

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Failing the
Unfailing God

INTRODUCTION

John 18:15-27

Jesus faces another betrayer, His other most trusted Disciple; now, two go against Him, while the rest, except for John, abandon Him. So, He is sandwiched between the jealous, scheming, religious leaders along with the hostile Romans and the absence of His followers! Peter, along with John, follows Jesus as He is being taken away into custody to face the coming mock trials and then His heinous crucifixion.

John knew people at the court's courtyard so he went in as Peter stood outside, warming himself by a fire. Then, he was given the third degree by the people there who asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples; shockingly, Peter said *no*. Even though the people there recognized him, Peter blatantly denied Jesus publicly! Meanwhile, Jesus is hostilely questioned by the high priest; He is questioned about His teachings and ordered to reveal information about His Disciples, which Jesus refused to do. People will betray Him, but He will never betray us. Jesus said, *what I teach is widely known; Go ask anyone who has heard me; I do not teach in secret*. This irritated the guards who hit Him; thus, the undeserved beatings commenced. Jesus meekly (strength under control) defended Himself by asking what He had done or said that was wrong. Annas became frustrated that he could not outwit Jesus' humility by his pride, so he sent Him to Caiaphas the high priest. Meanwhile, Peter had another opportunity, as he stood warming himself, to stand up for Jesus but instead, he denied Him again! *Are you not one of His followers?* Even a relative of the man Peter stabbed confronted him, and yet, Peter protested *I am not!* At that point, just as Jesus had prophesied, the rooster crowed!

We all at some point, more often than not, sooner than later—will stumble, make bad choices, and/or fail. The question is *where are we going with our faith and due diligence of His teachings?* We must seek to please God and submit our will to Him; by so doing, we will become humble, trusting, and obedient toward God and others (Ex. 32:19-20; 30-34; Num 12:1-3; Psalm 37:11; Matt. 5: 3-12; 11:29).

The great principle of comfort in our distress is that Jesus shows up; He is with us and for us because of His love. The principle of love, which is the essence of the Gospel, must be our mark so it is our impact; because His love influences us, we will contemplate (think deeply) upon it and become empowered and stimulated by it, so it flows even when we are not thinking of it or are as Peter was when the rooster crowed—stressed, hurt, or confused. The point of this passage is the point of the Gospel. If we live out our Christian lives with the great commitment of love and faith with diligence, then we can succeed in life, ministry, and service to our Lord. If love and faith are not our marks, then we will be worthless and of no value. Nothing we want to do or attempt to do could amount to anything of value without love. What we think is important and purposeful is not, unless it is joined to our growing faith empowered by His love. All we do must be in the cart that is pulled by the horse of our faith, with the reins of hope, and most of all love as the wheels, all because of Christ's love. Keep in mind that most people, including Christians, have a skewed idea of love. We get our ideas from TV and movies; we believe these flawed ideas are based on our feelings and how people have treated us. As a result, we do not see the unmerited love called *grace* that we have already received from our Lord.¹

¹Study Notes by R. J. Krejcir Ph.D. *Into Thy Word Ministries* found @ <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=71887>

OPEN IT

1. It's confession time! When have you embarrassed yourself in front of people? Did you try to cover it up or explain it away?

READ IT

John 18:15-27

EXPLORE IT

2. How far did Peter follow Jesus when he was taken to the High Priest?
3. What did the servant girl at the door ask Peter?
4. How did Jesus respond to the questioning of Annas? What happened next?
5. Who questioned Peter the second time?

APPLY IT

Like a good writer or movie director, John switched scenes to keep his readers in suspense. He cut away from inside the house to the courtyard surrounding the house. There Peter and another disciple tried to find out what was happening to their leader. Many Bible students believe the second man was John. Others think he was Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, who helped bury Jesus since it wasn't likely that fisherman John would know the high priest. These other two possibilities did. Since the yard was walled and had a guarded entrance, they couldn't just walk in on the proceedings. The unnamed disciple gained entrance because he knew the high priest. Then he got permission for Peter to enter as well and went back to fetch him.

