

# Deliverance Christ Offers (Romans 6)

by Alan Redpath

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*This sermon explores the breakdown of Simon Peter and how it relates to God's people, highlighting the importance of remembering God's word and being broken before Him.*

**Duration:** 35:37

**Topics:** "Deliverance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the failures and weaknesses of God's people, using the example of Simon Peter. The speaker outlines four steps down in Peter's experience, highlighting the common breakdowns that many believers face. However, the speaker also emphasizes that God does not intend for His people to stay in a state of failure, but rather to rise up and experience the power of His word in their lives. The purpose of the sermon is to encourage listeners to allow their lives to be examined by God's word and to be adjusted according to His will.

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## Transcript

Just before we have a brief prayer together, may I invite you to turn with me to the 26th chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel, and out of that long chapter I'd like to read just four groups of verses upon which our meditation will be based as we proceed in this meeting today. Saint Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, and first of all at verse 31. Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad, but after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

Likewise also said all the disciples, Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Verse 40, And he cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Verse 57, And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed

him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

Verse 69, Now Peter was sitting without in the palace, and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. But when he was gone out into the porch, another maid met him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And he denied again with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bereath thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.

And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now we doth bow our heads before we speak together. O God our Father, thou knowest and seest where we are. So very far behind, our blessed Lord, we long that thou shouldst look upon us as thou didst look upon Peter, till every vestige of sin and shame and pride is broken and we broken with it, ready to meet a risen Lord as he shall later reveal himself to us.

Speak now, we pray, and grant us the listening ear and the willing heart. And be thou supreme in this moment, for thine own dear name's sake. Amen.

I suppose that as we have read together the central portions of this great chapter regarding Simon Peter, we have all been saying to ourselves, of course, we've read that before and we know it well. And I shouldn't be at all surprised if the vast majority of us here have not at some time or other spoken upon these very verses that we have been reading together. And yet I feel that for some of us it isn't the knowledge of the text that matters, it's that the Lord of the passage should bring us to see how true it is of ourselves.

For while this closing verse of chapter 26 breathes the air of utter despair in the life of God's servant, I'm quite sure it holds for him, it held for him, and it holds for us a bright ray of hope as on this first teaching day of convention ministry we think together of God's word and seek the Holy Spirit's searching and teaching. How wonderfully we have here a picture of this brokenness of soul which possessed Peter as according to the closing verse he remembered. And a picture too of the wonderful provision that God was about to open up for him as in the very closing sentence of the verse we read he went out.

And if the memory of all that the Lord had said to him and of all that had happened in spite of it brought him to a place of brokenness before God, then the activity of that moment was the secret of his salvation. He went out. I wonder if there's someone here this morning and as we meet here today you're almost despairing.

The purpose of this convention is that our lives might be brought under the searchlight of God's word and that they might be adjusted to his will. And if that is the purpose and that is what God is going to work out in us and for us, there may be very little new to learn but there may be a great deal to remember. And it was what Peter remembered that broke him down and it was what he did that made it possible for God to lift him up.

What a lot there was for Peter to recall. There had been those three years of fellowship with Jesus Christ from the Jordan to the judgment hall and none had come closer to Christ in his earthly ministry than Simon

Peter along with James and John. And there had been, as you will well recall, those three special occasions of much closer intimacy with Christ which Peter, James, and John had known over and above that which was known by all the twelve.

You remember the raising of Jairus' daughter when the Lord Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John. Likewise, at the transfiguration mount as recorded in Matthew 17, these three disciples had been with him when the others had not. And now, according to our passage, into the deeper shades of the garden when our blessed Lord was facing up to all the cost of the cross and to what it was going to mean to go through with God's plan and purpose for him in the redemption of the world, into those deeper shades he had taken Peter and James and John and bidden them to watch and pray.

And I love to think too, not only of this profound fellowship with Christ himself during his earthly ministry, but of the wonderful personal friendship that is evidenced so often on the pages of the Gospels between Peter and John, so different in their personality, so different in their characteristic outlook upon discipleship, and yet so wonderfully put together by Christ. And I can't help feeling that down the years Simon Peter had been learning very much from John. And there was all that to remember.

