

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 57

Luke 22

INTRODUCTION: Peter was probably the best Christian who lived in his day. In every list of the apostles, he was always the first mentioned. Matthew 10:2, “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.” Peter was privileged to preach the great sermon on Pentecost. He took the Gospel to the house of Cornelius. It was Peter who made the great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Matthew 16:16b. Jesus gave Peter special honor when He gave unto him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. Peter was chosen to go to the Mount of Transfiguration with our Lord; yet Peter fell into sin. For the lesson today, we will notice his steps into sin so that we might avoid these steps in our own lives.

- I. A GREAT SORROW HAD COME INTO PETER’S LIFE. Matthew 16:22, 23, “Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Peter could not quite understand why Jesus had to be crucified. Since he was so close to Him, it was an extra sorrow for Peter to have to see Jesus die. Oftentimes people backslide or begin to do so because of tragedy, sorrow and heartbreak. In such times, we must be extra careful not to blame God, not to get away from God and not to use the tragedy or sorrow as a stumbling block but rather as a stepping-stone for growth in grace.
- II. PETER WAS OVERCONFIDENT. Matthew 26:33, 35, “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.” Here is one of the most oft repeated steps of the initiating of backsliding. We become self-confident. The Apostle Paul said that he buffeted his body daily lest he become a castaway. We are reminded in the Scriptures that we should never become confident in ourselves. We should never say, “It couldn’t happen to me!” Every Christian must watch himself constantly.
- III. THERE WAS A LACK OF PRAYER IN PETER’S LIFE. Matthew 26:40, 41, “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Jesus especially singled out Peter here. He realized that Peter’s backsliding would originate when he left the prayer altar. (It would be wise for us to discuss for a while the importance of having a place every day where we meet God and of having a time every day when we meet God. Teacher, help each of the pupils set such a time and place.)
- IV. PETER FOLLOWED AFAR OFF. Luke 22:54, “Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off.” Ah, here is a tragic thing! Peter should have been right in front. He should not have been sitting on the back row, but on the front row. He should have followed as close to Jesus as possible. Here is one of the great secrets of the Christian life. We need to stay close to the fire where it is hot. We need to have a box seat to the game, a ringside seat to the fight. We need to get as close to the Saviour and to the action as we can. Here is one of the best preventatives for backsliding, but Peter decided not to stay close but to follow afar off. Hence, he continues his downfall.
- V. PETER SAT DOWN WITH THE WRONG CROWD. Luke 22:55, “And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.” Check your Bible from cover to cover, and you will find that every backslider in the Bible got in the wrong crowd. Here is Peter following afar off. Now he sits down with the wrong people. Bad company ruined him. Bad company ruined Saul. Bad company ruined Solomon. Bad company ruined Balaam. Bad company ruined Jehoshaphat, and bad company will ruin you and me. (Teacher, once again stress the importance of running with the right crowd, going with the right boys and girls, going to the right kind of church, going to the right kind of school, etc.)

- VI. PETER WARMED HIMSELF BY THE DEVIL'S FIRE. Notice the words in Luke 22:56, "...as he sat by the fire...." We should get our warmth, inspiration, thrills and excitement from the Lord Jesus and from His people, not from the Devil's fire. Peter thought he was warming by the Devil's fire, but he was actually getting burned by the Devil's fire! When we think we are being warmed by Satan, we are actually getting burned. A Christian doesn't have to watch a worldly program on television, listen to bad music, drink alcoholic beverages, take dope or smoke cigarettes to get his warmth and thrills. He can get all of his thrills from Jesus!
- VII. PETER DENIED THE SAVIOUR. Luke 22:57, "And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not." What a tragedy for anyone not to be willing to admit that Jesus is his Saviour, in the light of the fact that Jesus was made a public spectacle for us on the cross!
- VIII. PETER DENIED THE FELLOWSHIP. Luke 22:58, "And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not." Notice especially the words, "Thou art also of them." First Peter denied that he was with Jesus. Then he denied that he was with Jesus' crowd. Don't you see how that first he denied the Saviour, and then he denied the Saviour's people? We could, without stretching the point, apply this to the church. Jesus wants us to be proud of the church. He wants us to be glad to tell people about the crowd with whom we run. Sure, the right kind of church will be slandered and hated, but we are not to deny our church, those dear ones with whom we fellowship.
- IX. PETER DENIED THAT HE WAS A CHRISTIAN. Luke 22:60, "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." Peter never thought that his self-confidence and lack of prayer would lead to these horrible sins, but lead to them they did. In fact, Peter even cursed as he talked to those to whom he denied our Lord.

CONCLUSION: Let every one of us be reminded of the importance of depending on the Lord all the time, of meeting the Lord faithfully in prayer, of staying with the right crowd, of being inspired by the right things, of staying close to Jesus, and of doing the other things that will keep us from backsliding!