The girl who gave permission for Peter to enter the courtyard wanted to know if he was one of Jesus' disciples. Without hesitating, Peter said no. It's hard to believe this was the same man who wasn't afraid to defend Jesus by taking out his knife and trying to kill a servant in the garden minutes before. Peter had turned into a coward who was afraid to be known as one of Jesus' disciples. He stood there with his enemies, warming himself at their fire.²

6. Read John 13:36-38. What does Peter vow to do? What does Peter do at even the slightest opposition?

7. What does this teach us about even the most committed disciple? How does this actually serve to encourage us today?

² Johnson, Lin. The Book of John (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series) (p. 225). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

8. Peter thought very highly of himself and that was manifested in his great boasts before others. Is there a difference between this and being confident? How so?

9. We focus on Peter in this passage but Jesus finds himself in a similar place. He can deny God and have his life spared. How is Jesus different from Peter?

10. What can we do to be more like Jesus and less like Peter?

Peter didn't understand that Satan was out to get him and that this hour belonged to the power of darkness. Thus he failed to pray at that crucial time in the garden (Luke 22:31, 46, 53). This caused him to react to Jesus' arrest by swinging his sword, rather than with weapons for spiritual warfare. Then he blindly wandered into the path of temptation in the courtyard of the high priest's house.

So often, like Peter, we react to difficult situations from the physical or human perspective, rather than realizing that we're in a spiritual battle with the unseen forces of wickedness in heavenly places (Eph. 6:11-12). Someone says something against you at work and you react in anger by putting him down or getting back at him. By not praying and seeing it as a spiritual attack, you missed the opportunity to bear witness for Christ!³

11. How might Peter's action have been different if he recognized the spiritual battle that was going on around him? What about us?

The fear of man was behind Peter's third denial (John 18:26), "One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, 'Did I not see you in the garden with Him?'" Peter panicked! This guy could get Peter in big trouble for what he had done in the garden! So Peter denied Christ again. Then the rooster crowed to remind Peter of Christ's words! Luke (22:61-62) tells us that at that moment, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. That look pierced Peter's heart! I'm sure that he never forgot it. He went out and wept bitterly.

To some extent, we all want the approval of others. But when we worry about what others think, our focus is wrong and we forget the most important thing: what does God think? Our aim should be to please Him. Proverbs 29:25 warns, "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted."⁴

12. Why do people and their opinions about us loom so large in our lives? How can knowing who we are in Christ impact the constant pull to please men instead of God?

³ Sermon excerpt from Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-94-when-you-fail-lord-john-1812-27>

⁴ *ibid*

Peter feared man, not God, and thus failed as a witness. But Jesus feared God, not these in power, and thus bore faithful witness. When Annas asked Jesus about His disciples and His teaching, he wasn't seeking the truth. Rather, he was illegally trying to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. Under Jewish law, a defendant was not required to testify against himself. Rather, other witnesses were called to testify. So Jesus' reply (John 18:20-21) was a rebuke, exposing Annas' illegal approach. Christ in effect says, "If you were really interested in My teaching, you've had plenty of opportunity to hear it. But you're proceeding illegally by not calling witnesses. You've already prejudged My case."⁵

13. This evening "pretrial" of Jesus by Annas was illegal and because of it Jesus yields no information during it. How can knowing our rights as citizens actually help as we bear witness for Christ?

The officer standing near Jesus recognized this as a rebuke. Trying to ingratiate himself with his boss, he illegally hit Jesus in the face. Needless to say, he was siding with the wrong boss! But Jesus didn't retaliate. Rather, He calmly replied (John 18:23), "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" Christ's fearless witness to these hypocrites was aimed at convicting them of their sin, without which they would not see their need for the Savior.⁶

14. Jesus is mistreated by one of the guards and doesn't retaliate. Is this always the best option? Is there ever a time to address wrongs done against us? What scriptures apply to such a viewpoint?

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

15. Why do you think John included the detail that the 3rd accuser was related to Malchus (v. 26)?

The measure of effective witness is not whether it produces converts, but rather that it is faithful to God. As far as we know, neither Annas nor the one who hit Jesus in the face ever repented (see Acts 4:5-22). But Christ bore faithful witness to them and they will have no excuse on judgment day. Because Jesus was faithful and He never fails, we can trust Him when we bear witness in this hostile world.⁷

16. In what ways can you be more courageous for Jesus?

17. What concerns you most regarding this step of faith? Who is one person that you need to bear witness about Jesus?

⁷ Ibid