

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PETER'S RESTORATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 22ND, 1888, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”—Luke xxii. 60—62.

PETER had terribly fallen. He had denied his Master, denied him repeatedly, denied him with oaths, denied him in his presence, while his Master was being smitten and falsely charged; denied him, though he was an apostle; denied him, though he had declared that should all men forsake him, yet would he never be offended. It was a sad, sad sin. Remember what led up to it. It was, first, Peter's presumption and self-confidence. He reckoned that he could never stumble, and for that very reason he speedily fell. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Oh, that we might look to the roots of bitter flowers, and destroy them! If presumption is flourishing in the soil of our hearts to-day, we shall soon see the evil fruit which will come of it. Reliance upon our firmness of character, depth of experience, clearness of insight, or matureness in grace, will, in the end, land us in disgraceful failure. We must either deny ourselves, or we shall deny our Lord; if we cleave to self-confidence, we shall not cleave to him.

Immediately, Peter's denial was owing to cowardice. The brave Peter in the presence of a maid was ashamed; he could not bear to be pointed out as a follower of the Galilean. He did not know what might follow upon it; but he saw his Lord without a friend, and felt that it was a lost cause, and he did not care to avow it. Only to think that Peter, under temporary discouragement, should play the coward! Yet cowardice treads upon the heels of boasting: he that thinks he can fight the world will be the first man to run away.

His sin also arose from his want of watchfulness. His Master had said to him, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” and no doubt there was more meaning in the words than appeared on the surface. The Lord several times said to him, “Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” The words were repeated with deep impressiveness, for they were greatly needed. But Peter had not watched: he had been warming his hands. He did not pray: he felt too strong in himself to be driven to special prayer. Therefore, when the gusts

of temptation came, they found Peter's boat unprepared for the storm, and they drove it upon a rock.

When Peter first denied his Master a cock crew. Peter must have heard that crowing, or he would not have communicated the fact to the evangelists who recorded it. But though he heard it, he was an example of those who have ears, but hear not. One would have thought that the warning would have touched his conscience; but it did not; and when the cock crowed a second time, after he had committed three denials, it might not have awakened him from his dreadful sleep if a higher instrumentality had not been used, namely, a look from the Lord Jesus.

God keep us free from this spirit of slumber, for it is to the last degree dangerous! Peter was under the direful influence of Satan, for it was a night wherein the powers of darkness were specially active. "This is your hour," said Jesus, "and the power of darkness." That same influence which assailed the Saviour unsuccessfully—for, said he, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"—assailed Peter with sad result; for the evil one had something in Peter, and he soon found it out. The sparks from Satan's flint and steel fell upon our Lord as upon water; but Peter's heart was like a tinder-box; and when the sparks fell, they found fuel there. Oh, that we may be kept from the assaults of Satan! "Lead us not into temptation" is a necessary prayer; but the next petition is specially noteworthy—"but deliver us from the evil one." A man never gets anything out of the devil, even if he conquers him. You will find in combat with him that, even if you win the victory, you come off with gashes and wounds of which you will carry the scars to your grave. "All the while," says Mr. Bunyan, while Christian was fighting with Apollyon, "I did note that he did not so much as give one smile." Oh no! there is nothing to smile about when the arch-enemy is upon us. He is such a master of the cruel art of soul-wounding, that every stroke tells. He knows our weak places in the present, he brings to remembrance our errors in the past, and he paints in blackest colours the miseries of the future, and so seeks to destroy our faith. All his darts are fiery ones. It takes all a man's strength, and a great deal more, to ward off his cunning and cruel cuts. The worst of it is that, as in Peter's case, he casts a spell over men, so that they do not fight at all, but yield themselves an easy prey. Our Saviour said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Peter was as much under the power of Satan as corn is in the hand of the man who winnows it. He went up and down in that sieve like a helpless thing, and so passed from simple falsehood to plain denials of his Master with oaths and cursings.

