

# TEARS OF OPPORTUNITY

*SERIES: THE PASSION ACCORDING TO MATTHEW*

By Scott Grant

## Understanding failure

“Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse”(1), the fascinating documentary on the making of the film “Apocalypse Now,” shows that Francis Ford Coppola, the director of the film, was convinced that he was failing. Even though he felt it was an important topic (the Vietnam War), he was so worried about failing that he even began hoping that he would get hurt, even paralyzed, so that he could find a graceful way to bow out of finishing the film. For Coppola, being paralyzed was a more pleasing alternative than failure.

We fear failure as if it were the worst thing that could happen to us. We take great pains to make sure it doesn’t happen. When we do fail, many of us beat ourselves mercilessly. When we also bring this attitude toward failure and success into our lives of faith, following Jesus then becomes this grand effort not to fail. Jesus, however, is not put off by our failure. In fact, he not only expects our failure, one might even say he delights in it, for failure represents an opportunity.

It certainly was an opportunity for Peter. Jesus predicted Peter’s failure, and when he failed, Peter wept bitterly. In truth, it was Peter’s concept of what it meant to follow Jesus that failed. He needed to change his mind about what Jesus was all about. The tears were part of Peter’s spiritual formation. Likewise, our bitter tears of failure are an opportunity to find out who we are as followers of Jesus and what it means for us to follow him.

Last week we looked at the Passover and how Jesus redefined the Passover meal (Discovery Paper 4811). We will skip over Matthew 26:36-56 concerning Gethsemane—Jesus is strengthened by prayer, he finds the will of the Father, and then the Jewish leaders have him arrested—and will pick up the story in chapter 26, beginning with verse 57.

## Stage set for two trials

**Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. (Matthew 26:57-58)**

These two verses set the stage for a two-part story. The main players are Jesus and Peter. Verse 57 introduces Jesus, and verses 59 through 68 are focused on him. Verse 58 introduces Peter, and verses 69 through 75 are focused on him. Matthew’s brilliant narrative shows that both Jesus and Peter were put on trial, Jesus by the Sanhedrin and Peter by the officers. In the way that Matthew

tells the story from the heavenly perspective, Jesus is on trial for being the Christ, and Peter is on trial for being a follower of Christ. Both are guilty as charged.

After Jesus is arrested, he is taken to the Jewish leaders. Caiaphas, the scribes and the elders had gathered in his court to plot against Jesus, and they have gathered there again to put him on trial (Matthew 26:3-4). Peter, on the other hand, is following Jesus, but “at a distance.” In the courtyard, he was close enough to see Jesus (Luke 22:61). His purpose in following Jesus is “to see the outcome.” Earlier, Peter told Jesus, in so many words, that he’d follow him anywhere, but that was under the premise that Jesus was the Christ and that he would be triumphant (Matthew 26:33-35, 16:21-23). His vision of who Jesus is and what it means to follow Jesus has taken a hit, but he still has hope. Peter hopes that Jesus—and his vision of Jesus as the Christ—will be vindicated and that the Jewish leaders will fall in line or fail.

If Peter gets too close to Jesus before the outcome is determined, he could be arrested and put on trial himself, and he’d end up sacrificing himself for a cause he doesn’t believe in. Unbeknownst to Peter, he will be put on trial anyway by the bystanders in the courtyard. His trial will cause him to face into reality.

### **Keeping our distance**

Like Peter, we too entertain a vision of who Jesus is and what it means for us to follow him. From time to time that vision takes a hit, when things don’t turn out the way we expected them to. We, too, then keep our distance from Jesus, being afraid that he’ll ask us to do things that aren’t according to our version of good. And, like Peter, we do everything we can to determine the outcome before entering into something that feels threatening. We walk around the issue, analyzing it from every angle, and then circle back again. We want an ironclad guarantee that the outcome will be favorable.

But we know there are no guarantees, so we become tentative, and we may not even be sure of what’s true anymore. We become frustrated with ourselves, wondering what’s wrong with us. Like Peter, at these times we have the opportunity to face into reality.

