

Introduction

1. Share survey of *Situations Causing The Most Anxiety*.
 - a. All have something in common: social failure, fear of embarrassment, inadequacy.
 - b. For most part, these fears not serious. If make mistake, mostly cost embarrassment.
 2. Suppose had survey of *Situations Causing Christians Most Concern*. What on list?
 - a. One thing should be high on list. (All concerned over, cause possible for all.)
 - b. What is it? Spiritual failure – turning from Christ or denying Him in some way.
 - c. Far more serious. Not matter of social embarrassment, but moral/spiritual downfall.
 3. *Spiritual failure is a process of taking steps away from the Lord that requires steps back to the Lord*.
 - a. Not happen overnight. Don't wake up, *I think I'll fail the Lord today*. Gradual thing.
 - b. See that in the life of Peter. Peter last one think deny Lord, but did in very ugly way.
 4. *From stage to stage...[Peter] passed away from Jesus ever a little further, until we come to open denial.*¹
 5. Didn't come about suddenly; it happened after a series of steps away from the Lord.
 6. (Show Title/Text) God used the crowing of a rooster to be an alarm clock to Peter's soul.
 7. Today see what Peter did to fail spiritually; next Sunday what Jesus did to restore.
- I. **Stage 1 – Self-dependence, vv. 27-31**
- A. **Peter's Nature** (Show Peter striking Malchus with Sword)²
1. Doesn't this depiction of Peter lashing out in the garden tell us much about him?
 - a. Jesus had told him exactly how it was going to go. Jesus was fully in charge.
 - b. Peter takes over & says, *It's not going to go that way. It's going to go my way*.
 - c. And of course he ends up doing 180° the opposite of his Master's will.
 - d. Isn't it amazing how we can think we're so right, when actually we're so wrong?
 2. What learn about Peter? Confident, outspoken, take charge, strong-willed, can do.
 - a. Are there any of us like this? Is this is our natural temperament?
 - b. If TV show, entitled: *Brian Knows Best?* Can all be this way at times, can't we?
 - c. People who appear be unassuming can still be very controlling in certain settings.
 - d. Peter was so confident, he was what? Overconfident.
 - e. He didn't really know himself, how truly weak he really was in right setting.
 - f. All of us are weak in the right setting. If don't know that we'll be self-dependent.
- B. **Application**
1. Been reading Pastor John Calvin's *Institutes* due to Reformation's 500th anniversary.
 - a. Starts on p. 1 by saying true wisdom = 2 things: knowledge of God & of ourselves.
 - b. [Who are] *not disposed to rest in [themselves]? Who, in fact, do not [so] rest, [as] long as [we're] unknown to [ourselves]; that is, as long as [we're] contented with [our] own endowments, and unconscious or unmindful of [our] misery?*³ P. 1. That's starting point in knowing ourselves.
 - c. *We cannot [seek] God in earnest until we have begun to be displeased with ourselves.*⁴

¹ G. Campbell Morgan in Wiersbe, Warren (1995). *Classic Sermons on the Apostle Peter*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Pubs, p. 88.

² https://assetsnffrgf-a.akamaihd.net/assets/m/1102014724/univ/art/1102014724_univ_lsr_xl.jpg. Accessed 1/7/18.

³ Calvin, J. (1997). *Institutes of the Christian religion*. I, i, 1. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁴ Ibid.

2. *God chose me cause weak enough. He trains someone be quiet enough, little enough, then uses him.*⁵
 - a. Who said that? Hudson Taylor. Impact on world missions has been enormous.
 - b. Why does God train us be weak, quiet, & little? That rids us of self-dependence.

II. Stage 2 – Slackness in devotions, vv. 37-38

A. Peter Sleeps

1. What contrast! Jesus, perfect Son of God tormented w/temptation to turn fr. God's will.
 - a. Tempted forsake way of cross, He prays to find renewed strength for crisis coming.
 - b. Peter, limited son of flesh, sleeps because confident there's no danger.
 - c. So confident that even when Jesus warns him, he goes back to sleep.
2. Sometimes the only way we will learn is by having to take a great fall.

B. What A Lesson This Is for Us!

1. Sleep in Bible is emblematic of spiritual indifference. (Show 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8)⁶
 - a. When overconfident, are unafraid of spiritual danger. Don't think need watch/pray.
 - b. We become slack in the very devotional exercises that keep us strong.
 - c. Look at what is included in watching and being sober.
 - d. *Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.*
 - e. Growing in faith, love and hope. These are the cardinal virtues of Christianity.
 - f. No one can be strong w/o developing these three areas of the Christian life.
2. Our Tuesday Morning Men's Bible Study has been going on for almost 40yrs.
 - a. Amazing men so hungry for the Word they've sustained a Bible study for 40yrs.
 - i. 1 man from another church has said learned more than all yrs at his church.
 - ii. When Guile family moved, Todd said could not find church w/Bible study like it.
 - a. 2 reasons why I go. I need the Word. I need to be w/men who love the Word.
 - b. When do we get enough of the Word? I'm almost 60. I haven't got enough yet.
 - c. One other thing I must have in my life. I need to be w/people who pray.
 - d. How do faith, love, hope grow? The Word. Fellowship w/people who love Word.
 - e. Time w/people who pray. To be awake means faith, love & hope are growing.

