

Chapter 81

I know not the Man

Matthew 26 vv 69-75

Mark 14 vv 66-72

Luke 22 vv 54-62

John 18 vv 15-18

John 18 vv 25-27

"I don't know what you are talking about. What do you mean? I, a follower of Jesus, the Galilean? ... What makes you think that? I don't know the Man!"

Without blinking or blushing Peter declares that he has absolutely no knowledge of Jesus. Jesus the Galilean is a stranger, unknown to him.

"No, you are mistaken," he continues. "I have nothing to do with Jesus. You are mistaking me for someone else."

For a moment it has become quiet. Everyone is listening to this argument between Peter and ... a maidservant, but when Peter so firmly declares that he definitely does not know Jesus, then for a moment they believe him.

But ... but does Peter say that? does Peter dare to say in public that Jesus is a stranger to him? ...

Yes, boys and girls, he dares to do that. With all his power he tries to convince the people around him that he does not belong to Jesus. He is openly lying.

But how does that come about? How can he do such a thing? ... Surely he was going to defend Jesus, though it should cost him his life? ...

Yes, that is a sad story, a fearful story, the same Peter, who a few hours before had declared

so forcefully that he would never forsake Jesus and who was prepared to go to death for his Master, is now denying Him!! How does that come about? What Peter would not believe only a few hours before, has already come to pass.

Just listen, and you will know how that came about.

When Jesus was taken bound and shackled from Gethsemane, all His disciples fled. They forsook their Master.

Before long, however, two of Jesus' followers stop in their tracks. They look round and see the band disappear in the distance. Hesitantly they retrace their footsteps. In all probability these two disciples are not together though, for in their fear and panic they had fled in all directions.

John, who is one of the two, resolves to follow Jesus. He walks behind the band of soldiers at a distance and when they step into the high priest's house, he also slips inside. This disciple was known to the high priest. How it was that John knew the high priest, we are not told.

The other disciple, who also follows, is ... Peter. He wants to see what will be done to his Master. Peter, however, does not dare to come too close, so he stays at a greater distance. In the Bible it says that he followed Jesus afar off. When

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at last he comes to the high priest's house, the door is already shut. Whether or not Peter knocked we are not told.

At any rate John notices that his fellow-disciple Peter is left outside. He goes to the door, has a word with the door-keeper, and by his request Peter is let inside. John stands by himself, for he doesn't want to miss a word of what is spoken between Jesus and the members of the Sanhedrin. Not a word must escape him, and he listens tensely.

Peter, who has perhaps come here for the first time in his life, does not know where to stand. He does not feel very much at ease. He does not want to be noticed. He must not draw attention to himself. Above all, they must not become aware that he is a disciple of Jesus, or they could perhaps take him prisoner too. Nervous and agitated he looks around.

Do you know what he is going to do? ... The servants of the Sanhedrin are standing there too. As it was rather cold in the middle of the night they had made a fire to warm themselves while they were waiting. Talking busily among themselves, probably ridiculing Jesus the despised Nazarite, they stand together around the warm fire.

Well then, Peter makes up his mind to go and stand with those servants, for then he runs less risk of being noticed. He will act just as though he is one of them. In this way he can still keep within sight of the Lord Jesus, and see what happens to Him. If only he had gone with John, because ...

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee," says a maidservant to him all of a sudden, and she looks at him insolently, with a look of mockery in her eyes.

Peter is deeply shocked. Conversation stops and they all look at him curiously and rather suspiciously. Peter senses this and he becomes confused. His brain works feverishly, "What must he do? ... Say openly: "Yes, that I was. I love my Master?"

If he answers thus, however, they will make fun of him, perhaps take him prisoner or ill-treat him. No, no, he dare not, he dare not. So Peter says coldly: "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest."

Outside echoes through the silent night the clear sound of a cockerel's crow. Peter hears it, but it makes no impression on him. Yet he does not feel at ease. He tries to get away from there unobtrusively, away from that dangerous spot. So, with as little fuss as possible he tries to make himself scarce, but his attempt is not successful.

Matthew tells us that another maid sees him and calls: "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Evidently she pointed to Peter with her finger.



"I know not the Man"

For the second time Peter is in a tight comer. He no longer knows what to do. But then, just now he had coolly denied that he knew Jesus. There is nothing for it but to do the same again. So for the second time these words fall from his

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lips: "I do not know the man!"

