

Denied

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Date: 09 April 2006

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[0 : 0 0] Dear friends and brethren, my intention is to inform you all about what exactly happened to me and my church on Sunday, January the 8th, 2006.

Five young men came in and introduced themselves and added that they were newly converted Christians. They were expressing their desire to learn more about Jesus Christ and Christianity and they requested us, the church leaders, some private teaching and conversation at the conclusion of the church service.

When everyone had left, they started to whisper amongst themselves about a package they'd left in the church building. When I heard that, I asked them to come back and take the package but they refused and they said, it's a surprise gift from Al-Qaeda and soon you'll discover what it is.

Then they quickly moved away. After I heard the things they said, I thought they might have placed a bomb in the church building and I closed the church doors and left the building. I was trying to call the police but these five young men returned suddenly and started to beat me.

They asked me to deny Jesus and become a Muslim. Thanks to God and by his grace, my response was, Jesus is God.

[1 : 1 8] And they beat me even more. The more they beat me and asked me to deny Jesus, the more I shouted out, Jesus is God. The more I shouted, the more they beat me until I was unconscious.

After a while, I didn't even remember what happened and then I woke up and tried to run away but they caught me again. They were continuously beating me while I was lying in blood. Suddenly, one of them put a big knife in my belly and asked me again to deny Jesus and become a Muslim.

He said that if I do not deny Jesus and accept Islam as my religion, he was going to cut me into pieces. Only by the grace of God, I did not do what he said.

He was ready to slaughter me and he asked me again to deny Jesus. I thought that I was going to be killed at that very moment. I began to think that my journey on this earth was coming to an end. I started blacking out and the next thing I remember, someone was trying to wake me up.

When I woke up, they were gone. I could hardly stand up and started to run for the closest police station. The police helped me a lot and they took me to a hospital and made sure that I was secure.

[2 : 3 2] Now more than a week has passed since this incident and I'm still recovering. I was beaten just because I believe in Jesus.

Today, I'm praising God. I'm praising God not because he saved me from death, but I'm praising God because I have been beaten and almost killed for the sake of my Lord and God, Jesus Christ.

I'm praising God because he helped me not to deny him in the shadow of death. Please keep praying for all the believers and the churches in Turkey.

Pray that the children of our God will be brave, wise and remain faithful. May our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, bless your life and ministry even more abundantly.

Your brother in Christ, Kamil Karuglo from the Adana Protestant Church in Turkey.
Friends, that's a report recently received from the Worldwide Christian Organisation Voice of the Martyrs.

[3 : 42] Christians under pressure, under pressure for their proclamation that Jesus is Lord, under pressure all around the world, but different times, applied in different ways, sometimes subtle, other times, well, simply in your face.

The pressure on Kamil was overt and the pressure on Peter was intense too. Peter is in the courtyard of the house of the high priest and I'd like you, if you've got your Bibles there, to turn with me to Mark 14 because you'll see in Mark 14 and verse 54 that's what Mark records.

The Peter is in the courtyard of the house of the high priest. Jesus has been taken to the house of the high priest after his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and so this scene from verse 54 all the way through to the end of the chapter, it alternates first of all with Peter, then the focus to Jesus and then back to Peter again.

Peter is warming himself besides the fire. Jesus is under fire from the religious authorities.

The plaintiffs of course were some of the religious leaders the jurors were the members of the Sanhedrin and the defendant Jesus.

[5 : 17] A defendant whom history will reveal in fact as the judge of all mankind. Well both Jesus and Peter are under intense pressure.

Jesus he initially remained silent and then in his dramatic utterance he remains firm. Look with me at verse 61 the high priest asked Jesus are you the Messiah the son of the blessed one?

Jesus said I am and you'll see the son of man seated at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven. What about Peter then?

Well Peter he crumbles under pressure. Peter now of course we need to realise that Peter's determination to be loyal to Jesus that's recorded in verses 29 and 31 his determination had in fact brought him further than any of the other disciples he had actually come to the courtyard but Peter is soon going to experience the truth of verse 38 the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak so we're meant as readers to see the striking contrast between Jesus and Peter if you were with us last week as we went through that scene in the garden of Gethsemane we would have clearly seen that contrast but now the contrast is even starker you see Jesus is going forward to the cross in full and total obedience and submission to the will of his heavenly father

Peter well Peter's full of bravado he expresses great confidence in himself but only to fail with bitter regret so while Jesus is appearing before these Jewish authorities and is being verbally and physically abused Peter's waiting out in the courtyard and so this scene of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and Peter out in the courtyard they're actually occurring simultaneously both men are under intense pressure two responses so different so what can each of us learn from this dramatic account look with me at the verses 67 to 71 because there we see the threefold challenges to Peter and Peter's denials and you'll notice that they increase in intensity the high priest had numerous servants and one of these servants a girl firstly asked Peter privately by the fire verse 67 you also were with