### **The trial of Jesus**

**Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’” The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What**

**further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!” Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”**  
(Matthew 26:59-68)

Those depicted in Matthew 26 as plotting against Jesus are Caiaphas, the high priest; the chief priests; the elders; the scribes. Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians are also in opposition to Jesus (Matthew 21:45; 22:15-16, 34, 41). Who were these people, and what was their problem with Jesus? The high priest was the leader of the Council, or Sanhedrin, a Jewish assembly responsible for civil and religious affairs. The chief priests were former chief priests and other leading priests who were responsible for the temple system. The elders, heads of influential families, were lay leaders. Scribes were experts in the Jewish religious and civil law.

The Sadducees occupied the upper class of Jewish society. The high priest and most if not all of the chief priests hailed from this party. The Sanhedrin was dominated by Sadducees, who collaborated with Rome and had a vested interest in the status quo. The Herodians also favored Rome. Most of the scribes, some of whom served on the Sanhedrin, were Pharisees, who were resistant to Roman occupation.

Jesus upset all of these parties. On the one hand, he stirred up the people and, in the Sadducees' minds, posed a threat to the status quo. On the other hand, he opposed resistance to Rome, upsetting the Pharisees. He upset all of these parties because he replaced the central symbols of Israel with himself. Most of them probably believed that Jesus was a false prophet who was leading Israel astray and therefore deserved death, according to Deuteronomy 13:1-5. John says, “Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation’” (John 11:47).

Matthew's narrative, however, focuses not on the Jewish leaders but on Peter. It's a story about *his* failure, not the failure of the Jewish leaders. Nevertheless, the church has not always seen it this way, and has pointed fingers—not to mention arrows, guns and poison gas—at not only the Jews of this story but Jews throughout the ages. We would do well, as followers of Jesus, to identify with Peter, the one disciple in this story, and find that it is speaking to us about our failure, not the failure of those who don't believe in Christ.

Members of the Sanhedrin are willing to entertain false testimony against Jesus if it will serve their purposes. The Jewish leaders need to convince not only their people but the Roman authorities, to whom they are subject, that Jesus is worthy of death, so they need evidence that he is a threat to Rome. In order to convince Rome, they have to first convict him according to Jewish law and win over their own people. Therefore, they are looking for evidence that convicts him in both spheres. The many false witnesses couldn't provide the necessary testimony.

Then two witnesses, whom Matthew doesn't specifically identify as false, come forward. Under Jewish law, the testimony of at least two witnesses was necessary to condemn someone to death (Deuteronomy 17:6). What these two witnesses say, though they've jumbled things up a bit, has a

ring of truth to it. The precise words that the witnesses put in the mouth of Jesus do not appear in the gospels, though his words in John 2:19 come close, even though there he was referring to the destruction of his body, not the temple (John 2:21). Nevertheless, he had pronounced and acted out God's judgment on the temple, and he did proclaim himself greater than the temple (Matthew 21:12-17, 23:38, 24:1-2, 12:6). He would, in fact, rebuild the temple, but in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 2:19-22).

The testimony of these two witnesses is significant in that it could be used to establish Jesus as a rebel bent on destroying the temple, Israel's sacred symbol. Such intentions would be offensive to Jews and threatening to Rome, which had an interest in maintaining the established order. If we can picture someone, prior to September 11, 2001, standing before the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the White House—these symbols of capitalism, power and democracy—and pronouncing God's judgment on America, while at the same time declaring that God will destroy these buildings, we have some sense of how Jesus' words about the temple would have affected Jewish leaders.

The testimony, if true, also pictured Jesus as making a claim to royalty, for Israelite kings built the temple, and it was expected that *the* king, the Messiah, would restore the temple (2 Samuel 7:12-14, Zechariah 6:12). Jesus could therefore be presented to Rome as making a claim to kingship, another threat to Rome (Matthew 27:11).

