

# PETER'S BIG FALL

## Mark 14:66-72

### INTRODUCTION

No one thought it would end this way. Joe Paterno, the legendary head football coach at Penn State University, heard of his firing by the school's board of trustees by phone. Just two weeks after achieving the most wins of any NCAA Division One football coach in history, Paterno was fired.

Roman Catholic Church – whole system of abuse, sin, perversion, and cover up

Big Falls as a function of deplorable theology: Baker, Swaggart – list goes on

Big Falls among Christians ... What is going on?

### READ Mark 14:66-72

**Proposition:** **Source** (Where does it come from?)  
**Symptoms** (What does it look like?)

**Big Idea:** Terrible Fall. When a Christian falls, they never fall far. The catastrophic failure at the end is a result of a lot of bad decisions along the way. There were little characteristics, choices etc. of selfish behavior that lead up to the catastrophic behavior at the end.

### I. **Source** (Where does it come from?) **Mark 14:66-68**

Point – There are three sources:

- **Pride**
- **Laziness**
- **Cowardice**

#### A. **Pride**

Point → ignorance of own weakness

### Proof – **Mark 14:29-31**

recall – last supper

- Peter is prideful
- Peter is ignorant of his own weakness
- he has been following Jesus for 3 years
- he has seen the miracles, the compassion, His perfect life

v.29 – Peter is being thick-headed

- Peter is a powerful example of being a work in process
- he is neglecting and turning away from the confidence He has in Christ
- he is relying on himself

v. 31 – Peter, king of the overstatement → More protest! No way!

- he is emphatic, again and again
- he is a raw leader and he is loyal but this is mixed with his pride
- Peter elevated himself above the rest.
- even when Christ tells him...Peter, your failure will be greater than the rest!

**“And they all were saying the same thing, too.”**

- Peter is the leader in the “Big Love - Weak Discernment” march

In smug self-confidence, they foolishly mistake their good intentions for strength.

**Proverbs 16:18** – “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

- This is nothing new
- In some ways, pride was the original sin

**Application – 3 Steps to Spiritual Strength!**

**1<sup>st</sup> step:** Understanding Spiritual Weakness.

Self-confidence always opens the door to temptation. The first step of a believer’s falling into sin is false confidence that he is able to be faithful to the Lord in his own power. We were all beggars given the free gift of salvation which comes only in Christ. When we begin to think or act outside of Christ...pride creeps in.

**2<sup>nd</sup> step:** Acknowledging your Spiritual Weakness and Repenting

A believer who is spiritually self-confident, who is indifferent to sin, and who does not turn to the Lord for help will fall deep into sin. → Repent → Don’t stay there!

**3<sup>rd</sup> Step:** is → NO “I’m only human.” Excuses

We understand our circumstances and environment have influence, but when we sin it is our responsibility and no one else’s. We sin against God and God alone. We are responsible for ourselves and ourselves alone.

**Application** – Continual need to deny self and not trust self. Trust God!

Pride was first, here is second source of a big fall:

## **B. Laziness**

Point → Peter slept too much and prayed too little

Proof – **Mark 14:37-41**

Because of his pride, he neglects Jesus' admonition to be on guard and to pray – As a result, he is vulnerable to attack.

- Not just physical sleep, but in terms of watching out for sin, having a heart for ministry, loving the church and others more than self, studying God's word, hiding God's word in our hearts etc.
- We are to pray without ceasing – **1 Thessalonians 5:17**

**Application** – Continual need to deny self and not trust self. Trust God!

**Consider this illustration** – There's a story about an organization in South Africa who wrote to famous missionary David Livingstone and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you." Livingstone replied, "If you have men who will come ONLY when there is a good road, I don't want them."

**Application** –

- Do not pray for easy lives.
- Pray to be stronger men.
- Ask God to help you excel here.
- Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers.
- Pray for powers equal to your tasks.

The third source of a big fall:

## **C. Cowardice**

Point – Instead of making a bold confession, Peter is a coward

Proof – **Mark 14:66-67** – “**And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, <sup>67</sup>and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene."**”

- May have been girl who admitted Peter into Caiaphus' estate
- The estates were built around an open courtyard
- It was a cold spring night in the Promised Land

“**officers**” – *an under rower* → Jewish temple guard

“**too**” – knows John is around – **John 18:15-18**

“**the Nazarene**” – Lit. – “that Nazarene, this Jesus”

- derogatory → dripping with contempt

**Consider this illustration – John 1:46** – Nathanael – “can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

**Mark 14:68**

**“But he denied *it*, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.' And he went out onto the porch.”**

Point – Peter, the big rough fisherman, who not long ago took out his sword and was ready to fight a Roman cohort and the temple guard ... is now intimidated by a young servant girl  
→ he **panics**

Peter has a wishbone where his backbone ought to be.

