



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
Mark 14:66-15:20

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English Standard Version

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## *“Denial and Delivery”*

The 43rd Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled  
*“The King and His Cross”*

### **Mark 14:66-72**

*“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 also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” <sup>68</sup> But he **denied** it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” <sup>70</sup> But again he **denied** it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” <sup>71</sup> But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” <sup>72</sup> And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will **deny** Me three times.” And he broke down and wept.*

### **Mark 15:1-20**

<sup>1</sup> And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led Him away and **delivered** Him over to Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And Pilate asked Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And He answered him, “You have said so.” <sup>3</sup> And the chief priests accused Him of many things. <sup>4</sup> And Pilate again asked Him,

*“Have You no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against You.”<sup>5</sup> But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.*

*<sup>6</sup> Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. <sup>7</sup> And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. <sup>8</sup> And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. <sup>9</sup> And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” <sup>10</sup> For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had **delivered** him up. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. <sup>12</sup> And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” <sup>13</sup> And they cried out again, “Crucify Him.” <sup>14</sup> And Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him.” <sup>15</sup> So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he **delivered** Him to be crucified.*

*<sup>16</sup> And the soldiers **led Him away** inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. <sup>17</sup> And they clothed Him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on Him. <sup>18</sup> And they began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” <sup>19</sup> And they were striking His head with a reed and spitting on Him and kneeling down in homage to Him. <sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the purple cloak and put His own clothes on Him. And **they led Him out** to crucify Him.”*

***The Word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God  
Let’s pray ...***

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. We do not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from Your mouth and we especially need this Word for it deals with matters of the heart. It does not merely record history of an event that happened almost two thousand years ago. It does not merely record instructions on daily life. This passage speaks of matters of the heart that are a reality, a reality in our own lives and in our own temptations. And we know that Your Word searches out our hearts. It’s powerful, it’s effective, it’s sharper than any two-edged sword. It gets down deep into our soul and heart and being and is able to discern and divide things that we ourselves can’t sort out. It speaks words that we dare not ignore, so open our eyes and our hearts and our ears that we might hear Your word and believe it and respond to it in faith. Thank You that today we’re learning once again from John Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, **help us see Jesus**, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.*

**INTRODUCTION: “The Primacy of Peter”**

The Apostle Peter is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. The Gospels are full of Peter! **No disciple spoke** as much or as often as Peter did. Jesus spoke to him more than any other of His followers. **No disciple was rebuked** by Jesus as much or as strongly as Peter was, and he was the only disciple who thought it his duty to rebuke Jesus! **No disciple boldly confessed** and encouraged Christ more than Peter — and none ever bothered our Lord more than

Peter. Peter was always talking — and his overabundance of words ranged from the **ridiculous** ... to the awe-inspiring. Sometimes he just opened his mouth to change feet ... and at other times his words were eternal.

Christ spoke words of approval and blessing to Peter, the likes of which He never spoke to anyone else. But at the same time, and sometimes almost in the same breath, Jesus said harsher things to Peter than to any of the other twelve disciples, including Judas. All the Gospels testify to Peter's primacy. He was the first among equals. In each of the four lists of the apostles given in the Gospels the order of the names varies, but Peter's is always first and Judas' is always last.

Shortly after Peter's calling, when he observed the miracle of the great catch of fish, he made a very astute observation, **Luke 5:8**, "...when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* He was profoundly aware of his own sin and his own need.

In answer to Christ's question as to who He was, Peter's immortal response in **Matthew 16:16** was, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* And yet a few moments later when Christ spoke of the cross, **Matthew 16:22**, *"Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You."* Foot-in-mouth disease ... Peter suffered from it terribly!

And let's not forget that stormy night on the Sea of Galilee, it was Peter who bravely called out to Jesus, **Matthew 14:28**, *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to you on the water."* But then a few moments later, **Matthew 14:30**, *"when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."* It will always be to Peter's credit that when the others abandoned Jesus, and Jesus poignantly asked about the disciples in **John 6:67-68**, *"So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"* <sup>68</sup> *Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Later, in the Upper Room, John's account records Peter as saying, **John 13:8**, *"Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with Me."* Then, hearing Jesus' words, he loudly reversed himself, **John 13:9**, *"Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"*

When I think of Peter, I imagine a big, loud, talkative extrovert. He was a headstrong hulk who was always getting into trouble and causing Jesus plenty of trouble too. Sometimes we preachers use him as a whipping boy. It's great fun to portray Peter slipping below the waters of Galilee and crying out in fear ... but we forget that **none of us** ... have ever walked on water!