The high priest asks Jesus two questions, neither of which Jesus answers. First he asks, "Do you make no answer?" Jesus won't deny the testimony against him. Second, the high priest asks, "What is it that these men are testifying against you?" Jesus won't offer any explanation of their testimony. How are we to understand Jesus' silence? First, his silence is a fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 53:7). Second, since his meeting with the Father in Gethsemane, Jesus has embraced a certain destiny. He believed it was his vocation to die. Third, they wouldn't understand his defense against the testimony. To sort out the truth of the testimony would require a lengthy explanation.

The testimony gives the high priest the opening he's been looking for. Because building the temple was connected with the Messiah, the high priest adjures, or charges, Jesus "by the living God," under oath, to tell them if he is the Messiah, "the Christ, the Son of God." Matthew has already reported that Peter expressed belief that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus validated the statement by saying that it originated in revelation from the Father (Matthew 16:16-17). Caiaphas, of course, does not believe that Jesus is the Christ; his question is designed to solicit evidence that can be used against Jesus. The Christ certainly wouldn't be on trial before Israel's high priest. Or so Caiaphas thinks.

Now Jesus has a question he can speak to: the question whether he is the Christ. He says, literally, "You said." His response is a qualified affirmative. He says in so many words that Caiaphas himself has answered his own question, and that the answer is yes, Jesus is the Christ. By letting Caiaphas' words speak for themselves, Jesus is saying that he is under no obligation to subject himself to the high priest's oath. Also, Jesus is saying that Caiaphas has no idea what the answer to the question means. You will recall that Jesus answered Judas with the same words

when Judas, in response to Jesus' statement that one of the disciples would betray him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" (26:25). Just as surely as Judas betrayed Jesus, Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus then tells Caiaphas what the answer to his question means, and he turns the tables on the high priest. With his next words, he takes the judge's seat, so to speak, and puts the Sanhedrin on trial (the pronoun "you" is plural, so he is speaking to others in addition to the high priest). The judges are judged. The high priest said, "I adjure you," but Jesus says to him, literally, "I tell you," and what he tells them is that he will be vindicated and that they will see it.

Jesus invokes a scene from Daniel 7, where Daniel sees a vision of dominion being taken away from the "beasts," the kingdoms of the world, and "one like a Son of Man" coming up on the clouds of heaven to receive an everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days, who is God. In God's courtroom, as pictured in Daniel 7, the kingdoms of the world are judged, but the Son of Man is vindicated. By use of the title "Son of Man," Jesus lifts the discussion from the arena of earthly politics to the realm of heavenly glory. Jesus says that he, the Son of Man, will be "sitting at the right hand of Power," a position of heavenly authority. "Power" was a Jewish title for God. Jesus also evokes Psalm 110:1, where David writes: "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" The Son of Man is the representative of the true people of God, and when Jesus identifies himself as such, he is also identifying members of the Sanhedrin as enemies of God, at least for now.

Jesus says that members of the Sanhedrin will see the Son of Man "coming on the clouds of heaven." Again, in Daniel's vision, the clouds were a method of divine transportation to carry the Son of Man "up" to God. Jesus is saying, then, that he will ascend to God, be vindicated, receive an everlasting kingdom and sit in authority over the world, including Caiaphas. This will mean the liberation of true Israel from the power of the beasts, the kingdoms of the world, and that's what it means for us as Jesus reigns now from heaven in authority over the whole world. This is the David and Goliath story all over again, with Jesus in the role of David and Caiaphas in the role of Goliath.

Jesus says to Caiaphas and the rest, literally, that "from now on" they will see it. At this moment, then, they are seeing the vindication of Jesus, as he turns the tables on them and becomes their eternal judge in their makeshift courtroom. They will also see it in the future, when they see evidence of the authority of Jesus: the growth of the church against all odds and the destruction of the temple by Rome in 70 AD. Jesus would be vindicated as a prophet, for he predicted the destruction of the temple.

The Sanhedrin found two witnesses, and so does Jesus. Caiaphas himself, in Jesus' understanding, is a witness, as is the word of God, which Jesus invokes. Both the high priest and the scriptures testify that Jesus is the Christ. The divine verdict in this scene, which depicts the heavenly courtroom, is that Jesus is the Christ.

