

GREATER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JOHN

GREATER: the book of John

SCRIPTURE: John 18:15-27: JESUS > DENIAL

John 18:12-14

12Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **13**and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14**Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Over the next few hours Jesus will undergo six trials. The first three were Jewish, before Annas, Caiaphas and then the Jewish ruling council, called the Sanhedrin. The second three trials were civil, before Pilate, Herod and then back before the Roman governor, Pilate, again.

John 18:15-18

15Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, **16**but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17"You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.
He replied, "I am not."

18It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

While Jesus is on trial inside, Peter is being on trial outside. Although Peter flees from Gethsemane he doesn't go far. Peter follows at a distance with another disciple. Most likely John.

Peter and John were known to spend a lot of time together, and John does not mention himself by name in his gospel account. There were also priestly ties in John's family which may have allowed him access to the high priest's house.

While John is able to go right in, Peter is held up outside the gate. John goes out, talks to the girl at the door and the ushers Peter in. On his way inside, the girl gets a good look at Peter and asks if he is one of Jesus' disciples.

The girl's question baits Peter into his negative reply...

17"You aren't one of *this man's disciples too*, are you?" she asked Peter.
He replied, "I am not."

Interesting, she knew that John was one of Jesus' disciples and he was allowed into the courtyard, but for some reason Peter felt the need to deny his association with Jesus.

Maybe it was because he had lashed out and cut off the ear of the servant Malchus in the garden. Maybe it was because he did not have the connections that John did. We don't know, but Peter does not admit to who he is.

At this point, Peter's motives may not be to save his own skin, but to gain access to the palace in order to be near Jesus or perhaps even to help him escape.

John 18:19-22

19Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. **21** Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

Jesus neither backs down or fights back.

John 18:23-24

23 "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" **24** Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Somewhat exasperated, Annas sends Jesus up the chain to Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest.

While this is going on with Jesus, Peter tries to blend in. He has found a place near the fire that the servants have built to stay warm. Remember this is still in the overnight hours.

Peter gets close enough to gather some warmth, but not close enough that his face is illuminated.

John 18:25

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"
He denied it, saying, "I am not."

For the second time, someone asks if Peter is one of Jesus' disciples. It could be the same girl from the gate. Maybe she has thought about it for a bit and has been watching Peter from a distance. She can't let it go and asks again, in the same way...

"You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

And Peter replies with the same answer... *He denied it, saying, "I am not."*

Peter probably removes himself from around the fire but still stays near the scene. Finally someone who was related to Malchus, the one who Peter had cut off his ear, challenges Peter again.

John 18:26-27

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" **27** Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Luke gives us another bit of the story that John leaves out.

Luke 22:60-62

60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. **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.

Can you imagine the feeling when Peter realizes that Jesus' prediction had come true. Somehow, caught up in the moment, Peter had forgotten that Jesus had said that he would deny him. And now after having denied him three times, the rooster crows and Jesus turns and looks straight at Peter.

JESUS > DENIAL

Peter. The one who pulled a sword and lashed out at the angry mob in the garden. One of only two of the disciples who followed Jesus and the crowd to the house of Annas.

Peter is the one who was always the first to speak up. He was the one who was willing to get out of the boat and walk on water. He was the one who said, "you are the Christ, the son of the living God."

The Bold. Boisterous. Brave fisherman. Now crying bitterly because he knew that he had sold out Jesus.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THE MOST OUTSPOKEN DISCIPLE DENY JESUS?

FEAR.

And maybe the bigger question for us this morning is this... What would make us deny Christ in our lives?

Three fears that might make us deny Jesus.

FEAR OF ASSOCIATION

John 18:15-18

16but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17"You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter.
He replied, "I am not."

Do you think Peter was afraid of being associated with Jesus and his disciples. Put yourself in his shoes. Would you be afraid of this association?

Better yet, how and when are we overcome with the **fear of association** which leads to our denial of Christ?

I'll have to admit. I'm less afraid of being associated with Jesus than I am with others who claim to be followers of Jesus.

There are so many groups who profess they are Christians, but their actions are so far from what Jesus would have wanted that I am afraid of being associated with them.

Let's remember the words of Paul to the church at Philippi...

Philippians 3:7-8

7But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **8**What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

FEAR OF CONSEQUENCE

For the second time, Peter denies he knows Jesus.

John 18:25

25Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"
He denied it, saying, "I am not."

Don't you think by this time Peter was afraid of the consequence of being associated with Jesus. He has seen the way the trial is going, he sees Jesus being slapped and bound.

I think maybe Peter is wondering if this could happen to him.

We don't really live with the fear of this kind of consequence. But for us there are other consequences...

We think maybe it might hurt the possibility of being promoted.

We may just go along with the language, or habits of those around us.

We think we might be written off as one of those religious people. (less than intelligent, not fully aware of life and science, etc.)

Our culture is changing. We are no longer the home team. We have to think about how to react when our faith is challenged.

How will we represent our faith in the face of a more and more secular and ungodly culture? Will we deny Christ out of the fear of consequences?

FEAR OF UNKNOWN

John 18:26-27

26One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" **27**Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Doubt. The opposite of doubt is FAITH. We have to learn to Believe and Trust even in the unknown.

I believe Peter got caught up in the fear of the unknown. Even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen. In the heat of the moment, Peter forgets all that Jesus had told them. Even that Jesus had predicted his denial.

Peter experienced fear which led to his denial of Jesus. Fear of Association. Fear of consequence. Fear of the unknown.

We too can fall victim to fear.

So what is the antidote to fear? LOVE.

1 John 4:18

18There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

It is love that overcomes fear. John says, "perfect love casts out fear."

Luke 22:60-62

60Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. **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.

You see when Jesus looked at Peter, I don't think it was a look of disapproval, or of anger, but rather of LOVE. I believe it was Jesus love that rocked Peter's world that night, and that love would sustain him through Jesus' crucifixion and later it would be that love that would allow Peter to stand up and preach boldly for the rest of his life, the message of Jesus.

Small Group Questions.

1. What are your greatest fears? What events, do you think, brought those fears into your life? Are any of your fears irrational?
2. Have you ever lied or stretched the truth to keep yourself out of trouble? Were you successful or did it come back to get you in the end?
3. Contrast John 13: 37 with 18:15 to 18. What caused Peter to change his stance?
4. Last week we looked at Judas' betrayal (Read Matthew 27: 3-5) and This week we see Peter's denial. What is the difference between Judas' and Peter's actions? Do you believe there was grace enough for Judas?
5. Why do you believe Peter denied knowing and following Jesus?
6. In Luke 22: 60-62 we see Peter's reaction to the acknowledgement of his failure as Jesus turns and looks at him. What do you think Peter thought in this moment? What do you think Jesus felt in this moment?
7. There are many fears that can paralyze our lives, but what are some of your reactions, thoughts, or feelings about the times when we don't know what is coming next? Or how you will overcome a trial?
8. Read 1 John 4:18. How does love overcome fear in your life?
9. This week, seek out ways where you can be bold in your faith.
10. Close in prayer for one another that, and remind them that God has given us the strength to be bold in our faith.
2 Timothy 1:6-10