How good it is of God to throw his people together with one another, even though they may be very different from one another. Have you ever noticed in the writings of St. Paul how every reference to Demas who forsook him includes a reference to St. Luke who stood with him? And these two men are not mentioned together without having been much together. And Peter and John are like that in the Gospel records.

How frequently the impact of each other's differing life and personality must have been great and profound upon the other. But the special word which Peter was to remember on this occasion was the word of warning which our Lord Jesus Christ had given him. So delightfully recorded here, and I think even more delightfully recorded in St. Luke 22 and verse 31 where we read of the Lord saying to Simon Peter, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat.

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art turned again, strengthen thy brethren. What a lot there was for him to remember.

And the ministry of memory is one of God's choicest and most used ministries. In the lives of his people, it wasn't anything new. It was calling to mind what the Lord had said to him and noting its relevance to the situation as it then was in his case that was God's ministry to him in that hour.

And I shouldn't be at all surprised if there aren't some of us here who are convicted not by any new word but by a word heard long ago by God's faithful dealings with us in past days and by his many teachings out of the word which have come to us. And as we sit and stand here in this meeting on this Monday morning and look back over our past lives, we are searched. God is speaking to us.

We are conscious of our breakdown and our failure and our sin not by light thrown upon a dark text that we hitherto didn't understand but by the light that flashes back into memory of what God has said to us in days gone by and our life has not measured up to it. And we've allowed our forgetfulness and our sin to spoil all that God taught us in earlier days and the backsliding of the Christian who was once so well taught is the devastating feature of our modern English Christianity. Peter remembered and I'm quite sure that God is bringing back to heart and mind as we gather here in Keswick and has been doing it over this weekend many many things that he has spoken to us and taught us in days gone by and God would bring

us to the place where the the impact and the power of that word begins to make itself felt in a new way in our present day experience.

How is it with us today? In the light of all we know, is there any comparison at all between that which we know and that which we are? Has there been some base denial, some cowardly retreat, some compromise with the world, the flesh or the devil? Have we lied as Peter lied before those who should have heard an unflinching statement of truth? God alone knows and and we know the details of our failure are open before his holy sight and they're wrapped up in the consciousness of our own spirits. I feel dear friends that though our cases vary and though my particular breakdown and failure may not just be the same as yours and yours may be somewhat different from the person sitting next to you, we may see here in this chapter the breakdown which is characteristic of God's people so often mirrored in the life and experience of Simon Peter and I would like just taking the bones of the passage as we have read to outline four steps down in Peter's experience. There'll not be time to think of three steps up.

I mention that now because it's wonderful to know that God does not intend his people to mark their steps down and then stop. God intends his people to get on the rung of the ladder that begins to mark the steps up. How well I like that prologue to bible readings this morning.

Some Christians you know live broken. That's not holiness. Holiness is health.

Holiness is wholeness and when God comes to break us it's a necessary prelude to something finer and better for God's purposes that the broken life should be pieced together in all the wonderful harmony of his perfect will that there should be built up a wholeness which is holiness unto the Lord. Steps down must be answered by steps up but in the ministry of God's grace God would bid us pause a while to note the steps down. You know sometimes when you're at the seaside you go from the promenade or the lovely cliff down to the level of the beach down a concrete pathway that has many steps in it and sometimes there are those steps that you can't take one after another like the staircase at home.

They're very wide and you go down one and there's a sort of a jerk and you then you go down the other and every step is a little landing and so down you go not rapidly one after the other and spiritual declension is not necessarily rapid. It may be insidiously slow but at every stage of it you're on a plane which is lower than the last. It may take years and God has brought us to Keswick in 1957 that he might reveal to us the lower step we've been taking.