I desire in this discourse to speak chiefly of Peter's restoration. Peter was down; but he was soon up again. One writer says the story should rather be called Peter's restoration than Peter's fall. His fall was soon over: he was like a little child learning to walk, scarcely down before his mother has him up again. It was not a continuance in a sin, like that of David, who remained for months without repentance; but it was the quick speech of a man carried

away by sudden temptation, and it was followed by a speedy repentance. Upon his restoration we are going to meditate.

It was brought about by two outward means. I like to think of the singular combination: the crowing of the cock, and a look from the Lord. When I come to preach to you, it almost makes me smile to think that God should save a soul through me. I may find a fit image of myself in the poor cock. Mine is poor crowing. But as the Master's look went with the cock's crowing, so, I trust, it will go with my feeble preaching. The next time you also go out to try and win a soul for Jesus, say to yourself, "I cannot do it: I cannot melt a hard, rebellious heart; but yet the Lord may use me; and if there come a happy conjunction of my feeble words with my Lord's potent look, then the heart will dissolve in streams of repentance." Crow away, poor bird: if Jesus looks whilst thou art crowing, thou wilt not crow in vain, but Peter's heart will break. The two things are joined together, and let no man put them asunder—the commonplace instrumentality and the divine Worker. Christ has all the glory, and all the more glory because he works by humble means. I trust that there will be this morning a conjunction of the weakness of the preacher with the strength of the Holy Spirit; so that stony hearts may be broken and God glorified.

This morning, first, *let us look at the Lord who looked*; and secondly, *let us look into the look which the Lord looked*; and then, thirdly, *let us look at Peter, upon whom the Lord looked*. We will be all the while looking: may our Lord look upon us. May his Holy Spirit work with his holy word!

I. FIRST, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD, WHO LOOKED UPON PETER.

Can you picture him up there in the hall, up yonder steps, before the high priest and the council? Peter is down below in the area of the house warming his hands at the fire. Can you see the Lord Jesus turning round and fixing his eyes intently upon his erring disciple? What see you in that look?

I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim: *What thoughtful love!* Jesus is bound, he is accused, he has just been smitten on the face, but his thought is of wandering Peter. You want all your wits about you when you are before cruel judges, and are called upon to answer false charges; you are the more tried when there is no man to stand by you, or bear witness on your behalf: it is natural, at such an hour, that all your thoughts should be engaged with your own cares and sorrows. It would have been no reproach had the thoughts of our Lord been concentrated on his personal sufferings; and all the less so because these were for the sake of others. But our blessed Master is thinking of Peter, and his heart is going out towards his unworthy disciple. That same influence which made his heart drive out its store of blood through every pore of his body in the bloody sweat now acted upon his soul, and drove his thoughts outward towards that member of his mystical body which was most in danger. Peter was thought of when the Redeemer was standing to be mocked and reviled. Blessed be his dear name, Jesus always has an eye for his people, whether he be in his shame or in his glory. Jesus always has an eye for those for whom he shed his blood. Though now he reigns

in glory, he still looks steadily upon his own: his delight is in them, and his care is over them. There was not a particle of selfishness about our Saviour. "He saved others; himself he could not save." He looked to others, but he never looked to himself. I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love.

I exclaim, next, *What a boundless condescension!* If our Lord's eye had wandered that day upon "that other disciple" that was known to the high priest, or if he had even looked upon some of the servants of the house, we should not have been so astonished; but when Jesus turns, it is to look upon Peter, the man from whom we should naturally have turned away our faces, after his wretched conduct. He had acted most shamefully and cruelly, and yet the Master's eye sought him out in boundless pity! If there is a man here who feels himself to be near akin to the devil, I pray the Lord to look first at him. If you feel as if you had sinned yourself out of the pale of humanity by having cast off all good things, and by having denied the Lord that bought you, yet still consider the amazing mercy of the Lord. If you are one of his, his pitying eye will find you out; for even now it follows you as it did Hagar, when she cried, "Thou God seest me." But oh, the compassion of that look! When first I understood that the Lord looked on me with love in the midst of my sin, it did seem so wonderful! He whom the heavens adore, before whose sight the whole universe is stretched out as on a map, yet passes by all the glories of heaven that he may fix his tender gaze upon a wandering sheep, and may in great mercy bring it back again to the fold. For the Lord of glory to look upon a disciple who denies him is boundless condescension!

