

Peter: A Good Man's Fall and Return

I have known faithful Christians, church leaders, and preachers who have committed grievous sins, left the faith, and even renounced the church. On the other hand I know some of those same people who returned to God's way and became more active in the church than ever before.

This lesson is a very practical discussion about such a person's fall and return. Simon Peter was as human as we are. He was a quick-spoken, hot-headed fisherman who struggled with many of life's challenges. He became the well-known apostle who preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost when the church began with 3000 responses. We are going to analyze the downfall and return of Peter and see how his downfall and return applies to people like you and me today.

What led to Peter's downfall?

1. **He doubted.** **Matthew 14:31**, "And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
2. **He boasted.** **Mark 14:29-31**, ^{"²⁹} Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." ^{"³⁰} Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." ^{"³¹} But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" **1 Corinthians 10:12** warns us "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
3. **He slept.** **Mark 14:37-38**, ^{"³⁷} Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?" ^{"³⁸} Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Christians today are in danger of falling asleep spiritually. **1 Thessalonians 5:6**, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober." Paul also warns Christians to wake up in **Ephesians 5:14**, "Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."
4. **He drew the wrong sword.** **John 18:10**, "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." Christ is to be defended by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;" (**Ephesians 6:17**). **Hebrews 4:12**, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
5. **He followed afar off.** **Mark 14:54**, "But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire."
6. **He sat with unbelievers.** **Mark 14:54**, "But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire." If the apostles would have stayed with each other they might have remained loyal. Remember **1 Corinthians 15:33**, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."
7. **He denied Jesus, lied, cursed, and swore.** **Mark 14:66-72**, ^{"⁶⁶} Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. ^{"⁶⁷} And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." ^{"⁶⁸} But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. ^{"⁶⁹} And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." ^{"⁷⁰} But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it." ^{"⁷¹} Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" ^{"⁷²} A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept."

Peter hit rock bottom just as Jesus had warned him. We need to heed these same warnings.

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What helped Peter return?

1. **He recalled what Jesus said and he thought about it.** **Mark 14:72**, "A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept."
2. **He received a look from Jesus.** **Luke 22:61**, "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." Remember that God is always looking at you. **Hebrews 4:13**, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."
3. **He remembered what Jesus said.** **Luke 22:61**, "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." Jesus said to the church at Ephesus in **Revelation 2:5**, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."
4. **He had godly sorrow.** **Luke 22:62**, "So Peter went out and wept bitterly."
5. **He repented.** **2 Corinthians 7:10**, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." **Luke 3:8**, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Being sorry was not enough. Peter repented and his life proved it.
6. **He boldly and fearlessly preached the good news of Jesus.** Peter used the keys of the kingdom and preached the first gospel sermon and told people what to do to be saved as recorded in **Acts 2:38**, "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." **Acts 4:19-20** clearly shows his boldness and courage. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. ²⁰ For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
7. **He died for Christ.** **John 21:17-19**, ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. ¹⁸ Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." Secular history and tradition says that Peter was crucified head down because he insisted that he was not worthy to be crucified like Jesus.

What can we learn from Peter regarding his downfall and return?

First, **1 Peter 5:8** warns that anyone of us can fall from the faith. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Second, a person never gets so bad that he cannot return to the grace of God. **1 Peter 3:21** declares "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Peter makes it clear how to turn to God and be saved. His life also shows us how to return to God when we fall away.