

<sup>66</sup> While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup> When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. <sup>68</sup> But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. <sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." <sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

We all know that when we don't pay attention in class or even skip class, we are trading our opportunity to be prepared for the exam for a moment's diversion. What we don't recognize quite so easily is that the same experience is true when it comes to the trials of life. Peter's experience in the Passion of Jesus is a great reminder of this fact of life.

Throughout the Gospel, Peter is bold in his proclamations of fearless and death-defying loyalty to Jesus. In fact, his protestations are so over the top that he is unable to hear what Jesus is predicting about the future. In a very real way, Peter actually denies Jesus at least three times before Jesus is ever arrested (Matthew 16:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:33). Each time Peter denied Jesus' words about his Passion by abruptly making his focus his own obedience and courage. So when the time of trial came upon Peter, the hollowness of his words came back to haunt him. He had not depended upon Jesus to teach him what was to come and so he was unprepared to depend upon him when confronted with the challenge.

As we read the Bible, we need to do so with our minds open to what God is telling us through his Holy Spirit. Our encounter with the Word needs to be one of humble dependence rather than complacent familiarity or arrogant rationalization. God has given the promises that lead to hope and many examples that reveal his nature, but we must read with the eyes to see if we are going to be able to apply his Word in our experience of trial. Like an athlete prepares by training through repeated challenges that exceed his natural ability, we need to prepare ourselves for the trials of life by a disciplined listening dependence upon God.

As Peter experienced, even denial is not fatal, but it leads to a bitter brokenness that we need not experience. A wise person does not make another person's mistake a second time.

**Father, prepare me for the time of trial so that I might not deny you. Help me to learn not to depend upon my own strength, but rather on the strength of your promises upon which my hope is founded. Amen.**