But then, again, *what tender wisdom do I see here!* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do: he did not speak to him, but looked upon him. He had spoken to Peter before, and that voice had called him to be a fisher of men; he had given Peter his hand before, and saved him from a watery grave when he was beginning to sink. But this time he gives him neither his voice nor his hand, but that which was equally effectual, and intensely suitable, he lent him his eye: "The Lord looked upon Peter." How wisely doth Christ always choose the way of expressing his affection, and working our good! If he had spoken to Peter then, the mob would have assailed him, or at least the ribald crowd would have remarked upon the sorrow of the Master and the treachery of the disciple: our gracious Lord will never needlessly expose the faults of his chosen. Possibly no words could have expressed all that was thrown into that look of compassion. Why, brethren, a volume as big as a Bible is contained within that look of Jesus. I defy all the tongues and all the pens in the world to tell us all that our divine Lord meant by that look. Our Saviour employed the most prudent, the most comprehensive, the most useful method of speaking to the heart of his erring follower. He looked volumes into him. His glance was a divine hieroglyphic full of unutterable meanings, which it conveyed in a more clear and vivid way than words could have done.

As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out: *What divine power is here!* Why, dear friends, this look worked wonders.

I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter, and, alas! he likes my sermon and forgets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading, and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife, and one would have thought it would have touched him, and it did, with some natural feeling; yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken, but continued in his backsliding. See, then, how our Lord can do with a look what we cannot do with a sermon, what the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages, and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. The Lord looked, and Peter wept bitterly. I cannot help thinking with Isaac Williams that there is a majestic simplicity in the expressions here used—"The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The passage reminds us of that first of Genesis: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." As the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians, and troubled the Egyptians, so did he now look into Peter's heart, and his thoughts troubled him. Oh, the power of the Lord Christ! If there was this power about him when he was bound before his accusers, what is his power now that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them? In that look there was divinity. The Son of God looked upon Peter: the text does not use the name Jesus, but it expressly says, "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." That divine look did the deed.

Let me beg you to note *what sacred teaching is here*. The teaching is of practical value, and should be at once carried out by the followers of Jesus. You, dear friend, are a Christian man or a Christian woman; you have been kept, by divine grace, from anything like disgraceful sin. Thank God it is so. I dare say, if you look within, you will find much to be ashamed of; but yet you have been kept from presumptuous and open sins. Alas! one who was once a friend of yours has disgraced himself: he was a little while ago a member of the church, but he has shamefully turned aside. You cannot excuse his sin; on the contrary, you are forced to feel great indignation against his folly, his untruthfulness, his wickedness. He has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and has done awful mischief to the cause of righteousness. Now I know what will be suggested to you. You will be inclined to cut his acquaintance, to disown him altogether, and scarcely to look at him if you meet him in the street. This is the manner of men, but not the manner of Jesus. I charge you, act not in so un-Christlike a manner. The Lord turned, and looked on Peter; will not his servants look on him? You are not perfect like your Lord; you are only a poor sinful creature like your fallen brother. What! are you too proud to look at the fallen one? Will you not give him a helping hand? Will you not try to bring him back? The worst thing you can do with a backslider is to let him keep on sliding back. Your duty should be your pleasure, and your duty is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted." O brothers and sisters, it is a very little thing that has kept some of us from turning aside unto folly. One grain more and the scale would have turned in favour of a great fall. Our steps have

well-nigh slipped. When we are proud of our sure standing, the Lord may well be angry with us for our vanity, and he may justly say, "How can I endure this pride? I have taken great care of this man, and watched over him to keep him out of sin, and now he takes the credit of it all, and plays the great man, and fancies that he will be defiled if he associates with my poor wandering children." Which, think you, is worse in God's sight, the sudden fall into sin, or the long-continued pride, which boasts itself in the presence of the Lord, and looks contemptuously upon erring ones? It is not my office to become a measurer of sins; but I would earnestly enforce this plain duty: since our own Lord and Master looked on backsliding Peter, let us seek out our wandering brethren.