Yes, to make them believe him better, he adds an oath. He swears that Jesus is a stranger to him. How sad, isn't it? Through anxiety and fear, through unfounded shame, he commits this great sin.

Well now they seem to have believed him, for they disturb him no more. An hour passes by and Peter begins to hope that they will take no more notice of him. He seems to have returned to join the waiting servants again.

Then suddenly, just when he least expected it, one of the servants exclaims: "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee" and "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?"

He gives Peter a penetrating look. The servant evidently recognises in Peter the violent man who had slashed wildly with the sword, cutting off the right ear of Malchus.

Once more all look suspiciously towards Peter. They no longer trust him. They look at the stranger searchingly.

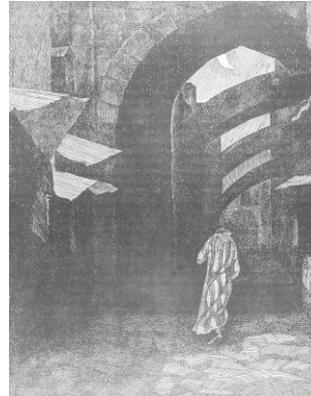
Peter stands rooted to the ground. Yet he must get himself out of this situation, or he is lost. And then ... oh, children, I hardly dare to relate it, then he began to curse and to swear saying: "I know not this man of whom you speak." They must, they shall believe him.

At the sound of these loud oaths and curses all have become silent. It is breathlessly quiet, and then - suddenly - loud and clear the cock's crow is heard for the second time.

Peter hears it and at once remembers what Jesus had said. He knows too that this is the second time the cock has crowed. He glances furtively at his Master who is still standing before the Sanhedrin. Will Jesus have heard it too? ... He

hopes not.

But ... Jesus turns and looks at Peter. The Lord Jesus then has heard it. Even his faithful disciple denies Him here, while He stands before



"And he went out, and wept bitterly"

the Sanhedrin as Surety and Saviour. Yet Peter reads in the eye of his Master love also. Oh that loving look penetrates to the depth of

his soul. He can no longer resist. The tears spring to his eyes. He is ashamed, and a sense of deep repentance overcomes him.

He hurries outside, and there in the faint glimmer of the advancing dawn he sobs out his grief and wretchedness. God's Word tells us: "He wept bitterly." Oh, all at once Peter feels the evil and fearful nature of his behaviour. Three times he has denied his beloved Master.

Yet ... yet ... he cannot do without Jesus. Outside of Jesus he cannot live, is it any wonder that he wept bitterly?

Like a broken man he staggers away sobbing. He is not worthy that his Master should ever look upon him again. It would be righteous if Jesus were to thrust him away for good. The grief over what has taken place rends his soul.

What a bad man Peter is, isn't he? ... No, you are nothing like so bad. You would never have done such a thing, would you? Jesus must be rid of such a lying disciple. The man cannot be trusted.

But ... if you ever sit in a train and you need to take a meal, well, then you should ask a

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blessing, that is what you are used to at home. Oh, how annoying. No-one does it. You really don't care to do so, you are ashamed to, and ... for this once you do not pray. No, you think, to omit it for once will not matter. So this time you eat your meal without saying grace, because well, what will your fellow passengers think? ... They will laugh at you and perhaps make fun of it. Yet, if you act like this, then you too are denying the Lord Jesus.

Again, when you are playing with your friends and hear one of them misuse God's holy Name and swear, then you should really warn him. You keep silent however, for you dare not tell him perhaps, that it should not be said. You are afraid that they will make fun of you. You fear their ridicule. You will not take the risk and ... you hold your peace. Yes, even worse, so as to look big you laugh about it. Yet that is also denying the Lord Jesus.

How often do such things happen? ... Is it not true at times?

Oh children, do not think that you are any better. That same evil lives in our hearts too. How often we shame our profession. And that is just as bad. It is the same sin.

The Lord Jesus is denied hundreds, yes thousands of times by children who know better, who attend church and Sunday School regularly Sunday after Sunday. An ill-founded sense of shame often prevents them from saying openly what they know to be right.

No, you are no better than Peter. Ask the Lord to make you faithful, though you may be mocked and laughed at.