



Even for Liars

“You will disown me three times.” Jesus’s eyes refused to move from Simon Peter’s face.

Peter refused to trust him. Ho...How could Jesus know that? How could Peter ever deny even knowing his Lord? No. Jesus must be wrong. It was the only explanation. Peter would never fail Jesus like that.

Because if he did, how could he ever claim Jesus as his Lord? How could Jesus ever claim Peter as his follower?

And now in the cold of the night, Peter huddles at the fire. His fingers twitch in the chill. John got them in – some family connection – but now, here was Peter, in the courtyard of the high priest. In the courtyard of the man who sent hundreds of soldiers to arrest Jesus.

On the other side of the courtyard, people gather around. They accuse Jesus of such blatant lies.

But Peter’s not paying attention. How could he?

A servant girl investigates Peter’s face in the flickering light. “This fellow’s one of them!” She grins. “I’m sure of it! You – you were with this Jesus fellow!”

“I – I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Peter stalks away from the warmth of the fire. Out to the gateway. Out to the cold.

But the servant girl – this little servant girl follows him! “This fellow is one of them!”

A man leaning against the gateway peers at Peter. “Yeah! You are one of them!”

And this time Peter denies it with an oath: “As surely as God lives, I don’t know the man!”

They left him alone at that. No one would dare take God’s name in vain. Not a good Jew! Not like this man must be, if he’s allowed into the courtyard of the high priest!

And meanwhile, across the courtyard, they keep slinging lies against Jesus. And he does not defend himself.

Finally, another servant comes forward. “Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?”

“I don’t know him! I don’t know this man you’re talking about!”

And as he was speaking... the rooster crowed.

And at that moment, as all the lies are slung at Jesus, he turns and looks at Peter.

Oh.

Oh, Lord.

How could I betray you like this?

And Peter went outside. He broke down and wept bitterly.

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I’ve prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you turn back, strengthen your brothers.”

Jesus had told Simon Peter that earlier that evening. Jesus had known what he would do. And yet Jesus still prayed for him?

How could it be that Jesus cared even for him? Someone who lied about even knowing Jesus? Could he forgive even someone like that?

And Jesus proves that he does, as he speaks the truth that will sentence him to death.

The high priest intones, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you say.” No deceit was found in his mouth.

Brothers, sisters:

In how we live and in how we speak, we are so often like Peter: We lie about who we know. But Jesus came even for liars like us. He speaks truth to you: You are a sinner. He died to forgive even that sin.

And this story is true.

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