think this will help. Think about it like this.

When your children were young and learning to walk, you know, they walked like Frankenstein, arms out!

And they would stumble, they would fall, they would fail!

How did you respond to that?

Did you say, “***How can you fall again. What is wrong with you. Stop acting like a child and walk like a man! I can’t even believe you are my son!***”

We would never say that and if you would, you would need to see me!

How would you respond?

You would encourage them, praise them for what they are doing. You would help them so they can grow, they can mature, and they can learn to walk!

Now if a human parent would respond like that, why do we think that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, would respond differently! He wouldn’t and He doesn’t!

Remember what Jeremiah 31:3 says, **“The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.’”**

How long is an everlasting love? It is everlasting, it never ends!

And in Ephesians 2:4 we are told, **“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”**

Never forget that He loves you. Don’t let the enemy sift you as wheat and blow you away with his lies!

So with this loving compassion that Jesus looked at Peter with, how did Peter respond to it?

We are told that Peter wept, and he ran!

And I think the reason why is very simple. It was because of God’s love, the look of love that Jesus gave to Peter just broke him as he saw his Lord beaten and bloodied and all he could do is deny Him, the one he said he was willing to die for!

But don’t lose hope. Jesus said He was praying for Peter and ***“WHEN”*** he returned, not ***“IF”*** he returned, he was to strengthen the brethren, strengthen others through what happened to him. And that is happening as we read the story of Peter here in John!

What a great lesson for us, what a great encouragement for us, for when we think we know ourselves better than God, after we have fallen, after we are broken, God restores us and will use us again!

In Psalm 103 we are told, **“The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. . . . He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”** Psalm 103:8, 10-14.

What does the Lord see us as?

DUST!

That means that our God knows that we are weak and prone to fail and He’s not condemning us for our failures because, as His children, He uses them to teach us how to walk with Him better in the future, as I have said!

But again, we tend to be so hard on ourselves and we set the standard so high that it becomes unrealistic to accomplish those things in our lives. We want perfection and we fall far short of that.

I am not saying set the bar so low that you don’t have to do anything, but be realistic and ask the Lord to help, and if you fail, don’t give up, God has not given up on you!

If you need encouragement, then look at that Hall of Faith section in Hebrews chapter 11. God lists the men and women of faith, and they are perfect, not one mention of any failures at all.

I know, you are thinking, ***“Are you kidding me Pastor Joe! If they walked so faithfully, how is that going to encourage me?”***

Because they didn’t!

Were Abraham and Sarah completely faithful?

No!

What about Jacob, he is a good one, right?

Not at all!

What about Moses, he truly was a faithful man?

No, remember, because of his unfaithfulness in representing the Lord he was not allowed to enter the Promise Land!

I can go on, but did you see a common thread here?

They were human, they had frailties and failures.

Then how can they be in this Hall of Faith section of the Bible?

Because God looks at their success and not their failures and He does the same with us!

You see, the difference isn't the failures. But when some fail, they give up, and that is not good.

What these men and women of faith did, is when they failed, they got up, they repented and learned from their mistakes and they moved forward in their walk with the Lord, the ministry that God had for them and so must we!

And the question I will leave you with this morning is this, ***“How about you? Do you understand God's love for you, that it is unconditional?”***

If you doubt His love for you, then look again at what we have seen here this morning. All that Jesus went through to save you. All that Peter went through, and the loving compassionate look of Jesus towards Peter.

I will close with this, I promise. The love of God for sinful man, perspective is everything.

We are told,

Many years ago, before the sensitive and politically correct society in which we live today, there was a boy who was continually in trouble. He was forever breaking the rules and always getting into trouble at school. His father could not understand why. He provided for him in every way with a good home, he spent time with him fishing and going to his ballgames, and he showered him with his unconditional love, but the father just couldn't figure out why the boy wouldn't mind? He had been raised in the church and had even been in Sunday school for five years. His father was consistently reading the Bible to him and his father had never provoked him to anger. His son's behavior was a mystery to him.

One day when his son was upstairs playing around with his baseball, which he'd been told repeatedly not to do, he ended up breaking one of his bedroom windows. The boy was ten year's old and certainly knew better because his father had told him time and again to not play ball in the house.

The father headed upstairs and took off his belt. The boy knew what was coming so he voluntarily bent over and kneeled next to his bed but the father said, "***Son, here, take this belt***" which his son did.

Then his father took off his shirt and kneeled down on the bed and said: "***Son, I want you to give me seven lashes with this belt across my back.***"

His son started to cry and said that he couldn't do it. His father kept insisting until the son finally relented and started hitting his father across the back with the belt but it wasn't hard enough.

He said, "**Harder son, harder!**"

When the boy finally lashed the belt across his father's back seven times with greater force the father asked him ***"Son, do you know why I had you do this?"***

The son said ***"No."***

The father said, ***"When Jesus went to the cross for us, He took the worst punishment that has ever been inflicted upon any man. He was pummeled, He was beaten, His beard was plucked out, and He was punished like no one has ever been punished."***

"Who do you really think did this to Jesus?" The boy, still whimpering, hesitated and finally said he thought it was the Jews or the Romans, but the boy's father said, ***"No, it was God the Father who punished Jesus for everything that we have ever done wrong and or will ever do wrong in the future (Isaiah 52:14-15; 53:1-12). He took the punishment that He didn't deserve to save those who didn't deserve saving. That is how much the Father and Jesus loved us"*** (John 3:16). It was God's love most gloriously displayed for us who deserved actually His wrath.

The boy was shaken deeply by this lesson and from that day forward, the boy never seemed to get into the same amount of trouble again. . . . not perfect but changed.

Maybe it was because he wasn't sure how his dad would react again. The boy didn't ever want to use the belt on his dad again although the father never said anything more about it.

Whatever it was, the message of God's love displayed on the cross by Christ forever changed this young man and it has forever changed us.

The boy was not perfect after that, by no means, but neither are we after being saved but that doesn't take away what was accomplished at the cross. ***THE LOVE OF GOD!***