Tearing one's clothes was a sign of mourning or repentance. It was also a sign that one had heard blasphemy. In Caiaphas' mind, Jesus' placing himself enthroned next to God qualified as blasphemy. The Sanhedrin agrees that Jesus is deserving of death, and they now hope they have enough evidence to convince both the Jews and Romans of their case. But before the Jewish

leaders take their next political step, they spit in his face and beat him, mocking his supposed authority. If he's in authority over them and they're supposed to see it, their reasoning goes, he should be able to prevent such treatment. They demand that as the Christ, the one who predicts his own vindication, he prophesy who is hitting him.

The word translated "slap" is the same word that is used in Matthew 5:39: "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also." Jesus, here, is practicing what he preaches. He is showing Israel how to be Israel. He is also fulfilling what was written of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 50:5-6:

"The Lord God has opened my ear;  
And I was not disobedient,  
Nor did I turn back.  
I gave my back to those who strike me,  
And my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;  
I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting."

In Peter's mind, the Jewish leaders, of all people, shouldn't be treating Jesus like this if he is the Christ. They are the people that Jesus should win over or defeat. They are the ones who must submit to his leadership. Jesus, of course, is the Christ, but for Peter, following Christ will mean involvement with different people than he envisioned. The establishment simply will not be won.

### **Higher goals**

Likewise, following Jesus may mean being involved with people who respond differently than we envision. Our friends, co-workers, neighbors, ministry partners, girlfriends, boyfriends and spouses may not look and act the way we think they should. It all may be significantly harder than we thought it would be. Have you ever noticed a common theme in your fantasies? In any of them, is there ever a scenario in which something is difficult? No, everything is easy. And where are people in our fantasies? They either meet all our needs or they are absent.

Jesus' vision for our lives is not so easy. He has higher goals for us that involve real relationships with real people who don't meet all our needs. Instead, he himself wants to meet our needs, he wants to show us that others can meet some of our needs in the strangest ways and he wants to teach us how to love. Along the way, who knows what kinds of people Jesus is going to drop in our path? I remember hearing a former missionary speak a few years ago. He ministered in the jungles of South America. "I wanted to work with a big tribe," he said, "but God wanted me to work with a small tribe."

### **The trial of Peter**

**Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he**

**denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:69-75)**

Peter, too, is on trial, though he doesn't know it. Earlier, he said he was willing to die with Jesus (Matthew 26:35), but now, as events propel Jesus toward his death, Peter is keeping his distance, sitting in the courtyard of the high priest—close enough to see the outcome but far enough away to make a break if the outcome is unfavorable. Peter may have been willing to die with Jesus, but Jesus has messed with Peter's concept of the Messiah so badly that he now doubts whether this cause is worth dying for. What is on trial, in one sense, is Peter's version of life, which will fail.

A certain servant girl, or, more literally, “one” servant girl comes forward against Peter. The word translated “servant girl” appears in the diminutive form of that word. Jesus faced a barrage of false witnesses, but Peter only has to stand up to one little servant girl. What is the charge against Peter? “You too were with Jesus the Galilean,” she says. Just as Jesus was charged with claiming to be the Christ, Peter is charged with being a follower of Christ. Jesus did not deny the charge against him. Peter, however, quickly denies the charge against him, though it is true. It's not enough for Peter to deny the charge; he has to do so “before them all.” Peter launches something of a pre-emptive strike against further inquiry, but it fails. In an interesting narrative twist, the Sanhedrin in the trial of Jesus was trying to obtain false testimony. In his own trial, Peter provides the false testimony himself, denying that he is a follower of Jesus.