[8 : 22] Jesus the man from Nazareth and then the girl appeals to the bystanders and likely the bystanders included some who perhaps were there when Jesus was arrested and she appeals to the bystanders and she said this man this man is one of them and then the bystanders themselves challenge Peter look at verse 70 certainly you're one of them for you are a Galilean the challenges to Peter what about then the sequence of his denials well firstly Peter contradicts a single person's allegation and then he moves from the forecourt likely into a less well lit area away from the fire and the cock crows Peter should have heeded the warning but then secondly Peter makes a public denial and then thirdly he swears an oath look at verse 71

Peter began to curse and swore an oath I do not know this man you are talking about I mean earlier on back in chapter 8 it was Peter who had declared Jesus to be the Messiah and now he simply refers to Jesus as this man Peter's threefold denial matches his threefold failure to watch with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and maybe when we think about Peter it's useful to remember the parable of the soils in Mark 4 because Peter was a lot like the rocky shallow soil so we read these are the ones sown on rocky crown when they hear the word they immediately receive it with joy but they have no root and endure only for a while and then when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word what happens immediately they fall away Peter is accused of being with Jesus and under pressure what does

Peter do he chooses he chooses to go with the crowd I wonder how these words of Peter impact you I do not know this man you are talking about I mean do the words shock you here's Peter for three years he has lived and breathed every aspect of Jesus earthly ministry Peter given the immense privilege of being on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured you're sort of left thinking Peter how on earth could you do this I mean what's happened between your ears I mean this is just totally brainless how pathetically weak well I wonder as we read these words of Peter whether we think to ourselves there's no way I'd ever do that because similar thoughts to that in fact is what

Peter had expressed just literally hours before because he said look with me at verse 29 he says even though all become deserters I will not verse 31 even though I must die with you I will not deny you so friends is that our confidence and if it is our confidence then what is our confidence based on is it sort of based on well that's just what I'm going to do I'm strong I've got strong willpower or if it is our confidence is our confidence based on total dependence on God for him to sustain us by his grace see remember the testimony of Camille in Turkey he wrote I'm praising God why because God helped me not to deny him in the shadow of death I do not know this man you're talking about and the cock crowed twice and we're reminded up of

Jesus words of prediction the words spoken after the last supper on the mountain in verse 30 Jesus said to Peter truly I tell you this day this very night before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times and Peter broke down he broke down and he wept how ironic that Peter is reminded of Jesus words by a rooster I mean a rooster renowned for its foolish pride strutting around full of self confidence the rooster ends up being a colorful and a feathered metaphor for Peter Peter broke down and he wept I wonder whether Peter would have remembered Jesus words they were spoken to Peter and also to the other disciples straight after

[14 : 00] Peter had rejuven Jesus when he spoke of his death and resurrection and Jesus had told them in Mark 8 for those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it if we try and imagine that scene Peter's sense of shame must have just been so overwhelming Peter the rock had crumbled simply into a pile of sand but how different is Peter's response to that of Judas when Judas settled premeditated disloyalty Peter well certainly denial but his remorse indicates that he failed under pressure rather than some deliberate changing of his allegiance and the prospect for

Peter is one of forgiveness and rehabilitation this threefold denial of Peter matches his threefold failure to watch with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in fact before the garden of Gethsemane Peter three times had failed to understand Jesus announcement of his suffering and three times Peter did not heed Jesus appeal to watch to stay awake to pray and three times he denied Jesus there's much that each of us can learn from this sad scene of denial and I want to identify three aspects three applications that come out of this sad scene and the first one is over confidence you see Peter certainly did go to the high priest house I mean albeit at a distance in the background the other disciples didn't do that

Peter was confident in his own flesh he was confident in his own strength in his own bravado Peter of course had this characteristic of competing with the other disciples verse 29 even though all become desert as I won't how destructive competition is amongst God's children jockeying for position for position and influence seeking to outdo or to outsmart one another and when we think about it how totally alien that is from the life of Jesus the life of Jesus the Lord of the universe very God and certainly very man Peter was confident in his own flesh and that set him up for a fall as we reflect on that as Christians we should be confident of our relationship with

Jesus I mean the apostle John gives us those words of confidence he writes and this is the testimony God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son whoever has the son has life whoever does not have the son of God does not have life friends we should have confidence in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ but we are not to have confidence in our own strength in our own abilities human flesh is not to be relied on when it comes to spiritual battles and Paul gives the same warning to the Corinthian Christians and I suspect there was a few roosters strutting around in the church in Corinth he writes to them and he says so if you think you're standing watch out that you do not fall don't trust your flesh rather than trusting your flesh simply ask the

