Message for THE LORD'S DAY EVENING, March 22, 2015
Christian Hope Church of Christ, Plymouth, NC
by Reggie A. Braziel, Minister

“BEFORE THE ROOSTER CROWS”

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter twenty two. And let’s read verses 54-62.

LUKE 22:54-62 (NKJV)

54 Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance.

55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.”

57 But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

58 And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!”
    Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.
Introduction

“Never say never!”

What dangerous ground it is to BELIEVE that the SINS or FAILURES that have befallen someone else could never befall you!!!!!!

........You would NEVER catch me doing that in a million years!

........Well I tell you what........you will NEVER see one of my kids act that way.

........I would NEVER treat my wife like that!

........I would NEVER do anything like that to my husband!

........I don’t care how bad off I get, you will NEVER see me stoop that low!

“Never Say Never!!!”

How often do we hear someone SELF-RIGHTEOUSLY proclaim their IN-FALLIBILITY to repeat the SIN or MISTAKE of someone else only to wind up doing the same exact thing or even worse?

ILLUSTRATION: I once heard a CHRISTIAN man condemning all DIVORCED people to hell as though they had committed the un-pardonable sin. SELF-RIGHTEOUSLY this man proclaimed

...............”You’ll never see my wife and me..........or any of my kids and their mates go through a divorce.”

Well guess what? Within a year after making that bold claim, that man’s SON and DAUGHTER-IN-LAW got a divorce. And since then that man’s granddaughter whom he idolized has been involved in numerous affairs and divorced her husband. NEVER SAY NEVER!
God has STERNLY WARNED us not to put ourselves up on the PROUD PEDESTAL OF INVINCIBILITY!!!!!

PROVERBS 16:18 (NKJV)  Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

I Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV) Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Perhaps the only thing more foolish than believing we are above repeating the sin of another brother or sister-in-Christ...........is to believe we are above repeating the same sin or making the same mistake as someone in the BIBLE.

God does NOT hide the imperfections and failures of HIS PEOPLE in the Bible. He lets us see both the GOOD AND THE BAD even in His most righteous children.

Some Christians like to believe that GIVEN THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES..................UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS .............and UNDER THE SAME PRESSURE...........that someone how certain Bible stories might have turned out differently had it been them.

-Unlike CAI子里..............we would have just shrugged it off that God accepted Able’s sacrifice and not ours.............instead of murdering him.

-Unlike MOSES..............we would have counted to ten and calmly walked away from the Egyptian rather than killing him.
Unlike DAVID........we would think we would have taken a cold shower instead of going over to Bathsheba’s house.

Unlike JONAH........we would think we would have gone straight to Ninevah instead of getting on a boat headed in the opposite direction.

Unlike JUDAS ISCARIOT........we would tell the Chief Priests we wouldn’t sell out on Jesus for all the money in the world, let alone 30 Pieces of Silver.

Unlike THE OTHER TEN APOSTLES........we would have been right there at the foot of Jesus’ cross to show our support, rather than cowardly watching the whole thing from a distance.

And UNLIKE PETER........we would never have denied Jesus, never in a million years!

THE APOSTLE PETER

Is there any man in all the NEW TESTAMENT or even the whole BIBLE on whom we have been HARDER than the Apostle Peter?

When we think of PETER........what’s usually the very first thing to come to mind?

- NOT that 3,000 people accepted Christ after he preached that powerful sermon at Pentecost.

- NOT that he won the very first Gentile convert to Jesus Christ ......when Cornelius and his household were baptized.

- NOT even the fact that through the power of God, He was the one who brought DORCAS back from the dead.

- And NOT even the fact that he wrote two New Testament books.
NO.........WHEN WE THINK OF PETER.......THE VERY FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND IS HIS FAILURE............HE WAS THE ONE WHO DENIED CHRIST!!!!!

Imagine what it would be like for ALL OF YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.....and ALL OF YOUR SUCCESSES......and ALL YOUR VICTORIES.......and ALL THE GOOD THINGS YOU’VE EVER DONE...to be overshadowed by one moment of failure!!!

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It had been THREE YEARS since Peter dropped his fishing nets and followed JESUS to become a “fisher of men.”

During those three years..........PETER had seen a lot of “half-hearted disciples” come and go. They would see Jesus give sight to some blind man............or make some crippled man walk............or even raise some dead person back to life.........and they would get all excited and start following Jesus, pledging to stay faithful to him no matter what .............then before you know it............ONE BY ONE, THEY WOULD DISAPPEAR.

Peter was determined NEVER to do what those people had done to Jesus!

But according to MATTHEW’S gospel........on the night of the LAST SUPPER............Jesus told his twelve apostles........

“This very night, you will ALL fall away on account of me, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the flock of sheep will be scattered.” (Matthew 26:31 NIV)
I can just hear Peter.............”Master, did I just hear you say that ALL of us would fall away?” Surely you didn’t mean me, because you know even if everyone of these other guys FALLS away from you.........I NEVER WILL!!!!!

“Never Say Never!!!!”

Imagine the DISBELIEF AND SHOCK when Peter heard Jesus say those haunting words:

“Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” (Matthew 26:34 NKJV)

Oh master, you know this cannot be so.........”why, why....don’t you remember it was me who had enough faith to get out of that boat and walk to you on the Sea of Galilee.............I was the only one!”