Here they are as I see them in this chapter. Peter's first blunder was that his confidence was wrong. His confidence was wrong for we read in that 34th verse that when the Lord Jesus Christ warned him about the sore trial that was coming he said verily I say unto thee that this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter had preceded that by saying though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended and he followed it by adding though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee. Here was a man who was determined in his heart that he would not do the very thing that Christ warned him was coming and his determination was based upon self-confidence. First of all it assumed exemption from the possibility of failure and I wonder whether some of us especially older Christians ministers and missionaries and Christian workers we've assumed that we have after many years of knowing the Lord we have come to a position where this kind of thing while it might come the way of some young convert doesn't come our way now we're older than that now.

I won't tell you how old I am but I'm not older than that and I can see some of you who are older than I am and may I say it very kindly to you older folks neither are you. Peter assumed possibly assisted by his past experiences of God's grace after all had there not been the walking on the water had there not been that wonderful declaration of faith at Caesarea Philippi had our Lord not wonderfully approved of his statement of fact thou art the Christ the son of the living God and there had been so much in Peter's past history which made him say on this occasion not I though all men not I not I.

I was talking to a young Christian just a few days ago and he told me how he had gone through an experience and he added which I suppose we all go through about that time and the experience about which he was speaking was having slipped back from the Lord quite soon after his conversion there had been a bright and a happy profession of Christ in conversion and then there had been a slipping away and thank God in his wonderful way as so often with his young children he had drawn him right back to himself and the comeback had been great and blessed but the young Christian said to me I suppose we all go through something like that about that time he may be quite right but may I ask permission to cross out about that time for there are some who come to that backsliding condition years after

that that that particular time even though they went through it then backsliding is not limited to six months after I was saved it can happen 60 years after I was saved and Peter had come to the position where he had assumed that this warning from Christ while applicable to very many didn't touch him for he was immune I wonder if there are some of us whose very failure is to have taken that attitude and we're where we are today because we read the warnings of holy scripture to our bible classes and to our junior converts but we didn't read them to our own hearts and going about our Christian work and amongst our Christian friends with a wonderful air of confidence which had been drawn steadily from confidence in God to confidence in ourselves or our experience or our progress in service

we have been trusting ourselves in the end and thinking that this had no reference to us let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall his confidence was wrong and then I find in the natural sequence of events in this chapter that his communion was broken not willingly for the spirit indeed is willing we read in verse 41 but the flesh had mastered the spirit and prayer watching which was commanded of the Lord had collapsed I cannot help feeling as I read this chapter fresh and as I have been reading it and rereading it in preparation for this morning that this is a very amazing situation for Peter or for us in the face of two things the first is this that surely as our Lord approached Gethsemane he had chosen Peter for this very thing with Peter and John with with James and

John why the very choice of the disciples originally as we read in the early verses of Saint Mark was that they might be with him and when coming towards the close of his earthly ministry and facing the deeper shades of the garden he picked on three of the twelve to go further in it was they might watch and pray with him that was the purpose of their presence in the garden and Peter failed his master as much as he failed himself when prayer watching broke down and he fell asleep but not only had the Lord chosen them for that but the Lord had commanded it so that failure in the place of prayer was a disobedience to a clear command of Christ watch and pray our Lord said and they fell asleep I wonder if we sufficiently regard prayerlessness as sin when we think in terms of sin we think in

terms of those positive acts of evil but what about the failure to watch and pray the breaking of any command is sin and have we been I say again for the young people have their meeting and we here are somewhat older this morning I wonder if the Christian church is how she is today because experienced Christian people are failing in the matter of their praying this communion was broken remember many

years ago in my theological college in Bristol an old clergyman who's long since gone to glory taking several terms of pastoral lectures he gave us so many helpful things for the work of the ministry but one thing that he said has remained in my mind over 20 years now when most of the others have gone I remember him so well saying and underlining as he said it and repeating it time and time

again the minister on his knees in his study before God what he is there he is and no more his communion was broken and as a natural sequence to wrongly placed confidence and broken communion I find in the progress of the chapter that his contact with Christ was distant the word follow is forever linked with Simon Peter not only in its occurrences in the gospels but in his own use of it in the two epistles that bear his name and nobody can think of this little phrase in verse 58 without thinking of Peter he followed afar off there are two characteristics of this distant following in the life of Peter here and in the life of ourselves no doubt I noticed that he was near enough to be interested he went in to see the end he was near enough to be interested he still loved the Lord he was