Peter feels the awful truth closing in on him, so he moves out to what he thinks is a safer place, the gateway of the courtyard, but the truth tracks him down. This time another servant girl says to others nearby, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” From the perspective of the narrative, the girl is responding to Peter's denial “before them all.” If it's the word of the first servant girl against that of Peter, another servant girl comes forward to make it two against one. Now there are two witnesses against Peter, just as there were two witnesses against Jesus. Notice the charge is getting more specific: Jesus is now identified as being from a specific town, not just a region. So Peter has to meet the growing number of witnesses and their more specific testimony with a more intense denial. This time, he takes an oath. The high priest tried to force an oath upon Jesus, but Peter takes one voluntarily. His denial is also more specific, going from “I do not know what you are talking about” to “I do not know the man.”

The court has now heard the two witnesses and the defense, and it renders its verdict. The bystanders believe the witnesses, not Peter. A literal translation of the word translated “bystanders” would be “those who were standing.” Just as the high priest stood in seeking a verdict against Jesus, those nearby are standing to render their verdict against Peter. They are convinced by Peter's manner of speech, which could be a reference to his northern accent or the shaky way in which he defended himself. Jesus told the high priest that his question as to whether Jesus was the Christ gave away the answer. Jesus said to Caiaphas, in so many words, “You have said it yourself.” As to the question of whether Peter is a follower of Jesus, the bystanders tell Peter, in so many words, “You have said it yourself.”

The charge against Peter gets more specific still. They say, “Surely you are one of them”—one of Jesus’ followers. The word “surely” makes the charge more emphatic, the appearance of the pronoun “you” in the Greek text also makes it more emphatic, and the tense of the verb is now present. Earlier, the witnesses said “you *were* with Jesus” and “this man *was* with Jesus.” Now they say “you too *are* one of them.” Peter, of course, has to turn up his denial a notch in order to meet the verdict. He *begins* to curse and swear; he’s ready to do whatever it takes to convince them that he is not a follower of Jesus. He “curses,” invoking a curse upon himself in the event that he is lying. He swears, taking an oath again.

Just as he was beginning to deny his association with Jesus, something interrupts him; a cock crows. And Peter knows that an even higher court has rendered its verdict, endorsing the verdict of the earthly court. He remembers the words of Jesus from earlier in the night. When Jesus said all of the disciples would fall away and Peter said he would never fall way, Jesus told Peter, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny me three times” (Matthew 26:34). Jesus predicted that Peter, despite his vow that he would never fall away, would fall away this very night, before morning, signified by a cock’s crow. Peter was supposed to deny himself, but instead he denies Jesus (Matthew 16:24).

The members of the Sanhedrin mocked Jesus and told him, “Prophecy to us, you Christ,” and here, the same night, his prophesy regarding Peter has been fulfilled. He predicted that Peter would deny him three times, and Peter does so. That means his more significant prophecy, that “you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven,” is trustworthy.

The crow of the cock pierces Peter’s heart and catches him in mid-denial. He leaves the courtyard. Jesus was guilty of being the Messiah, owned up to it and got spit on, beaten and mocked by the court that convicted him. Peter is guilty of being a follower of Jesus and gets out of Dodge.

What happens when the cock crows? Peter had earlier expressed belief that Jesus was the Christ, but subsequent developments have caused him to question that belief. But if Jesus could predict Peter’s actions so exactly, how could he not be the Christ, even though he’s not acting like the Christ is supposed to act? This question must be wreaking havoc in Peter’s heart.

In response to the cock’s crow, Peter does something else. Rather, he stops doing something he was doing. He stops denying that he is a follower of Jesus. The simple fact of the matter is that Peter *is* a follower of Jesus. Despite his best efforts, he cannot deny who he is. Two servant girls say he’s a follower of Jesus; the bystanders render the verdict that he is a follower of Jesus, and even the blasted rooster says he’s a follower of Jesus. Jesus has disappointed Peter by being the wrong kind of Messiah and submitting to arrest, but Peter loves Jesus. He is a follower of Jesus, and he will follow Jesus.