Peter's sheer humanity makes him **everyone's teacher**. As the old preacher Clarence Macartney so well explained, "His impulsive deeds, his frequent questions, his eager exclamations and confessions, the praise and honor and rebukes that were bestowed upon him, his sometimes manly and sometimes cowardly acts, his oaths, his bitter tears — all this makes Peter the great companion and the great instructor of his fellow men and his fellow Christians." And the night of his failure is, perhaps, the most instructive night of his life.

This is a familiar story. But remember ... in the crumbling atmosphere of the Upper Room, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples, one of the inner circle, His most confident, enthusiastic supporter, made an incredible **promise, Mark 14:29-31**, *"Peter said to Him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not."* <sup>30</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."* <sup>31</sup> *But he said emphatically, "If I*

*must die with You, I will not deny You.*” And in the parallel passage in **Luke 22:33**, he says, *“Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death.”* Peter – the rock of Gibraltar among the disciples. And yet this foremost disciple would succumb to deadly denial and infamous failure. The rock would crumble. He would be reduced to a small stone of a man.

**This is the story of ...**

**14:66-72: PETER’S DENIAL** <sup>1</sup>

It’s a famous story, but did you notice we have to gather and collate it? We have to collect the verses to put the whole narrative together. Mark has deliberately intertwined two stories (the story of Peter’s denial ... and the story of Jesus’ trial) because he wants us to contrast and compare and see the parallels between these two stories. Peter is on trial just like Jesus. Peter is being questioned just like Jesus. And Peter is forced to give a response, just like Jesus. However, while Jesus is well aware that He’s on trial, Peter doesn’t realize it until it’s too late. Starting at **verse 66**, *“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 also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”<sup>68</sup> But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.<sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.”<sup>70</sup> But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”<sup>71</sup> But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.”*

<sup>72</sup> *And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he broke down and wept.”*

The hour is late; the night is dark, cold, and damp. Peter has followed Jesus all the way to the temple courtyard where the Savior, under heavy guard, awaits His hearing. Peter comes because Jesus is His Lord, because Jesus would have come for him. He comes to help, not knowing what to do, or how, or when.

*“Do I fight?” “Do I yell?” “Do I preach?” “Do I just watch and listen?”*

He’s not sure, so he comes to a campfire, to sort things out, to think, to plan his next move. And in the damp, dreary chill of a long night, Peter sat down amidst the enemy. Luke says that he sat down among the guards. He was, literally, in the enemy camp. He was overwhelmed by a cold, dark, listless depression. Peter was in dangerous company.

One of the servant girls of the high priest’s household had been studying him. And by the light of the flames, Satan will do his work. Perhaps the fire blazed up, revealing him more clearly, **Luke 22:56-57**, *“Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.”<sup>57</sup> But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.”* Peter feels the heat and so he denied Jesus. Peter’s words are a lie, a bald-faced denial. By this time most of the disciples had already run off and abandoned Jesus. Peter had at least followed Him. But in a foggy instant he abandoned the battle. He gave the impression that

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**1** The Introduction and exposition of the text are adapted from my sermon, *“Jesus and Peter: A Typical Relationship”* preached here at Potomac Hills, 2/16/03. And the sermon, *“Witness”* by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 3/4/07, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*, Logos Bible Software 8.15. And the book, Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire, pages 337-342.

if he wasn't one of the enemy, he was, at best, just a bystander. The lie had thrown its first coil about him and it began to tighten.

Because it was cold, as Jesus' interrogation continued behind closed doors, those in the courtyard stayed close to the fire. The conversation ranged from one subject to another — the Passover crowds, yesterday's fight at the barracks, the new girl, this eccentric teacher from Galilee. They talk and nod and lay odds on His chances. Then comes another accusation, **verse 68**, "*And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." <sup>70</sup> But again he denied it.*" And another serpent's coil slid about Peter. In his first lie he had denied knowing Jesus; in the second he denied being one of His disciples.

This coiled deception rested comfortably on Peter, imperceptibly tightening, **verse 70**, "*And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak."*" It's the moment of truth. And in no uncertain terms, **Peter denies His relationship with Jesus**. And somewhere in the night, a rooster stretches out its neck, shakes its feathers, and crows an indictment.

Now, let me say something **really discouraging**.

