



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Christ looking on the sinner in mercy



And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice, Luke 22:60-61.

A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day 21st October 2001, by the Minister, Rev. Ivan Foster.

The inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and the heavenly origins of the gospel are both underscored by the denial of Christ by Peter. For the record of the disgraceful fall of one of the chief men in the apostolic band to be given, as fully as it is in all four gospel accounts, requires a degree of honesty, impossible amongst fallen men and certainly not found in the writings of men. How wonderfully do things work together to bring about the incident recorded here!

1. It was Peter's third denial, Luke 22:59-60.
2. The rooster crowed the second time as Peter denied the Lord for the third time, Mark 14:30, 72.
3. The Saviour emerged from the high priest's house at that moment and was visible to Peter who had earlier withdrawn to the porch, Matt 26:71, John 18:27-28. Poor Peter's sorrowful downfall has been a most valuable lesson for the people of God ever since.

It has taught us:

1. To beware of pride. How confident Peter was that he would not deny the Lord. He was confident enough to contradict the Lord! *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all, Mark 14:30-31.*

2. To beware of prayerlessness. Self-confidence leads on to prayerlessness. When he was required to pray, Peter was sleeping. *And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation, Luke 22:46.*

3. To beware of sinful company. *And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them, Luke 22:55.* Mingling and fellowshiping with the enemies of Christ will not assist us to stand up boldly for Him. Their prejudices will tend to cow our instincts to defend the Saviour.

But Peter's fall provides us with a wonderful instance of Christ's mercy and power. It was clear that the look of Christ was the instrument that produced the repentance and return in Peter. It is that look which is so coveted by God's people, It is a look which imparts grace and enlivening power to the soul to repent and turn to God. It is the look referred to in the



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Aaronic blessing, Numbers 6:24-26. It is the look so much sought by God's people when they felt their helplessness and emptiness, Ps 67:1, Ps 80:3, 7, 19. It is the look that the Church of Christ greatly needs today. It is the look which, like the rising sun in the morning, drives away the darkness and the creatures of the night and brings life and power and energy to all who have been asleep by its energising rays. It is the look to which the prophet referred in Malachi 4:2. *But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*

May the life-giving rays of Christ's love and mercy shine upon us here tonight and grant faith and repentance to sinners and refreshment to His saints.

Consider this look of Christ upon Peter.

I. IT WAS A LOOK THAT ESTABLISHED CONTACT.

As the Lord looked at Peter so Peter looked at the Lord. There could have been no benefit gained by Peter from the Saviour looking at him, had he not seen that look of love on the Saviour's face. How important it is for you to understand that right now the Saviour is looking at you. Will you look to Him and see what His face declares? The gospel call is: *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else,* Isaiah 45:22. The natural disposition of sinners is to avoid the face of Christ, to turn the back upon Him and so avoid seeing the expression of mercy that is revealed there. Satan would blind men to that revelation. *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. . . . For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor 4:4, 6. The full revelation of God's love and mercy is displayed on the tender countenance of the Saviour. Will you look tonight upon His face and live?

II. IT WAS A LOOK THAT EXPRESSED MUCH.

1. It did not express anger and wrath. The Saviour's response to the actions of sinful men that night is clearly recorded. He did not react in anger. When men came to arrest Him and Peter unwisely struck out with a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest, the Saviour rebuked Peter and mercifully healed the wounded man. *And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him,* Luke 22:51. The Saviour went meekly with His persecutors. *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house,* Luke 22:54. He called Judas, "Friend," when he led the mob to arrest the Saviour. *And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him,* Matthew 26:50. He went without violence. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth,* Isaiah 53:7. On the cross, He prayed for his enemies. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,* Luke 23:34. He saved the thief who had been loud against Him in his blasphemies and sneers. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise,* Luke 23:42-43. No, there



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

was no wrath or anger on the blessed countenance of the Son of God on that night of evil. But there is a day of wrath coming when the countenance of Christ will display wrath. It is spoken of in Revelation 6:17. *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* The face that mirrored the love of God to sinners will then manifest the wrath and judgment of God toward rebellious mankind.

2. It must have expressed sorrow and grief. *As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men . . . He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not,* Isaiah 52:14; 53:3. Would not Peter's actions have been part of the marring of the Saviour's face? Peter would have seen his denial, and the grief that such a cruel sin would have caused his Saviour, mirrored in His beloved face.

3. It definitely expressed mercy. It was a look that reproved but did not condemn. It was a look that shamed but did not banish. It was a look that melted and restored Peter. It was a look that conveyed the sentiments of Jer 3:11-14. *And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you.* The mercy the Saviour's expression manifested to Peter, has been revealed to sinners throughout the ages. It is the expression which is upon His face this evening if you but look in answer to the gospel call.

III. IT WAS A LOOK THAT EFFECTED MUCH.

Just what did the look of Christ accomplish?

1. The Saviour's look brought the Word of Christ to Peter's remembrance. The crowing of the rooster had not accomplished this. It ought to have served as a very poignant reminder but it did not. But the look of Christ did. How vital in conversion is the Word of God. Had Peter not forgotten Christ's words, he may well have avoided denying the Lord. But Peter's proud heart had hardly heard, and certainly had not heeded, Christ's words of warning. But now the Saviour's look brings them back. This is the look that must accompany our preaching. Preachers are but as the crowing rooster, helpless to alarm and awaken the sinner until He looks upon him and imparts grace to recall and understand the words of the gospel.

2. The Saviour's look brought home Peter's sin. Again, the rooster crowing had not accomplished this. Peter had gone on denying Christ after the first crowing by the cockerel and would have done so after the second crowing, had not the Lord looked upon him. The rooster is as the preacher. His words will not work conviction. The light of Christ's countenance shone into Peter's heart and showed him his sin. It was that which wrought conviction in Peter's heart.

3. The Saviour's look broke Peter's heart. Instantly he saw what he had done and the enormity of his burden of guilt bore down upon him and broke him. He had to get away



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

and be alone to give full expression to his brokenness and grief. *And Peter went out, and wept bitterly*, Luke 22:62.

4. The Saviour's look brought repentance and restoration. That night, Peter was restored to fellowship with the Lord, his backsliding pardoned. Proof of that may be seen in Christ's message via the angel to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, who had gone to the tomb early on the resurrection morn. *And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you*, Mark 16:7. Specifically, Peter was mentioned. Why? Perhaps those who knew of Peter's dreadful denial would have believed that the Lord would not be interested in such a denier being told of where the risen Saviour would meet with His disciples and so would not have told him. But the Saviour wished Peter to be told and for all to know that the wayward apostle had been pardoned and reconciled to his Saviour. Such then is the message written on the beautiful countenance of Christ. He looks upon you tonight. Will you look upon Him?

There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee. Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved, Unto Him Who was nailed on the tree.

Look, look, look and live; There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee.

It is not thy tears of repentance nor prayers, But the blood that atones for the soul; On Him then believe, and a pardon receive, For His blood can now make you quite whole.

May you look tonight upon the face of Christ looking upon you and be saved.