But first, he weeps bitter tears. In Matthew’s description of Peter, we hear echoes of the Lord’s words, as recorded by the prophet Zechariah: “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on me



whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born” (Zechariah 12:10). Peter has tried to be someone he is not, and it hasn’t worked. Bitter tears flow from the man trying to understand who Jesus is as the Christ. And who is Peter? Is he a follower, or isn’t he? He said he would follow Jesus anywhere, but he wasn’t able to follow Jesus any further than the courtyard of the high priest. Yet everyone in the courtyard said he was a follower, and ultimately, he stopped denying it. He crashes into the harsh reality: He is a follower of Jesus, but following Jesus is a lot different than he thought it would be, because Jesus’ version of the Christ is different from Peter’s.

With his previous outlook on life, he doesn’t have what it takes to follow Jesus in this new reality. You see, *Peter had to fail*. He failed at something he had no business succeeding in—following Jesus with his previous concept of what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ. He failed because his version of reality failed. So, for now, the tears flow. And as the tears flow, he is being prepared to find out who he is and to find out who Jesus is. He is a broken man—exactly the kind of person Jesus is looking for. Jesus is in no way discouraged by Peter’s failure. He expected it and even predicted it. The tears of Peter’s biggest failure, then, water the seeds of his discipleship.

### **When the cock crows**

Sooner or later, Peter’s story becomes our story. If we have chosen to follow Jesus, we too will face similar crises in identity as our version of reality fails to match up with what’s really true: who Jesus really is and what he is really doing in our lives. Jesus may be leading us to a place that we never thought he would, and we may fight it. The truth is that Jesus wants us there, and if we’re fighting it, we’ll feel increasingly uncomfortable about being there. Peter felt fine in the courtyard, but then the truth closed in. We feel fine in the courtyards of our lives, so to speak, but then the truth closes in. We feel increasingly anxious and want to move to an even safer place. But ultimately, if we’re followers of Jesus, we can’t effectively deny who we are.

If we do try to deny it, like Peter, we won’t feel good about it. We’ll feel as if we’re living in two worlds, and our best efforts to compensate for the incongruity will fail to quiet the anxiety within. Then one day the cock crows, so to speak. We hear something or see something or feel something that precipitates an internal crisis of sorts. We’re not sure what’s real anymore, and perhaps tears begin to flow. As we wrestle with reality, there is a release of sorts; what is unreal will slip from our clutches, and we are reminded of who we are, and we know we’re where we shouldn’t be—far from Jesus. We know that Jesus is our Lord, that he is leading somewhere else and that we must follow him there. We now want to follow Jesus wherever he leads, because we’re convinced of his goodness. We find out who we are: followers of Jesus. We find out who Jesus is: the Christ, who leads us to good places. And we follow him to those places. Rich Mullins sings, “And step by step you’ll lead me / And I will follow you all of my days.” The words express confidence that the Lord will lead and that we, as followers of Jesus, will follow, when we know where the Lord is leading.

Peter found out who Jesus was, and that the true version of the Christ was significantly different from his. Peter found out who he himself was. Not many days after his failure, he took his stand

on the Day of Pentecost, in this very city, and preached a sermon about Christ that resulted in the conversion of 3,000 people (Acts 2:14, 41). He himself was later seized by the Jewish leaders and stood before the Sanhedrin to answer charges. Then, filled with the Holy Spirit, he spoke boldly of Jesus (Acts 4:1-22).

### **A grand opportunity**

Jesus is in no way discouraged by our failures. We have to fail! Our version of reality has to fail! We have to fail at things we have no business succeeding in. Just as Jesus expected Peter's failure, he expects our failure, and is not in the least discouraged by it. He considers our failure a grand opportunity. The tears of our failure only water the seeds of our discipleship.

Failure then becomes something not to be avoided at all costs. Failure, in fact, is unavoidable. But more than that, it is necessary. The bitter tears of failure are an opportunity to find out who we are as followers of Jesus and what it means for us to follow him. This is the kind of sorrow that Jesus wants for his people. May God pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication in our age, so that we would mourn our failure to follow Jesus and find pride and pretense melted away by our bitter tears.

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### NOTES

(1) *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, © 1991 Paramount Studios. Written and directed by Fax Bahr with George Hickenlooper. Documentary footage directed by Eleanor Coppola.

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