And don’t, don’t you remember.........it was me who wanted to build those monuments to HONOR YOU.......and MOSES and ELIJAH when you were transfigured up there on Mt. Herman!

“Before the Rooster Crows Peter......before the Rooster Crows.”

With those HAUNTING WORDS still ringing in his ears, the ELEVEN remaining disciples followed Jesus out to the GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE to pray.

As usual, Jesus took PETER, JAMES AND JOHN with him to a private place away from the other disciples. Before going farther to pray alone........Jesus gave them these instructions.

“Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation.”

(Matthew 26:36 NIV)
But shortly after JESUS left them.......they fell asleep.

Now MARK’S account of what happened next is very interesting.

After Jesus had spent some time alone agonizing in prayer and sweating drops of blood..............Jesus came back to his three disciples and found them asleep.

**Jesus didn’t say............** You guys what am I going to do with you.”

“Or........wake up you sleepy heads!”

“Or.........I thought I could count on you three.”

NO.......according to Mark's account, Jesus woke Peter up and said, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? (Mark 14:37 NKJV)

In other words, “Peter, don't you remember that just a couple of hours ago you were the one who boldly said, “I will never fall away, even if everyone else does?” Simon, do you remember what you said?”

Imagine how SOBERING that must have been for Peter, to realize it wasn’t even morning yet and already HIS COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW CHRIST TO THE DEATH was starting to “un-ravel.”

Well, Jesus was arrested a short time later........and Peter makes a rather foolhardy attempt to prove his loyalty to Jesus! He committed an ACT OF VIOLENCE by taking a sword and cutting off the ear of MALCHUS the servant of the high priest. Blinded by his own foolishness, Peter didn't realize he came within a thin whisker of being cut to pieces by the Roman soldiers.
After restoring MALCHUS’ EAR...........Jesus was then led away to be tried before the Sanhedrin.

Peter followed JESUS from a distance, and while Jesus was being interrogated in the court of the Sanhedrin, Peter was about to be interrogated out in the courtyard of the Sanhedrin by a servant girl.

When this servant girl saw Peter warming himself by the fire she said:

**CHARGE 1:** “This man was also with them. “ (Luke 22:56)
**PETER’S 1st DENIAL:** “Woman, I do not know Him.” (Luke 22:57)

**CHARGE 2:** “You also are one of them.” (Luke 22:58)
**PETER’S 2nd DENIAL:** “Man, I am not!” (Luke 22:58b)

**CHARGE 3:** “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.” (Luke 22:59)

**PETER’S 3rd DENIAL:** “Man, I do not know what you are saying.”

“And the rooster crowed.......and the rooster crowed.”

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**APPLICATION**

Before the rooster crows.......before we ever leave the house for work.....before we ever take our morning break........before we ever eat lunch.......HOW MANY TIMES DO WE DENY CHRIST?
*We DENY JESUS when we fail to spend time in His word.

*We DENY JESUS when we fail to spend time in prayer.

*We DENY JESUS when we engage in sinful habits that bring shame and dishonor upon the name of Jesus.

*We DENY JESUS when we swear and take the Lord's Name in vain.

*We DENY JESUS when we refuse to forgive one who has wronged us.

* We DENY JESUS when we show hatred instead of love towards a brother or sister-in-Christ.

* We DENY JESUS when others are mocking Christ and we never open our mouths to defend Christ.

* We DENY JESUS when we refuse to obey His commands.

You see, while we judge Peter for verbally denying Jesus in the wee hours of the morning before He was crucified, many of us are just as guilty of denying Jesus in so many other ways.

CONCLUSION

T.H. Huxley, a well-known agnostic, was with a group of men at a weekend house party. On Sunday morning, while most of them were preparing to go to church, he approached a man known for his Christian character and said, "Suppose you stay at home and tell me why you are a Christian." The man, knowing he couldn't match wits with Huxley, hesitated. But the agnostic said gently, "I don't want to argue with you. I just want you to tell me simply what this Christ means to you." The man did, and when he finished, there were tears in Huxley's eyes as he said, "I would give my right hand if only I could believe in this JESUS!" (Our Daily Bread, January 24, 1993.)
Brothers and sisters, there are people in our lives, who like T.H. Huxley are just waiting on someone to stand up for Jesus. It may be one of your relatives or friends or someone you rub elbows with every day at work, or a neighbor.

Stand Tall For Jesus, Stand Tall

by Reggie A. Braziel, 2006

When those around you mock His sweet Name, stand tall for Jesus, stand tall!

When you are in a crowd that tempts you to sin and shame, stand tall for Jesus, stand tall!

On a rugged cross Jesus stood tall for you
When you were lost in sin and there was nothing you could do.

For you on that cross Jesus gave His very all,
So every chance you get, stand tall for Jesus, stand tall!
CONCLUSION

I want to leave you with this thought tonight! Just as we often deny Jesus without ever saying a word.......................We can OFTEN SHOW OUR ALLEGIANCE TO JESUS without saying a word.

......When you SPEND TIME IN HIS WORD

......When you SPEND TIME IN PRAYER

......When you CAREFULLY GUARD YOUR EXAMPLE around non-Christians.

......When you ENCOURAGE AND BUILD UP YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.

......When you FORGIVE A WRONG.

......When you SHOW KINDNESS TO SOMEONE IN NEED

......When you PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FAILED and ENCOURAGE THEM.

......And when you FAITHFULLY MEET WITH THE LORD ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

You are saying to the everyone around you........”I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”