still keen to know what was happening to his master he was near enough to be interested but he was far enough to be immune from all that close discipleship might cost verse 70 makes that plain near enough to be interested and therefore to know all and see all and watch every little detail of the proceedings but far enough not to be caught up in the total cost of it as our Lord approached the judgment hall and his cross is that how we are I must confess as I look back over the years of my ministry and I think of the 30 years now 31 years now that I have known the Lord there must have been many many occasions when this has been distinctly true in relation to some critical matter in relation to some challenging situation you wouldn't catch H.

W. Craig being ignorant of the facts why I must know what happens I must understand what's going on but how often has it been true that H. W.

Craig was not completely caught up in the total cost of what was going on thought I was in that situation and in relation to that matter completely committed to my Lord and right at his side for whatever he might ask me to do there are a great many Christians who are interested and they're near enough to be interested but if we may borrow a picture from the evangelistic world they're like Zacchaeus they've climbed up a tree they want to see without being seen and in all sorts of vital spiritual issues that beset the church of Christ today there's a great crowd on the touchline but very few on the ball they watch the match they note the breakdowns in those who are committed to the game but they themselves are not yet on the ball for God but when I think of Simon Peter following afar off I

think of a man who who was unwilling to miss anything but unwilling to be totally committed to what he was watching and all that it involved but our contact with Christ like that you regard yourselves as having slipped back somewhat if anything in the spiritual realm had escaped your ken but a thousand things in the spiritual realm have had to go their way without your committal and if I may bring in here what I regard as one of the most delightful touches in the whole realm of the four gospels did you ever notice how according to John 18 16 when Peter followed afar off John spoke to the damsel that kept the gate and she opened it that he might come inside I love that John was inside already he was nearer to Christ than Peter that Peter's following had got more and more distant and when

the gate was closed he was outside John spotted what had happened and he went to the maid that kept the gate and they brought in Peter Christian Peter didn't benefit from John's kindness but what a ministry it was I find amongst Christian people that when one of the brethren seems to be slipping back and to be

outside the gate that those who are just inside and sometimes only just may point a finger see where he is not surprised if any man be overtaken in a fault ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness considering thyself lest thou also be tempted his confidence was wrong his communion broken his contact distant and his company doubtful that's to put it mildly and I like to put it mildly for Simon Peter's sake because I trust that God will put it mildly for my

sake his company was doubtful is that where you are this morning he sat with the coffer and therefore disobeyed the first sound and like lot who pitched his tent towards Sodom he soon found that those to whom he had drawn near for a sort of smoke screen became the company which he was embroiled in my friend is the thing which is wrong in your life and mind that you're in the wrong set you're in the wrong friendship you're finding your pleasure and your comfort and your relaxation amongst those who are ready there to despise and to mock and to hail Christ to his cross his company was doubtful it was made possible by a lie for Peter's whole position there with the scoffers as they gathered around the fire where he would they were warming themselves while Christ was being falsely accused in

the judgment hall his whole position there was based upon a falsehood and the falsehood which was in his position soon became a falsehood on his lips and three times he denied saying I do not know the man his very presence said that before his words uttered it I can't help feeling that we Christian folk have often and all too often allowed ourselves to get into the position which can only be substantiated by a lie our very presence there our very participation in what is going on there is based upon a denial of Christ though we may not have said so much with our lips for there's no depth too low for a Christian to sink once he has got out of touch with his Lord his confidence was wrong his communion was broken his contact was distant and his company doubtful and if his presence there was

based on a lie I'm awfully delighted to know that it was made impossible by a look and there we begin the first step up again as the Lord turned and looked on and he went out may that loving searching look of wounded love reach into the darkest places of our backsliding hearts God give us grace to get out before the place becomes a doom too great to be set right on earth for his name's sake

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