One more lesson: observe *what heavenly comfort is here*: "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter"; yes, Jesus looks upon sinners still. The doctrine of God's omniscience is far oftener set forth in a hard way than in a cheering way. Have you never heard a sermon from "Thou God seest me," of which the pith was—Therefore tremble, and be afraid? That is hardly fair to the text; for when Hagar cried, "Thou God seest me," it was because the Lord had interposed to help her, when she had fled from her mistress. It was comfort to her that there she also had looked after him that had looked upon her. There is a dark side to "Thou God seest me"; but it is not half so dark as it would be if God did not see us. It is true, O sinner, that God has seen your sin, and all the aggravations of it; but it is also true that as he sees your ruin, your misery, your sadness, he has compassion on you. He sees your sin that he may remove it, and make you clean in his sight. As the Lord looked upon Peter, so he looks upon you. He has not turned his back on you; he has not averted the gaze of his pity. He sees to the bottom of your heart, and reads all your thoughts. You have not to go about to find out God—he is looking upon you. "He is not far from every one of us"; he is within eyesight. You are to look to him; and if you do, your eyes will meet his eyes, for already he looks upon you.

I think we have gathered much from this brief look at the Lord who looked upon Peter. I doubt not that, had we more time and more insight, we should see greater things than these.

II. Now let us go on to the second point, and see whether we cannot gather still more instruction. **LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER.** Help us again, most gracious Spirit!

That look was, first of all, *a marvellous refreshment to Peter's memory.* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What a sight it must have been for Peter! Our dear Master's face was that night all red from the bloody sweat. He must have appeared emaciated in body; his eyes weary with want of sleep, and his whole countenance the vision of grief. If ever a picture of the Man of Sorrows could have been drawn, it should have been taken at that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. By torchlight and the flickering flame of the fire in the court of the hall of Caiaphas Peter saw a vision which would never fade from his mind. He saw the man whom he loved as he had never seen him before. This was he who

called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men; this was he who bade him spread the net, and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, insomuch that the boat began to sink, and he cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; this was he who had made him walk on the water, and at other times had rebuked the winds, and raised the dead. This was he with whom Peter had been upon the mount of transfiguration! Truly there was a wonderful change from the glistening whiteness of the mount to the ghastliness of that sad hour! Though the lineaments of that reverend face were distained with blood, yet Peter could tell that it was the selfsame Lord with whom he had enjoyed three years of intimate intercourse and tender unveiling. All this must in a moment have flashed upon poor Peter's mind; and I do not wonder that in the recollection of it all he went out and wept bitterly. He did love his Lord; his denial was not of the heart, but of the tongue; and, therefore, as all the grounds of his faith came before his mind anew, his heart was broken into a thousand pieces with grief that he should have been false to such a friend. Yes, that look awoke a thousand slumbering memories, and all these called upon the sincere heart of Peter to repent of its ungenerous weakness.

Next, that turning of the Master was a *special reminder of his warning words*. Jesus did not say it in words, but he did more than say it by his look. "Ah, Peter! did not I tell you it would be so? You said, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Did I not tell thee that before cock-crowing thou wouldst deny me thrice?" No rebuke was uttered; and yet the tender eye of the Lord had revealed to Peter his own extreme folly, and his Master's superior wisdom. Now he saw his own character, and perceived his Lord's discernment. It was a prophecy, and, like all other prophecies, it was understood after it was fulfilled. We read that "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." It is clear, then, that our Lord's look was a special reminder of his former words: it stirred up Peter's mind by way of remembrance, and made him see how foolish he had been, and how inexcusable was his fault.