“**denied**” – desert (*disown*): to forsake

**Matt 26:70** – “before them all”

- Peter denies to all – not just the servant girl

“**neither know nor understand**” – Peter emphatically denies!

- I don’t know the man ... I don’t even understand what you’re talking about!
- he is caught on the spot but he understands the mock trial that Jesus is being put through, he knows the situation and what is at stake

“**And he went out onto the porch**” – he flees from the light of the fire and the crowd – goes to the safety of the shadows on the porch

“**Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall**” (1 Cor. 10:12)

- the arrogant hero shrivels into a cringing coward.
- his courage evaporates.

**Revelation 21:8** – list of characteristic behavior of people who won’t enter the gates of heaven

- Cowardice is first!

The unexpected comes from God.

- an angry, fearful or anxious response is our sin  
→ being unprepared is our problem

**Application** – Our first response, our involuntary response to the unexpected is a **very reliable measure of our character**...much more reliable than our response to the expected.

## II. Symptoms (What does it look like?) **Mark 14:69-70**

- A. Deceit
- B. Disaster

Point – **Deceit** and **Disaster** intensifies → leading to desperation and recklessness

First symptom:

### A. Deceit

Proof – **Mark 14:69-70a** – “**And the maid saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is *one of them!*"** <sup>70a</sup>**But again he denied it.**”

“**maid**” – same word as “**servant-girl**” in v. 66  
the article – the same girl as v. 66

**Matt 26:71** – “another” (feminine pronoun)

**Luke 22:58** – “another” (masculine pronoun)

- several join in challenging Peter this time
  - escalation – there is an intensification – that is what sin does – it sinks its talons into your skin deeper and deeper
  - Little fibs grow and grow into bigger lies

**Repetition** is seen here - sin again ... and again

- one sin leads to another
- hardening effect of sin

**Mark 14:70a** “**But again he was denying it.**”

“**denying**”

- in v. 68 – “deny” is aorist.
- in v. 70 - imperfect here (escalation)
- again, more repeated denials on this occasion
  - Jesus’ prediction of three times refers to 3 occasions

**Intensification** →

**Matt 26:72** – “he denied it with an oath” → continued escalation!

A Jewish oath was always assumed to be made in God’s presence.  
In effect, Peter calls God as a witness as the Witness to his lie.

“Sin fascinates, then it assassinates.

It thrills, then it kills.

It will take you farther than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you were willing to pay.” (Adrian Rogers)

**Application** – when you are on the wrong path, **get off!!!**

- encountered the time to fight temptation is before it is
- away. if encountered, fight to the death right
- the longer it wins
  - the more difficult the battle,
  - the greater the fall,
  - the more tangled the web,
  - the greater the defilement on your life and others

Second symptom:

### **B. Disaster**

Point – Disaster is brewing, festering, boiling under the surface

Proof – **Mark 14:70b** – “**And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are *one of them*, for you are a Galilean too."**”

**Luke 22:59** – “**about an hour had passed**” – in between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> denials

- Peter had had time to stew about it ... time to think about it
- he had time to consider the consequences
- he has time to remember the previous denials and the mock trial of Jesus

“**the bystanders**” – now “everybody” – accusations are flying from every side – Peter is like a cornered animal

**John 18:26** – “One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off (Malchus), said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"”

**Matt 26:73** – “the way you talk gives you away”

- you speak like a Galilean!

### ➔ **Blasphemy**

**Mark 14:71** – “**But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"**”

“**began to**” – the cursing and swearing continue for a time

Not cursing and swearing per se as you might think – not swear words.  
What Peter is doing here is worse.

“**curse**” – *anathematizo* – to declare anathema or accursed – calling for God to damn it if what is said is not true or if one does not carry out what has been promised –

**Galatians 1:8-9** “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.<sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.”

The most serious taking of the Lord’s name in vain that is conceivable. Peter is calling for God to damn him if he is lying – a lot worse than using a swear word.

Peter is saying, in essence -

**“May God kill and damn me if I am not speaking the truth.”**

**Blasphemy – Part 2 → Denial**

**““I do not know this man you are talking about!””**

Now Peter denies Jesus Himself. Peter won’t even use His name!

**Mark 14:72a** – “**And immediately a cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times."**”

**Luke 22:60-61** – “And immediately, while he was still speaking, a cock crowed. <sup>61</sup>And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord”

I can’t even imagine that look. Do you think it was a look of anger? I don’t think so at all. I think it was a look of unbelievable sadness ... in the midst of the agony – total forsakenness. Jesus is alone and Peter denies Him.

**Application** – to original audience – provides a warning to church in Rome under severe pressure of persecution – Peter himself denies Christ → be on your guard unless you too fall! If Peter can do this, so can you. So can I.

