

**Introduction**

1. Today, we are in the middle of our eighth Markan sandwich (cf., 14:53-72).
  - a. Mark placed a story within a story. A story begins which is the bottom slice of bread. A second story is told. That is the middle of the sandwich. Then the first story concludes. That is the top slice of bread forming our Markan sandwich.
  - b. We have encountered this literary feature at least nine times in Mark (3:20-35; 4:1-20; 5:21-43; 6:7-29; 11:12-25; 14:1-11; 14:17-31; 14:53-72; 15:40-16:8). For example:
    - 1) Mark used it to highlight the two primary sources of opposition to Jesus' ministry: his family and the Jewish teachers of the law from Jerusalem (cf., Mk 3:20-35).
    - 2) He used to interleave the stories of the healing of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood to highlight Jesus' victory in the physical realm over both disease and death (cf., Mk 5:21-43).
  - c. This lesson forms the middle of our eighth Markan sandwich as the account of Peter's denial of Jesus is sandwiched between Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin (cf., Mk 14:53-65) and His trial before Pilate (cf., Mk 15:1-15).
  - d. William Lane notes, "The use of the literary technique of flashback indicates that the trial and interrogation of Jesus coincided, and is to be contrasted with the ordeal and interrogation of Peter (see on Ch. 14:54). The irony inherent in the situation is evident when the force of juxtaposing verse 65 and verses 66-72 is appreciated. At the precise time when the court attendants were heaping scorn and derision upon Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, the prophecy that Peter would deliberately deny him was being fulfilled" (William Lane, *Mark*, 541).
2. Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed twice as Jesus had predicted (cf., Mk 14:30).
3. **Read Mk 14:66-72.**

**A. The First Denial (66-68)**

1. After Jesus was arrested Peter had ". . . followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest" (Mk 14:54).
  - a. Remember that Peter had boldly said, "Even if all fall away, I will not" (Mk 14:29).
  - b. He had physically defended Jesus at His arrest in Gethsemane by drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest, whom Jesus subsequently healed (cf., Mk 14:46-47).
  - c. Unlike the other disciples who fled, Peter had come with the arresting party to the high priest's home where the trial that we considered in our last lesson took place.
  - d. The events in this passage lie in parallel with Jesus' trial by the Sanhedrin. They recount what was happening outside in the courtyard while Jesus was tried inside the house.
2. Warren Wiersbe observes, "While the Lord was being mocked and abused, Peter was in the courtyard below, trying to escape detection. Had he heeded the Lord's warnings, he would have avoided walking into temptation and denying his Master three times. He is a warning to all of us, for, after all, if an apostle who walked with Christ denied his Lord, what might we do in similar circumstances? The Roman believers who read Mark's gospel no doubt learned from this account, for they would soon be entering the furnace of persecution themselves" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 170).
3. "While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls (Gk., *paidiskon*) of the high priest came by." (66b)
  - a. The servant girl took a good look at Peter who was "warming himself" by the fire.
  - b. She was sure that she recognized this stranger, and said, "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus" (67b).
  - c. The servant girl used the term Nazarene as an epithet of derision and contempt.
  - d. Jesus was known as the Nazarene since He came from the city of Nazareth which lay in the northern region of Galilee and was considered a less-than-likely region to produce a prophet.

4. Peter was in a tight spot.
  - a. If he acknowledged that he was a follower of Jesus, he might be arrested with Jesus.
  - b. So, “. . . he denied it” (Gk., *‘O de ernesato*). The verb “denied” is in the Greek aorist verb tense which indicates the denial was a single action.
  - c. Not only did Peter deny knowing Jesus he said, “I don’t know (Gk., *oute oida*) or understand (Gk., *oute epistamai*) what you’re talking about.” (68a)
  - d. He compounded his guilt by leaving the warm fire of the courtyard for the dark entryway (68b). He still didn’t flee, but he was ready to make his get-a-way if necessary.
  - e. This was Peter’s first denial of Jesus.
  - f. Mt 26:71 adds that after this first denial, the cock crowed for the first time. This should have been a warning to Peter which he didn’t hear, ignored, or failed to heed.

#### **B. The Second Denial (69-70a)**

1. But the servant girl wouldn’t give up.
2. She saw Peter lurking in the shadows of the doorway and said to the temple guards still warming themselves by the fire, “This fellow is one of them (Gk., *Outos eks auton estin* – This one is of them)” (69).
3. I can see her raising her finger to point him out.
4. “Again he denied (Gk., *erneito*) it” (70a). This time Mark uses a Greek Imperfect verb indicating this was a continuing denial. It was not a one time slip but a continuing denial.
5. This was Peter’s second denial of Jesus.

