

Denied and Restored

What's the scariest verse in the Bible? I nominate Matthew 10:33, where Jesus says, *"But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown before my Father in heaven."* I'm not bold by nature and, especially in my younger years, I was much too concerned about what other people might think. So I know I have, in effect, denied Jesus many times, maybe not so much by what I said but by what I failed to say. I had the chance to stand up for Him, and instead I remained silent. I was given an opening to share the gospel, but I hesitated and the opportunity was lost.

The good news is that God always gives us the chance for redemption, as he did with Peter. All four gospels report that, after Jesus was arrested, Peter three times denied even knowing Him, just as Jesus had said he would. When the rooster crowed and Peter realized what he'd done, he was filled with remorse and *wept bitterly*. But later, after the resurrection, Jesus restored him. He gave Peter the chance to three times declare his love for his Savior – once for every time he had denied Him before (John 21: 15-17) – and Peter went on to speak out boldly for Jesus ever after:

Then Peter stood... raised his voice and addresses the crowd... "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." (Acts 2:14, 36-38)

Peter's earlier denial didn't cause Jesus to turn His back on him. Peter's earlier failure didn't forever disqualify him from serving God. No, instead Jesus lovingly reinstated Peter as an apostle and gave him an assignment: *"Feed my sheep."*

Do you grieve over failing Jesus in the past? Do you, like Peter, weep bitter tears over denying God's only Son? God knows we are weak (Ps. 103:13-14). Confess, be forgiven and restored, like Peter. Have your slate wiped clean, and pick up your next assignment. If you are ready to serve Him, God will give you new opportunities to speak out for Jesus, probably at least as many as the times you denied Him in the past. Then have no fear; claim the glorious counterpart to that "scary" verse, which is right beside it. In verse 32, Jesus says, *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."*

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