Surely it was, also, a *moving appeal to Peter's heart*. I bade you notice just now, in the reading of the chapter, that this story of Peter is singularly interwoven into the narrative of our Saviour's passion: it is so interwoven because it constitutes an essential part of that passion. We must not regard it as an accidental incident, it was part and parcel of that grief which he had to bear when he stood in our place and stead. It was written of old, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered"; and this scattering of the sheep, of which Peter was a notable instance, was one of the bitter ingredients of our Redeemer's mental anguish. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me" is his complaint in the Psalm. When the Saviour showed himself to Peter with all those lines of grief upon his face, he seemed to say to him, "Canst thou deny me now? I am bound for thee, and dost thou deny me? I stand here to be adjudged to death for thee, and dost thou deny me? Now is the hour of mine agony, and dost thou deny me?" The Lord could not have looked at Peter without

creating strong emotion in the breast of the weak disciple who now found himself in so sad a plight. That look touched very tender cords. There was no need for a single word of appeal: that look sufficed to stir the deeps of Peter's nature.

What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this: when the Lord looked upon Peter, though he did refresh his memory, and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evidently a *glorious manifestation of love*. If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this: "And yet I love thee, Peter, I love thee still! Thou hast denied me, but I look upon thee still as mine. I cannot give thee up. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and, notwithstanding all thine ill-conduct towards me, I am looking for thee, and expecting to receive thee. I have not turned my back on thee. Behold, I look towards thee with tender regard, foreseeing that thou wilt yet serve me, and prove the truth of thy devotion to me. Despair not, O Peter, for I will receive thee again, and thou shalt glorify me." Judging what would break my heart the soonest if I had thus denied my Master, it seems to me that I should be most affected by his saying to me, "And yet, despite thy sin, I love thee still." Love is the great heart-breaker. Immutable love is that divine hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. Though a man should have sinned himself into great hardness of heart, yet almighty love can soften him. Who can resist the charms of grace unchangeable? Sharper than a sword is a look of love: more fierce than coals of juniper are the flames of love. One said, the other day, speaking of a person who has gone awfully astray after having been a preacher of the Word, "If I did not believe in the doctrine of unchanging love I do not think I dare pray for him; but since I believe that God will bring him back again, I pray with humble confidence that he will be restored." That which is an encouragement to prayer for others will be a help towards our return if we have gone astray. I love to believe that my Lord will bring his wanderers back. O ye who are anxious to return to him, let this cheer you—"Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." This doctrine wins men back. There are wicked men who turn it into an argument for continuing in sin; but their damnation is just. True men will see, in the measureless and unchanging love of Christ, a reason which will put wings to their feet when they hasten back to him from whom they have gone astray.

Again: this look *penetrated Peter's inmost heart*. It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. I look with eyes of deep affection at men from this pulpit, and I perceive that they know my meaning; but they soon shake it off. But our Saviour has an eye to which the joints and marrow are visible. He looks into the secret chambers of the soul; for his look is a sunbeam, and bears its own light with it, lighting up the dark places of our nature by its own radiance. Peter could not help feeling, for he was pricked in the heart by the arrow of Christ's glance. How many persons are affected by religion only in the head! It does not affect

their heart and life. I am grieved when I hear of some of you, who are regular hearers, and take pleasure in my preaching, and yet, after many years, you are not a bit better. You have had spasms of improvement, but they have ended in nothing. You go back to the mire after you have been washed. You are a hearer of the gospel, and yet a drunkard. Your voice is heard in a psalm, but it may also be heard in an oath. It is a shocking thing; but I have done my best. I can preach to your ears, but I cannot look into your hearts. Oh, that my Lord would give such a glance at you this morning as should dart light into you, and cause you to see yourself, and to see him, and then the tears would fill your eyes!

