

Growing Deeper in Mark

MARK 14.66-72

VERSE 66: Mark tells us that Peter is in the courtyard below. This is the courtyard of the residence of the high priest where Jesus is on trial. The trial is above on another level so that Peter would not be able to hear the proceedings, except for possibly that uproar that would have ensued when Jesus replied 'I am' to the question of whether he was the 'Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?'

VERSE 67: Mark tells us that Peter is warming himself by the fire. While Jesus' trial is going on above, Peter's trial commences in the courtyard below. Jesus is being interrogated by the high priest, now Peter is questioned by a servant girl of the high priest. She sees Peter by the fire and makes an accusation, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus."

VERSE 68: Peter's denial seems a bit over the top. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about." He seems to be attempting to invalidate the girl's statement by calling it crazy talk. Peter is rattled, he retreats to the entryway.

VERSE 69: The girl comes by again and sees Peter by the entryway. This time she speaks to those who are standing around where Peter is and makes the accusation, "This fellow is one of them." It is still just a lowly servant girl, and in that time the testimony of a woman was not allowed in a trial. But this is no formal trial, this is the court of public opinion.

While we may never be on trial for our popularity threatening the powers that be, like Jesus is, we all will certainly face the same kind of trial that Peter faces here. How will you respond in the court of public opinion? It is important for us to think about our convictions. What are the things we believe that cannot be compromised or denied? What is worth losing a friend over? What is worth losing a job over? For what are you willing to be mocked and ridiculed?

Peter surely didn't know what would happen to him if he confessed that he was one of Jesus' disciples. He probably assumed that he would be put on trial as well. The pressure on him was very real, but it seems it was unfounded. Surely the guards he shared the fire with could have caught him when he 'broke down and wept' in verse 72. They don't seem to have been very worried about Peter. I imagine that many of our fears about being upfront about our faith in Jesus are equally unfounded. Pray that you will have a bold conviction when it comes to showing and sharing the love of Jesus with the people around you.

VERSE 70: Peter again denies it, but it is his denial that gives him away. Those standing nearby hear his Galilean accent and realize that the servant girl must be on to something.

VERSE 71: Peter seems to fall into the common habit of getting louder when you aren't right. Many argue this way substituting volume for reason. The commentators state that it is unclear if Peter is calling down curses on himself or if he is cursing Jesus. Either way, Peter is in a bad place. His world is coming unglued and he is coming unglued along with it. It goes back to Jesus' admonition to him (and the other disciples) to 'watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation' in verse 38. Peter trouble now is a direct result of his failure in prayer.

We haven't mentioned it for a long time, but this is a good place to be reminded that it is believed that Mark wrote his gospel for the church in Rome. This was a church that was facing some persecution and was soon going to face much more severe persecution. How important a lesson for them to know that even Peter (whom they knew as a pillar of the church) could falter in the face of opposition if he trusted in his own strength. The success or failure of the church, as well as individual Christians, rises and falls with faithfulness in prayer. Jesus says to all of us, "Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

VERSE 72: Garland points out that it is ironic that it is a rooster that signals the fall of Peter. A rooster is the symbol of pride (we get our word 'cocky' from the rooster). Peter failed in prayer three times, now he has denied three times, but he 'remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him' and he broke. It is the word of God that leads us to repentance. When God's word challenges you, do not turn away from it...turn away from your sin. Allow the word of God to break you, too. Peter found healing, as will you.