

Peter: *The Rock?*: Peter's Denial Monologue John 13:12-27

3/8/26

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"It was the longest night any of us had ever imagined. We had no idea what was coming. I certainly did not.

About 3 years earlier, when my little brother Andrew came running up to me all out of breath "We have found the Messiah!", I hadn't the foggiest idea what we were all getting into. But I dropped those nets quicker than you can say "Go Fish" and followed.

He took one look at my face and said "Hey. You are Simon, Son of John. You will be called Peter. The rock."

Peter, *the rock*. Some rock I was, on that long night. Maybe a pebble, or grain of sand stuck between the grimy toes of one of us that came for dinner that fateful night.

I don't know how he did it, but all 12 of us dudes, and a bunch of women that you read as much about, put our trust in him. Well, at least what we put our trust in what we thought he was or would be..

Maybe it was the way he called us by name even before he had been told our names. Maybe it was that incredible wine that kept flowing over in those water pitchers at the wedding in Cana. Or how he heals the gravely ill son of that Roman governor just by telling him "Go, your son will live". Or feeding 5 thousand people with 5 loaves of barley and 2 little fish, not to mention walk across a lake.

Or perhaps it was that wild, baptizing cousin of his with a few loose screws in his head, who kept pointing and shouting "Look, that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

No, this man was different. He said and did things that had us scratching our heads all the time. "I am the good Shepherd, " he had said. "I don't run away from danger when the wolves come howling. I lay down my life for my sheep." I, on the other hand, was like the hired shepherd.

And when we went to buy bread in Samaria we came back and he's talking to this Samaritan woman, drinking from her canteen! Good grief. A Samaritan. Woman. Some strange messiah this is, we thought. He *stayed there 2 days*, just hanging out and talking about how the God of the Jews, Yahweh, was the God of love and kindness

and forgiveness for everyone. Pretty soon he had a whole *Samaritan* town of people believing in his every word.

He should have stayed there. But next thing you know, we're back in Jerusalem. And he heals a man that's been blind from birth. What a stir that caused among the Jewish elite.

And then his friend Lazarus, Mary and Martha's little brother, dies. And Jesus, after a good cry himself, calls their little brother out of the tomb—he'd been dead 4 days! He's fine! Unwrap him and let him go..

And when Mary cracked open that expensive jar of perfume and pours it on his feet he says "this perfume is for preparation for *my* burial." "Jesus. What are you even talking about?"

The next thing you know, we're headed up into Jerusalem again, and people are waving palm branches and shouting Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel! As he rode in on that donkey.

Oh, this was good. Could he really be the one who would overthrow the Romans and get us back on track as God's people? He's got power. He's got a following. They say he's connected to David's line.

Oh, but it was not good. The Pharisees and Sanhedrin and Sadducees were not to be impressed. And what about Rome? You can't just go around claiming someone is King around here. Not if you want to LIVE.

So it came down to this fateful night. At dinner, he starts washing our feet. I was not about to let *him* wash *my* feet, Never, ever, EVER. "Oh, Peter, Peter. Just trust me", he said. "If you don't let me wash your feet you will have no part of me". Well, I know I had just said never, ever EVER, but I splashed both feet right in that basin, wash all of me then! "I don't really know what you are talking about, but I love you and trust you and will follow you even if everyone else abandons you."

Oh, I was so clueless.

He kept talking about leaving the world and going to the God who is behind everything, and then returning again. "Where I am going, you cannot come." "But where are you going, Master?" I pleaded. "I will follow you! I will follow you even if it kills me. What can I do to convince you of that?"

“Peter,” he says to me. “Peter, tonight you will deny you even know me 3 times by the time the rooster crows.”

No, no way. I have set my hope in you, the Messiah. I have seen your power in action. If there is some kind of reckoning tonight, I will stand tall. I am with you. I am brave. I have a sword. And I’m not afraid to use it. Just give me the signal, and let the miraculous Holy war begin! When I see the temple walls begin to crumble like the walls of Jherico, I will know it’s show time.