One fact may not escape our notice: our Lord's look at Peter was *a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus*. The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter, and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. Notwithstanding all Peter's wanderings, he was anxious about his Lord, and therefore looked to see what was done with him. Even while he warmed his hands at the fire, he kept looking into the inner hall. His eyes were constantly looking in the direction of the Lord Jesus. While he wandered about among the maids and serving-men, and got talking to them, fool that he was; yet still he would perpetually steal a glance that way to see how it fared with the man he loved. He had not given up the habit of looking to his Lord. If he had not still, in a measure, looked to his Master, how would the look of Jesus have been observed by him? His eye must look through your eye to get to your heart. The remainders of faith are the sparks among the ashes of piety, and the Lord blows on these to raise a fire. If there is a poor soul here that, despite his backsliding, can yet feel, "I am trusting in Jesus, and if I perish, I will perish there," there is hope for that soul. If you have given up the outward forms of religion it is a grievous fault: but if you still inwardly look to the Crucified, there is something in you to work upon; there is an eye which can receive the look of Jesus. It is through the eye that looks to Jesus that Jesus looks, and lets fresh light and hope into the soul. Oh that you who have this lingering faith in the Lord may now receive a look from him which shall work in you a bitter, salutary, saving repentance, without which you can never be restored!

This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing; neither is it visible to any but the receiver. This morning, if the grace of God comes to any one of you in power, it will be unperceived by those who sit on either side of you in the pew: they will hear the same words, but of the divine operation which accompanies them they will know nothing: the eye of the Lord will not speak to them as it is speaking to the awakened one. Do you know anything of the secret love-look of the Lord Jesus?

The whole process may not have occupied more than a second of time. "The Lord turned, and looked on Peter." It took less time to do than it takes to tell. Yet in that instant an endless work was done,

How soon can Jesus change the heart! "He spake, and it was done:" I venture to alter that verse, and say, "He looked, and it was done." Lord, look on sinful Peter now! Work a miracle with thine eye! Even here, let some sinner look to thee because thou hast looked on him.

III. Now I must go to my third point: LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? When the Lord looked on Peter *the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened*. Peter's mind had been sleeping. The charcoal fire had not done him much good, the fumes of it are evil. The dust of Satan's sieve had got into his eyes. He was confused with very sorrow for his dear Master, whom he truly loved. Peter was hardly Peter that night. I think I had better say, Peter was too much Peter, and his mind had more of Peter's stone in it, than of Christ's flesh. He had forgotten that he was an apostle; he had forgotten that which he had declared when the Lord said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Again, I remind you how significantly it is written, "*The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter*"; for it hints that Peter now saw his Lord's Deity through the veil of his humiliation and anguish. He had forgotten his Lord's Deity, and thus he had, in thought, denied his Lord. He was off the lines, and was in a sleepy state. He was what Paul calls "bewitched," and under the influence of a spiritual soporific, administered by Satan. The Lord's look brought him to his better self, and aroused all the spiritual life which had been dormant in him: "Peter remembered," and by this remembrance he was restored.

The next effect was, *it took away all Peter's foolhardiness from him*. Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall, but now he made his way out of it. He had not felt in any danger though in the worst of company. What did he care for the girl that kept the door? Surely he was too much of a man to mind her remarks. What did he care for the men that were round the fire? They were rough fellows, but he had been a fisherman, and quite able to cope with the priest's bailiffs. But now the brag is gone out of him. No sooner had Jesus looked upon him than Peter declined all further risks.

Now he shows the better part of valour, and with great discretion quits the dangerous society of the high priest's palace. Revival of grace in the heart is the death of presumption. The man who runs risks with his soul is not in a right state of mind. Perhaps the Saviour's glance conveyed a hint to Peter that he had no business where he was. It may have seemed to say to him, "You had better be gone from these surroundings." At any rate, that was the effect it produced. That palace in which the Lord fared so badly could not be a fit place for a disciple. To be warming himself at the fire was quite inconsistent for Peter while Jesus was being mocked of his enemies. A sight of the Lord Jesus makes many things seem incongruous which else might appear right enough. All Peter's daring vanished; he turned his back on maids and men, and went out into the darkness of the night. We do not hear of his coming near the cross: in fact, we hear no more of him till the resurrection morning,

for Peter was sensible enough to feel that he could not trust himself any more. He placed himself in the background, till his Lord summoned him to the front. I wish that some religious professors whose lives have been questionable had grace enough to do the same. When I see a man who has sinned grievously pushing himself speedily to the front, I cannot believe that he has a due sense of the evil he has wrought, or of his own unfitness to be in the place of peril.