Here's what I think Mark is trying to show us. Mark wants us to see that, you know what, you don't have to be in a courtroom to be on trial. **Ordinary life** is a trial in and of itself. Just out there in the courtyard at the fire, it wasn't just Peter, but you and me. Will you speak up for the truth no matter what the cost? Will you speak up if you know Jesus? Will you identify with Jesus publicly? What Mark is trying to say is it's in **ordinary life** that your integrity, your ability to be a faithful witness for Christ is on trial, and he's trying to show us that, look ... **None of us** is actually going to succeed; **no one will pass the test**. Because here's a man who tried so hard, harder than anyone else. Here's a man who had an accountability structure like **you'll never have, and he failed**. And it wrecked him.

In the heat of his denial, Peter was not prepared for the excruciating next moment — **verse 72**, "*And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he broke down and wept.*" At that moment, all of Peter's emotions collapse. He runs from the courtyard and the tears coursed down his face like rain down a rock. He probably stops somewhere and beats his fists against a stone wall. He pulls at his hair. He gnarls his face. The guilt is too much to bear. He collapses into a heap. And he cries and cries and cries until there are no more tears left to cry. No one will ever know the anguish that Peter went through during the next few hours or over the next few days! Something died inside Simon Peter that night.

You see, **the winnowing of Satan ... is over**. And Peter is a smaller man now without the thick husk of self-sufficiency and over-confidence that once surrounded his life. **He is broken ... and he is laid bare**. All that's left is a small kernel of faith. It's a tiny grain, but it's a grain Satan couldn't touch. Satan can winnow the chaff all he wants, **but the wheat belongs to Jesus**. And that's important to remember, because Jesus is ...

### **15:1-20: PETER'S DELIVERANCE**

<sup>1</sup> *And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate.* <sup>2</sup> *And Pilate asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "You*

have said so.”<sup>3</sup> And the chief priests accused Him of many things.<sup>4</sup> And Pilate again asked Him, “Have You no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against You.”<sup>5</sup> But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.”

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Let’s go back to what Mark has been trying to say all along. Mark wants us to see the parallels. Peter’s questioned; Jesus is questioned. Peter’s on trial; Jesus is on trial. Peter’s being charged with something **which is true**: you are a disciple. Jesus is being charged with something (as we saw this last week) **which isn’t true**. He’s **not** trying to blow up the temple. He’s not a vandal. He’s not a terrorist. But Peter, though he’s being charged with something **true**, gets off. And Jesus, though He’s been charged with something **false**, is condemned.

Mark has done everything up to this point to show us that’s not just an ironic coincidence. You say, “Oh, Peter, who deserves to be condemned, gets off, and Jesus, who deserves to get off, is condemned. Isn’t that ironic?” No, it’s not just ironic. Because in the Lord’s Supper passage, **Mark 14:24**, “And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is **poured out for many**.” In the parallel passage in Luke, we read, **Luke 22:20**, “And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is **poured out for you** is the new covenant in My blood.” What Jesus is saying and what Mark is saying is this isn’t just an ironic coincidence. Peter, who deserved to be condemned, gets off because Jesus, who deserved to get off, was condemned **in his place**. Jesus is not just suffering **unjustly**, though He is; He’s suffering **substitutionally**. It’s not just, “Peter goes free and Jesus gets condemned. Isn’t that awful!” Rather, Peter goes free **because** Jesus is condemned. He was our Witness in court. He was our Representative in court. He stood in our place in court and He took the punishment we deserved; Jesus was crushed for our transgressions.

Luke tells us even more than Mark. Luke tells us is that Peter says, “Oh, I’m never going to fail You,” and Jesus says, “Yes, you are,” and Peter says, “No, I’m not.” Then Jesus adds something, and it sounds strange, because we don’t fully understand it when He says it, but we can understand it now. Of course, the reason Peter had not been sifted into oblivion, the reason he repented and was restored, was Christ’s prayer for him, **Luke 22:31-32**, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,<sup>32</sup> but **I have prayed for**

*you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*” The message was clear: though through his denial Peter was a great sinner, he would be granted repentance. And repent he would. Not only that, Jesus had said that when Peter turned back, he was to *“strengthen your brothers.”* He would have a ministry — a strengthening ministry. This great sinner would become a pillar of the church.