#### **C. The Third Denial Brings Reality (70b-72)**

1. Now that the servant girl had drawn everyone’s attention to Peter, others joined in with her accusation.
2. “After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, ‘Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean’” (70b)
  - a. When Peter had opened his mouth to deny Jesus, he had given away the truth.
  - b. Peter’s Galilean accent gave him away like a New York twang in a southern city. You’re not from around here are you?
  - c. Jesus had come from the northern region of Galilee. So, logically this stranger with a Galilean accent must have come with Him. It only made sense.
3. Peter responded even more vehemently this third time.
  - a. “He began to call down curses (Gk., *anathematizein*) and swore (Gk., *omnunai*)” and made a strong declaration of denial: “I don’t know this man (Gk., *Ouk oida ton anthropon touton*)” (71).
    - 1) Three denials was a complete, superlative denial of Jesus.
    - 2) Lane states, “The statement that he began to invoke a curse is intentionally left without an object in the Greek text to denote both that he cursed himself if he is lying and those present if they insist on asserting that he is a disciple” (Lane, 542-43).
    - 3) Peter declared their words were anathema (Gk., *anathematizein*)—lies!
    - 4) He took an oath to support his denial. Remember Jesus’ words in Mt 5:34-37 about oaths: “. . . do not swear an oath at all . . . All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Mt 5:34,37).
  - b. This denial was a reversal of his earlier declaration regarding his knowledge of Jesus.
    - 1) At the highpoint of Mark’s gospel, Peter had correctly identified Jesus when Jesus asked him, “Who do you say I am?” and Peter correctly replied, “You are the Messiah” (Mk 8:29).
    - 2) This third denial was a strong reversal of Peter’s previous confession of faith about Jesus.
  - c. Daniel Akin notes, “Peter failed the Lord three times in the garden of Gethsemane (vv. 37-42). Now he fails Him three times in the courtyard of the high priest. Initially, he failed Him by sleeping when he should have been praying. Now he fails Him by denying Him when he should have confessed Him. The rock named Peter crumbles and is pulverized under the pressure” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 342).

- d. Remember Jesus' words to His disciples about denying Him.
- 1) "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mk 8:38).
  - 2) "But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven (Mt 10:33).
4. As Peter denied Jesus for this third time, "Immediately the rooster crowed the second time." (72a)
- a. The reality and horror of what he had just done came upon Peter in an instant.
  - b. ". . . Peter remembered (Gk., *anemnesthe*) the word (Gk., *rhema* – the powerful word) Jesus had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times'" (72b).
  - c. Wiersbe notes, ". . . it was not the crowing of the cock that convicted Peter; it was the remembering of Christ's words. It is always the Word that penetrates the heart and brings about true repentance" (Wiersbe 171).
  - d. "And he broke down (Gk., *epibalon*) and wept (Gk., *eklaien*)" (72c).
  - e. Peter came apart as he wailed over what he had just done.
  - f. In Luke's account of these events (Lk 22:61), Jesus looked at Peter. I believe the Lord looked at him not with hatred but with a glance of hurt and injured love. His prediction had been fulfilled.
5. Peter had lost the struggle of the flesh because he was not yet filled with the Spirit of truth.
- a. Paul counsels, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it" (Ro 7:14-20).
  - b. Paul reminds us, "Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8).
  - c. Furthermore Paul commands, ". . . put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (Eph 6:13).

#### **D. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection**

1. Do your words and actions indicate that you have been with Jesus? Do you have a kingdom accent?
2. How have you denied Jesus with your words and actions in the past?
  - a. Wiesbe concludes, "How many times have we denied the Lord and lost opportunities to share the gospel with others? Do we, like Peter, talk when we should listen, argue when we should obey, sleep when we should pray, and fight when we should submit? Peter at least was sorry for his sins and wept over them, and the Lord did forgive him. After His resurrection, Jesus had a private meeting with Peter (Luke 24:4); then Jesus helped Peter make a public confession when He met the disciples in Galilee (John 21)" (Wiersbe, 171).
  - b. James Brooks states, "Mere profession is not enough. Constancy in all circumstances is required of true disciples" (James Brook, *Mark*, 245).
  - c. Peter was humbled by sin and reinstated by grace.
    - 1) Peter became a bold, fearless leader of the early church who spoke openly and boldly about his faith in Jesus (cf., Acts 2:14ff, 5:29ff).
    - 2) Peter's ministry was not ended but enabled by his encounter with the gracious forgiveness of His Lord.
3. What was your reaction when you denied the Lord? Did you deny and run or confess and repent?
  - a. Both Judas and Peter denied Jesus, but each one responded in a different way to their guilt.
  - b. Daniel Akin notes, in contrast to Peter, ". . . Judas would only feel regret, run to the religious leaders to try to make amends, and go out and hang himself (Matt 27:5). If only he had turned again to the Lord Jesus like Peter. Though his sin was great, he would have discovered that God's grace was even greater" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 342).
  - c. We have a fleshly struggle. The only weapon we have or need is the Spirit of God within us.
  - d. Like Peter, only when we confess our sin and seek God again will we find His forgiveness, restoration, and recommission.