Above all, shun the place where you have fallen. Do not linger in it for a moment. Go out, even though you leave the comfortable fire behind you. Better be in the cold than stay where your soul is in danger. Till Peter had received from the Lord's own mouth abundant assurance of his restoration to his office by the threefold charge to feed the sheep and lambs, we do not find him again in the forefront.

That look of Christ *severed Peter from the crowd*. He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them: he quitted their company in haste. It is well for believers to feel that they are not of the world! They should flee out of Sodom. The Lord has severed us from the multitude by his divine choice, and the separation should be our choice.

Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would *seek solitude!* The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone; but the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart, and draw out the arrow. Alone is the place for a penitent. Out in the darkness is far better for you than around the fire, where coarse jokes are bandied while Christ is mocked. There must be confession and weeping alone. If Christ has looked upon you, you must get away from the men of the world, and indeed from all others; the solitude of your chamber will suit you best.

That look of Christ also *opened the sluices of Peter's heart*: he went out, and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his bitter sorrow. Dear friends, if we have sinned with Peter, God grant us grace to weep with Peter. Many will think of Peter's wandering who forget Peter's weeping. Sin, even though it be forgiven, is a bitter thing; even though Christ may look away your despair he will not look away your penitence. "He went out, and wept bitterly." Oh, how he chided himself! "How could I have acted so!" How he smote on his breast, and sighed, "How can I ever look up? Yet is he very precious. That look forgave me; but I can never forgive myself." He remembered it all his life, and could never hear a cock crow without feeling the water in his eyes.

Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ *gave him relief*. It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people that suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terrible sorrow. The Lord touched a secret spring, and made Peter's grief flow out in floods; and that must have greatly eased him. I have frequently heard people say, "I had a good cry, and after that, I was able to bear it." People die of bursting hearts when no tears relieve them. I thank God for Peter that he could weep bitterly, for thus the

Holy Spirit came to him with comfort. O Master, look on some poor dry heart here—some poor heart that cannot feel its sinfulness, but would if it could—and give it feeling! Look on the heart which cannot repent, that is crying, “I would, but cannot feel contrition.” Lord, thou didst make the rock yield water at the smiting of the rod, use thy poor stick of a servant this morning to smite the rocky heart, and let the waters of repentance flow out.

And now, to conclude, it *made Peter* as long as he lived, *ashamed to be ashamed*. Peter was never ashamed after this. Who was it that stood up at Pentecost and preached? Was it not Peter? Was he not always foremost in testifying to his Lord and Master? I trust that if any of us have been falling back, and especially if we have wandered into sin, we may get such a restoration from the Lord himself, that we may become better Christians ever afterwards. I do not want you to break a bone, I pray God you never may; but if you ever do, may the heavenly Surgeon so set it that it may become thicker and stronger than before. Courage was the bone in Peter which snapped; but when it was set, it became the strongest bone in his nature, and never broke again. When the Lord sets the bones of his people, they never break any more—he does his work so effectually. The man who has erred by anger becomes meek and gentle. The man who has erred by drink quits the deadly cup, and loathes it. The man who has sinned by shame becomes the bravest of the company.

O Lord Jesus, I have tried to preach thee this morning, but I cannot look with thine eye. Thou must look on erring ones thyself. Look, Saviour! Look, sinner! “There is life in a look at the crucified One,” because there is life in a look *from* the crucified One. May Jesus look, and the sinner look! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Matthew xxvi. 31—40, 69—75; John xviii. 15—27.

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