**What? Why? How?** Now first of all, Jesus is giving you a foreshadow of what He’s going to say on the beach in **John 21**. He’s telling Peter, “You’re going to turn back. But you’re going to get through this ... and when you do, you’re going to strengthen your brothers. Because you’re the biggest failure, you’re going to be the biggest leader. Because you’re the biggest screw-up, you’re going to preach the greatest gospel.” Why? Well, here’s the answer, *“I have prayed for you.”* **Past Tense.**

Here’s another way in which Jesus represents us. Listen to this, **1 John 1:9; 2:1-2**, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ...<sup>1</sup> But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.<sup>2</sup> He is the **propitiation** for our sins...”* Why does it matter that Jesus prays for us? Because He is your **Advocate**, standing before the Father representing you and He is the atoning sacrifice, *the propitiation for our sins.*

The Apostle Paul says in **Romans 8:33-34**, *“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.<sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.**”* He’s praying for us. **Present Tense.**

**Now, here’s the gospel according to Romans 8 and 1 John 1 and 2 ...**

When you receive Christ as your Savior, you don’t have to represent yourself anymore. Jesus Christ stands as your Representative, as it were, before that heavenly court. In some way, Jesus Christ is seen, not you; **He** is your Representative. Hebrews says He’s our great High Priest and John says He’s our Advocate. He’s like our defense attorney. He stands in the court on our behalf. We don’t have to appear; He speaks for us and therefore ... **we’re safe.**

But many of us, perhaps most of us, don’t really understand how this works. We think something like this was happening up there. Jesus was coming before the Father and He says, “Father, it’s about Frank Wang. He did it again. Yesterday he promised he’d never, ever do it again, and he did it again.”

The Father says, “Well, what should we do about that?” And Jesus says, “Would you please just give Frank one more chance?” That’s what I thought was happening. “Please give him one more chance. Be merciful to him just for me?”

And I thought the Father was saying, *“Well, all right,”* because I figured Jesus was up there as Frank’s Advocate and what He was doing was begging for mercy. In other words, He was like a defense attorney who has no case. When you have a client like Frank, and you’re defending Him, and you have no case at all, all you can do is play on the emotions. All you can do is spin. All you can do is manipulate and hope that somehow, you’re going to get some sympathy. You haven’t got a case and I thought He was coming before the Father saying, “Please give Frank mercy one more time.”

Then I read David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of the great preachers of the last century, and Lloyd-Jones said something like this, “Would you please notice Jesus Christ is not before the

Father asking for mercy, because it says if we confess our sins when Jesus is our Advocate, God is faithful **AND JUST** to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.”

It doesn't say He's faithful **and merciful**. It doesn't say He's going to forgive us because **He's merciful**. He's going to forgive us **because He's just**. Jesus the Advocate is not asking for **mercy**; He's asking for **justice**.

What He's saying is, “Father, it's about Frank Wang ... again, but I'm not asking for mercy for what he's done. You see that sin? **I've paid for it**. I paid for it **fully**. There is My blood. And Father, it would be **unjust** for You to get two payments for the same sin and therefore, Frank must never fall out of Your family. Frank must never fall out of Your love. Frank must never fall out of Your arms. Father, I am not here asking for mercy for Frank, **I'm asking for justice.**”

**THAT is an infallible case for Frank** ...and for me ... and for you. I realized Jesus wasn't just asking for mercy, for me or for you or for Frank, to have one more chance, but He was clothing me and you and Frank with His **righteousness** because in the earthly court, He had already been crushed by God's **justice** is on our side, and not just His mercy.

Peter was prayed for (**Luke 22**) and Peter was **delivered (John 21)** and Peter went on to strengthen the church. Peter was moved from **denial to deliverance** and so can you. You see, we have been prayed for (**Romans 8**) **and we are delivered (1 John 2)** and so now, **we go on to strengthen the church**.

The book of Mark, the entire gospel of Mark, is the eyewitness testimony of Peter. After this was all over, Peter was healed so completely he became the **leading** eyewitness, the **leading** apostle, the one who for decades publicly and faithfully testified to what Jesus Christ said and did, to what Jesus Christ had done **for him**, and to what Jesus Christ had done **for us**. This passage is a testimony to the power of the gospel of God's grace as it's found in Jesus Christ. This is testimony to the fact that Peter **was changed** ... and its testimony to the fact **that you have been changed**. Think about that. Thank God for that. You need to pray. Take a moment to do that, and ask God to ***let us hold true to what we have attained***, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Thank You that You have given us a King, Your Son, our Savior. Father, forgive us, for, like Peter, we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. We imagine that we have the strength to be faithful through any trial. And yet we have failed time and time again. We deny the gospel by our thoughts, words, and actions. We need to be delivered from our denials. We need a Savior. Thank You that Your Son faced the agony of death on a cross as our substitute. There was no other way. Your will was done in the salvation of sinners. It is a story of amazing grace and we thank You for it. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in His grace towards someone just like us. Give us, we pray, the faith to trust Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*



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### **Philippians 3:12-16**

*“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **Only let us hold true to what we have attained.**”*