We reclined at that table for a long time that night. He talked about all sorts of things that I could almost understand, things like I am the vine, and you are the branches. I see you have that in your worship banners! Very good! Someone must have written this stuff down..

And love. He talked so much about love. In fact he said my greatest commandment is simply this: Love one another. That’s it. That’s it? Tell that to the Romans. How do you build a kingdom on love? How do you change the hearts of those cold angry Pharisees and Scribes and Priests, and Levites and Sanhedrin. You can’t just throw love at them, can you?

Well, you good Bible reading church goers probably know some of how the rest of the night goes. Judas, one of the 12 of us, had already made a deal with the religious authorities. And after we’re done with our long dinner we left and headed over across the Kidron valley to our favorite garden prayer spot. We hadn’t more than sat down and leaned against my favorite olive tree when we heard them coming. Lanterns, torches, swords, a bunch of Roman soldiers, and guards the chief priests and Pharisees had sent along, with Judas leading the way.

Jesus doesn’t run. He just stands there, unwavering as they swoop in around us. “Who you looking for?” Jesus, the Nazarene. “I AM”. When he said those words, everyone hit the ground. “Run for it, Jesus!” I want to say, but I am so tense that I can’t even squeak out the words. They get back to their feet. He’s still just standing there. “Who are you looking for”, he says again. Jesus of Nazareth. “I told you, I AM”. Don’t worry about these others (gesturing to the 12, well, now the 11 of us), if it’s me you want.

DO SOMETHING, I want to say to him. You have the power! I saw how everyone hit the deck when you said I AM! Unleash the boom!

They begin to tie him up. C’mon Jesus. I can’t just stand here. Maybe if I start something Jesus will miraculously take over and the revolution will begin! I reached into

my belt and pulled out that small sword. I lunged forward, so tense with fear that I can't even see straight. I'm a fisherman, ok? Not a soldier.

I swipe, and hit mostly air. Mostly. Poor Malchus (tap my right ear). "Put that thing away", I hear him say, and something about having to drink this cup.

John and I followed as they drug him to Annas, the former High Priest, and father in law of the current high priest Caiaphas. John went on into the courtyard. I hesitated by the gate. After all, I was the one that took a swipe at the servant of Caiaphas.

John had some connection, and he sent the servant woman who guards the gate to come get me.

"Aren't you one of this man's disciples?" she asked. "I am not." I said, as I pulled my headpiece further over my head. It was getting colder and naturally, I'm warming my fingers and toes by the fire.

It was horrible to watch. Was all this a big mistake? Why is he not defending himself? Is his power gone? It must be. But how can he stand there so confidently? They are going to kill him if he doesn't do something! Had the whole thing been wishful thinking?

One of the guards that's also warming up at the fire suddenly sees me and says, "Hey, buddy, aren't you one of his disciples?" I am certainly NOT his disciple, I say, fear tingling up my spine.

I mean, what would *you* do? I was powerless against those Sanhedrin and the Romans. If they find out I am the ear slicer, they will filet me like a fish!

Another person, who I found out later was a brother of Malchus who no longer had a right ear, says "didn't I see you in the garden with him?"

No! I am not that person..

Right then, that pathetic old rooster cleared his throat and let out the most sobering mournful sound I have ever experienced. I had denied not just Jesus, but I had denied myself. All those tender moments, those 3 years of close friendship, I denied they had ever happened.

I learned a lot that night. I learned that it's easy to have bluster and courage when you are standing behind someone else's power. Take that power away, and then you will know the depth of your courage.

I learned the only true and lasting power is the power of love. It is far, far wider and deeper than anything violence or threat of violence, force or coercion can ever touch. And that, *that* is rock solid. Will you open *your* hearts to his great and powerful love?

*Note: Nathaniel Schmucker provided me with some input to my manuscript above, coaching me on where to place emphasis and where to pause for dramatic effect, etc.. Thank You Nathaniel!*

Chris