Lord to sustain you by his grace to empower you by his spirit just not at times of great climax and massive battles and challenges in your life but ask the Lord to sustain you to empower you every day in just the normal experiences of day to day life our confidence as Christians ought to be in direct proportion to our dependence on God our confidence as Christians ought to be in direct proportion to our dependence on God so firstly be aware of overconfidence and secondly be aware of spiritual lethargy you see Peter was really big on rhetoric but he was short on spiritual depth think about it Peter slept when Jesus needed him

[19:12] Peter was the one who fought when Jesus didn't want him to Peter was the one who denied Jesus when he needed to be the most strong now we need to be clear Peter was under extreme pressure his life was on the line and for us living in Australia we don't as yet face physical persecution in fact in the west we don't have to make those choices between Christ and imprisonment or execution Christians but friends our denials of Christ can be every bit as real as Peter's perhaps we just decide to remain silent so that we don't offend the crowd perhaps we choose sometimes not to be identified as Christians and we sort of think to ourselves well don't rock the boat or

I mean let's not be too enthusiastic about our faith it's okay for these enthusiasts over here but let's not be too enthusiastic friends we are not all called to be evangelists but every Christian is called to be promoters of the gospel to be ambassadors for Christ using the gifts with which we've been blessed Christ has gone to the cross he's born our sin he's born God's punishment for our sin what should be our response to that our response to that should be faithful obedience not faithful obedience in our own strength but faithful obedience in the strength that in fact God so graciously blesses us with gives us as we depend on him here Peter was certainly spiritually lethargic spiritually asleep and the

Holy spirit calls each one of us to stay spiritually awake and we do that we do it as we spend time in God's word we do it as we spend time in prayer we do it as we deal with sin in our life we do it in fact as we meet together and build one another up in the body of Christ be aware of confidence in the flesh be aware of spiritual lethargy of being spiritually asleep and thirdly Peter stumbled also because he was frightened frightened as to what the crowd and the Jewish authorities might do to him if indeed he confessed Jesus as his Lord and as the years went by Peter had lots and lots of time to reflect on this sad episode in his life so hear these words of a repentant sinner who's been restored by

God's graces Peter writes in fact to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor modern day Turkey and he's writing to them these people facing lots of difficulties lots of tests lots of trials and he writes this to them beloved do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed what transformation in the life of Peter fearing men and women in this world is not the way for us to live as Christians be aware of overconfidence of putting our confidence in the flesh of being spiritually asleep and being frightened by the world in which we live the denials of

Peter they certainly are a sad chapter aren't they in Peter's life and yet there's so much that we can learn from them in fact we can take solace from the account because Peter like me like you was a sinner in need of God's mercy Peter's remorse he broke down and he wept that marked the beginning of his restoration what a gracious God that we worship and serve it's interesting that from the earliest time just after the time of the apostles church teaching has recognised that Mark's gospel reflects information provided to him by the apostle Peter if you reflect on that what humility of heart that Peter should have recorded so many of his weaknesses because time and time again we see

[24 : 31] Peter putting his confidence in his flesh in himself and not in the Lord Jesus what wisdom of God that the Holy Spirit should have superintended the writing of all of scripture so that it is indeed God's very word to us and yet miracle of miracles it retains the intensity of human personality and human experience friends may each one of us this morning respond to the Holy Spirit respond to the Holy Spirit as he actually applies the lessons of Peter into each of our lives be aware of putting our confidence in ourselves of fleshly confidence of being spiritually lethargic and simply being frightened by frightened by what people might say or do to us the one who's to be our model is the

Lord Jesus the one who steadfastly followed the will of his heavenly father he followed the will of his heavenly father even to death on a cross and that's what we're going to look at on Good Friday morning father we thank you for your word we thank you that the Holy Spirit has superintended every word of scripture we thank you that it is your very word and Lord in this extraordinary miracle your word reflects the experiences the personalities the characteristics of the human authors Lord we thank you for these hard and penetrating lessons that come out of the sad denials of Peter Lord there are going to be different challenges in each of our lives different amongst each member of the congregation different from time to time

Lord by your spirit may we respond to your spirit and never put our confidence in our flesh in ourselves to be spiritually awake and not spiritually lethargic and Lord not to be frightened by a world that is so hostile to the proclamation that Jesus is Lord Lord we pray that we would just on a daily basis on a moment by moment basis turn to you independence with great confidence that in your infinite grace that you will sustain us so father we ask this for the glory and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ amen amen