**Application** – lies are difficult to maintain, aren’t they?

**Mark 14:72b** – “**and he began to weep**” – loud expression of grief

- wailing for the dead
- in Greek – Lit. “broke down and was weeping” – imperfect

**What are we to make of this????????????????????**

**For believers:**            Falling down does not make you a failure.  
                                     Staying down makes you a failure.

If you do fail, there is always an opening for repentance, an opening for forgiveness, an opening for restoration.

The first step: Deep Remorse

The true Peter is not seen in his **denial** but in his **repentance**, the first stage of which is deep remorse. Finally realizing the vile nature of his sin, he turns from it in revulsion. His faith slipped and weakened, but it is genuine faith.

→ Realized sin breaks the heart ... of ... a ... believer!

Charles Allen, *Perfect Peace* —

“One difference between a sheep and a hog is that, when a sheep falls into a mudhole, it is uncomfortable and struggles to get out. When a hog falls into a mudhole, he wallows in it and enjoys it.”

When a Christian sins, we are not comfortable with it. There is always some struggle to get out of it.

**Consider this illustration:** Women and children - if someone tries to take you fight to the death right then and there. If they take you to second location, you're dead.

**Application:**

- **Flee** from sin immediately!
- **Fight** sin immediately!!!

The more serious the **sin** → The more bitter the **remorse** → The deeper the **repentance**

No man is ever useful to the Lord until he has absolutely no trust in himself, until he is crushed.

**Consider this illustration:** Why was Paul useful?

- **1 Timothy 1:15** – “I am foremost among all sinners”

**Application:** Confession of sin is a normal Christian duty and the natural response of a heart pierced by the power of Scripture

**Consider 2 Samuel 12**

- Nathan rebukes David
- David had at least 9 months to stew in his sin and cover it up
- David wrote about true repentance in **Psalm 51**

**5 Qualities of True Repentance**

**True Repentance** is ...

## 1) Occupied with Sin's Guilt; Not Sin's Consequences Psalm 51:2

Point - True repentance is a change of heart; not a fear of punishment.

- God-centered, not man-centered
- guilt before God rather than the consequences
  - this is in contrast to Cain who was concerned with his consequences
  - characteristic of worldly sorrow – being concerned with consequences of sin

**Consider this illustration:** Convict on Death Row being interviewed a month before his execution – when asked what he thought of his punishment, he replied “it is a just sentence”.

**True Repentance is ...**

## 2) Focused Upward; Not Inward          Psalm 51:4

Point - Sin is against God.

- focus on God, not self
- we need to ask for forgiveness etc and do the things that are right before the Lord but the focus of true repentance must not be inward or outward – but upward.

**True Repentance ...**

## 3) Seeks Pardon; Not Pity          Psalm 51:9

Point - He does not try to explain his sin or play the blame-shift game.

When we are caught in sin, it is easy to be caught in a pity party. Recall Job and Adam. True repentance does not have excuses:

- my sin is not because of my upbringing, it's not because of my unsaved spouse, not my evil coworkers, not my imagined disease, not because of circumstance

**→ I, and I alone, am responsible for my sin, period.**

**True Repentance ...**

## 4) Prays for Cleansing; Not Cover Up          Psalm 51:7

**Consider this illustration:**

The unsaved try to cover the nakedness of sin with fig leaves. Contrast this with the godly desire to be right before God.

- concern is not reputation but for cleansing
- concern must be about righteousness before God, not reputation before men

**True Repentance ...**

## 5) Is Clear; Not Cloudy

- no word-smithing
- no word cup game
- no, “I’m sorry, but ...”
- no, “I was told I have to apologize...”  
→ these instantly evaporate the apology

Biblical repentance, confession, and asking for forgiveness is clear. The person to whom you say “please forgive me,” is not confused. They do not ask, “was that an apology?”

## CONCLUSION

**Turn to: → Luke 22:31-34**

My faith would evaporate in a minute if God were not busy day and night strengthening it. God always sees to it that faith has the victory and that his children have faith.

And the Encouraged becomes the Encourager! – **Luke 22:32**

Peter, the leader of the apostles, learns through his own fall, to have compassion on others – learns through his own weakness, to be merciful to the weaknesses of others.

→ **2 Pet 3:17–18** – “Beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest ... you fall from your own steadfastness,<sup>18</sup> but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Peter says → Be alert! Watch out! Be sober!

The word of encouragement, consolation, and hope – if you love God and are called according to his purpose, if you are despairing of your own resources and looking to Christ for hope, then you have a most wonderful promise: Jesus prays for you, and he will never let Satan destroy your faith and bring you to ruin.

**Consider this illustration:** When they were young, I would let my children walk on something dangerous ... but only while they are holding my hand! In the same way ... we are safe when Jesus is holding our hand!