

## The Best of Men are Men at Best: Peter's Denials of Jesus

~Mark 14:66–72~

“It stands forth as an everlasting proof, that the best of men are only men at the best.” (J.C. Ryle of Thomas Cranmer)

### Three progressions in a sad account of self-confidence:

#### 1. Faithless confidence (vv. 27–31)

Mark 14:27-31  
Zechariah 13:7

#### 2. Cowardly denial (vv. 66–71)

John 18:16  
John 18:26–27

#### 3. Broken contrition (v. 72)

Luke 22:61

“And now I come to the great thing which so much troubleth my conscience, more than anything that ever I did or said in my whole life. And that is setting abroad of a writing Contrary to the truth, which now here I renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart and written for fear of death, and to save my life if it might be. And that is all such bills and papers which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation, wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished therefore, for may I come to the fire, it shall be first burned.” (Thomas Cranmer)

But then came the time of Cranmer's triumph. With a light heart, and a clear conscience, he cheerfully allowed himself to be hurried to the stake amidst the frenzied outcries of his disappointed enemies. Boldly and undauntedly he stood up at the stake while the flames curled around him, steadily holding out his right hand in the fire, and saying, with reference to his having signed a recantation, "This unworthy right hand," and steadily holding up his left hand towards heaven. Of all the martyrs, strange to say, none at the last moment showed more physical courage than Cranmer did. Nothing, in short, in all his life became him so well as the manner of his leaving it. Greatly he had sinned — but greatly he had repented. (Ryle)

Then Ryle writes: “Like Peter he fell — but like Peter he rose again.”

John 21:1-17

### Takeaways...

1. Jesus remains faithful when we are faithless. Luke 22:31-32
2. Momentary weak faith is different than permanent denial. (Judas vs Peter)
3. While there is life and breath, there is opportunity to return to God.