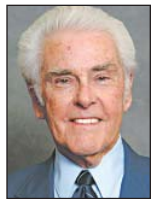


Redeemed from devastating failure

Jesus and his disciples had shared the Passover meal (Luke 22:23-48). During the meal, Jesus predicted his betrayal by one of his disciples



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(vv. 21-23). Peter had boldly pledged to go with Jesus to both prison and to death; Jesus responded by predicting Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed (vv. 31-34).

Jesus took Peter, James and John to be with him while he prayed to the Father in his agony about what was going to happen to him (Luke 22:39-46). Mark's gospel has Jesus leaving the three and going alone to pray about his coming agony three times, but Luke condenses this to only one time with the Father with similar prayers for deliverance from his cup. When Jesus returned to the disciples, he found the disciples sleeping and said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you do not enter into temptation" (v. 46).

With Judas' identification of Jesus to the Roman and Jewish mob by his kiss, Jesus was betrayed and arrested (vv. 39-54). Luke differs from the other gospels by including Jewish priests and elders in the arresting mob. Despite an initial act of boldness by cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave, Peter, along with the rest of the disciples, abandoned Jesus and fled. But Peter followed the mob at a distance as they took Jesus to the high priest's house.

Have we all denied Jesus in some fashion? Peter joined with the accusers at the enemies' fire and there made the threefold denials (vv. 54-62). A striking phrase has Peter making his third denial when "the Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord...and he went out and wept bitterly" (vv. 61, 62).

A number of interpretations of Peter's denial conclude that we all as disciples have also denied Jesus.

But certainly we cannot identify our denial (if it is real) with Peter's circumstances. How, then, might we deny our Lord?

(1) *We can deny him by neglecting our opportunities to witness about Christ.* Whether it be from fear, embarrassment or simple neglect, we do not fulfill his call for us to be witnesses to others about him. "Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day be risen from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things" (Luke 24:44-48, RSV).

(2) *We can deny him by mistreating others who need care.* Luke gives us the story that we call the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). A Jewish man was on the road to Jericho and was beaten, robbed and left for dead on the roadside. Two religious men saw him but did nothing. A Samaritan came upon him and had compassion on him.

This is the only man in the parable described as having compassion on a needy person. G. Campbell describes the activity of the person in need. "Personal service. The binding up of wounds, the pouring of oil and wine, the lifting of the man to a beast that carries him, and makes provision for him. These are the responsibilities which law creates (and which the religious men ignored). We can spell them out in one little word of four letters LOVE" (Parables and Metaphors of our Lord, p. 181).

(3) *We can deny the Lord by failure to serve him in his ministry.* The words of Paul challenge our commitment when he writes, "I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of

God, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

(4) *We can deny him by inappropriate behavior as professed*

Bible Studies for Life

May 15, 2016

Scripture: Luke 22:54-62;
Acts 4:8-12

believers (Titus 1:15; Jude 4). These individuals profess to know God but they deny him by their deeds (Titus 1: 16). Jude is concerned for so-called believers "who pervert the grace of our Lord in licentiousness and deny our Master and Lord Jesus Christ."

Obviously these forms of denial do not involve standing against Christ to deny him as Peter did, but they are more subtle denials that the Bible holds before us. We need to become conscious of them.

God's Spirit empowers our witness (Acts 4:8-12). By now in biblical time, Pentecost had come with the gift of the Holy Spirit and Peter's marvelous sermon offering God's grace and salvation to all who would accept it. Peter and John had healed a "man lame from birth" (Acts 3:1-10). This created a problem for the religious leaders who wanted to "know by what power or by what name did you do that?" Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly explained that it was by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, that the man stands before them healed.

The leaders were staggered by this testimony and finally, in accord with custom, sent John and Peter outside while they debated what to do. Then they called them back in and "charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

Peter's boldness and recovery of dependence on Jesus was demonstrated in his answer to that charge: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, but for us we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." So the gospel began to infiltrate their world.

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