III. Stage 3 – Carelessness in decisions, vv. 46-47

A. Peter's Actions

1. Apostle John tells us this was Peter, Jn. 18:10. So far fr. Lord took matters own hands.
 - a. Standing right next Jesus, doesn't ask Him what to do, just does what seems best.
 - b. Isn't that a telltale sign of spiritual decline? Instead of asking Jesus, do seems best.
2. Because Peter hadn't really been hearing Jesus, He didn't know what the plan was.
3. When we aren't paying attention to God's plan, we can't possibly fail to be careless.

B. Insights from An Artist (Show Peter striking Malchus again)⁷

1. Let's notice again this drawing. Whoever drew it brought out some key points.

⁵ Hudson Taylor quoted in Hughes, R. K. (1989). *Mark: Jesus, servant and savior* (Vol. 2, p. 184). Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.

⁶ <https://www.slideshare.net/dhowell86/more-like-the-master-more-holy>. Slide 15. Accessed 1/5/18.

⁷ https://assetsnffrgf-a.akamaihd.net/assets/m/1102014724/univ/art/1102014724_univ_lsr_xl.jpg. Accessed 1/7/18.

- a. Standing next to Malchus, who's holding his ear, is Jesus. See what doing?
 - b. Has hand up. In a drawing you have to use visuals to depict what happened.
 - c. Jesus stopped Peter telling him to put up his sword, John 18:11.
 - d. Notice the soldier w/sword half out. The soldiers came prepared for opposition.
 - e. Had Peter struck another blow, surely swords would've been drawn.
 - f. There could've been many injuries and even deaths. What a lesson here.
2. When our decisions are careless, innocent people are put in harm's way.
 3. In 2018 our families are looking to us for spiritual direction and leadership.
 - a. We may not be listening to the Lord and seeking the counsel of His people.
 - b. We may be doing what we want to do, or what we think is best.
 - c. We may very well do the exact opposite of God's will for our life or for our family.
 - d. We are headed for a downfall, but they will experience the fallout.
 4. Look at this. Don't want to jump in and say to Peter, *Watch out! It can get worse!*

IV. Stage 4 – Sinfulness in Actions, vv. 54, 66-71

A. Downfall Complete

1. Downfall is complete isn't it? Lying, false oaths, denying Jesus Himself. All sins.
2. Self-dependence → Slackness in devotions → Carelessness in decisions → Sin.

B. Two Actions

1. *Peter warmed himself by the fires of the world, v. 54.*
 - a. Peter now follows Jesus at a distance. Cold out so goes to warm self by fire.
 - b. Whose fire? The guards, v. 54 = temple guards. Very ones who arrested Jesus.
 - c. One who walked so close to Jesus now standing with those who arrested Him.
2. *Peter caved into the pressures of the world, vv. 66-71.*
 - a. Peter's downfall was almost complete. All needed was a little pressure.
 - b. It started with a little servant girl. What a truth is found here.
 - c. When in spiritually weakened condition, warmed by fires of the world,...
 - d. Doesn't take much to get you to compromise and deny Jesus. Little pressure.
3. I find so much help for my Christian walk in this scene. (Show Denial Scene)⁸
 - a. Peter, who walked so close to Jesus is now so far, warms himself at enemies fires.
 - b. He is so weak spiritually, all it takes is a few pointing fingers to make him afraid.
 - c. Lying, false oaths, denying Jesus Himself came at the end of it all.
 - d. The bold Peter wielding a sword is now the cowering Peter backing up in fear.
4. *You are saying, "Why does the preacher so talk to us? We shall never do this thing. I am never going to deny Christ." Is that the language of your heart? Then it proves you are a distance from Him. The nearer [believers are] to Christ, the more conscious [they are of their] own frailty, & the more [are they] possessed of strength, tho [they] hardly know it. The nearer [believers] live to Jesus Christ, the more acutely conscious [are they] of distance between [them] & [their] Lord by reason of [their] Lord's superior strength & [their] own frailty, & the more they press closely to [Jesus].*⁹

⁸ <http://www.janssenart.de/pjalt/restoration/status33.htm>. The Restoration of Peter Denying Christ by Peter Janssen, 1869. Accessed 1/5/18.

⁹ G. Campbell Morgan, op. cit., p. 94.