

The Gospel According to  
**Luke**

***“I’ve Fallen and I Can Get Up!”***

Chapter 22:54-62

Introduction

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1991, 12 year old Boy Scout Jared Michael Negrete was on his first overnight backpacking trip. Jared, five other Scouts, and an adult Scout leader were hiking to the summit of Southern California's tallest peak, the 11,502-foot San Gorgonio Mountain.

Jared fell behind his fellow Scouts. The Scout leader must have figured that the rest of the group would reach the summit, then pick-up Jared on their way back down the trail to camp.

**They never saw him again.** Even after an extensive search and rescue operation, Jared was lost.

The Christian life is sometimes compared to a walk with Jesus; sometimes to a long-distance race. It’s not going too far to compare it to a climb to the summit of a mountain. In any case, *you don’t want to fall behind and lose sight of Jesus and become lost in some wilderness of sin.*

**Falling behind** is central to the verses we’re about to discuss. The very first thing you read about Peter is that **he followed from a distance**. He lost sight of Jesus until after he had denied the Lord three times and the **Lord turned and looked at him**.

These verses speak first as a warning to those of us who have not yet lost sight of the Lord in our walk or race or climb; we should keep up the pace. Then they speak to any of us when we have lost sight of Jesus in our walk or race or climb.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 If You Follow At A Distance, You Will Lose Sight Of Jesus, and #2 If You’ve Been Following At A Distance, You Should Look Straightway At Jesus.

#1 If You Follow At A Distance,  
You Will Lose Sight Of Jesus  
(v54-60a)

About fifteen years ago we had an overnight Men's Retreat camping up at Mineral King in late September. Three of us decided to hike up to one of the lakes and do some fishing. I don't need to tell you that I am not an experienced hiker, do I?

About an hour into what turned out to be a three-hour hike, one of us (not me) had gotten so far ahead on the trail that we lost sight of him. I would have stopped and returned to camp; but I didn't want to explain to that young man's mother we had left him up in the wilderness to die!

We lost the trail. Somehow we managed to regain the trail, and we actually found the lake, and our fellow hiker. Just about then, it began to snow. **I never ran so fast, so far downhill in my life!**

[Luke 22:54](#) Having arrested Him, they led *Him* and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance.

Peter loved Jesus. He had left everything to follow Jesus. There was no doubt about his devotion to the Lord. He had become one of the inner circle, along with James and John. When he had earlier that evening exclaimed, [Lord, I am ready to go with you, both to prison and to death](#), he meant every word of it from his heart of hearts.

If Peter could fall behind and lose sight of Jesus, then so can I. So can you.

How did it happen? We've already seen two reasons Peter fell behind in our previous studies. I don't mean to keep going over old ground, but they are too important to forget.

First, and maybe foremost, Peter fell into a spiritual fatigue because of prayerlessness. In verses thirty-nine through forty-six, Jesus told him to pray; instead, Peter slept. The moment prayer loses its priority, I have slackened my pace in my walk or run or climb, and I have begun to fall behind.

Second, we saw in verses forty-seven through fifty-three that Peter was in the flesh. That always sounds like a horror movie – like *Night of the Flesh Eating Christians*. Let me explain. The Bible uses the word ‘flesh’ to describe our natural impulses and appetites which need to be brought into submission and under the control of the Holy Spirit. If they are not, they can become overpowering. A brief, partial description of the tendencies of our unchecked-flesh is given in the Book of Galatians, where the apostle Paul wrote,

Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

Galatians 5:21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter reacted in a fleshly way – striking out with his sword and cutting off the ear of one of his enemies. Jesus was a model of walking in the Spirit, as He reached out and healed the man’s wound and then went-off with His arrestors to be crucified.

Until we go to be with the Lord, we will struggle against the flesh, to bring it under the control of the Holy Spirit. When we give in to our flesh, we have slackened our pace in our walk or run or climb, and have fallen much farther behind.

**Fatigue** and the **flesh** set us up for following Jesus at a distance. We don’t even recognize we have fallen behind. Peter didn’t; but you see how he lost sight of the Lord as the story is told.

Luke 22:55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

Luke 22:56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.”

Luke 22:57 But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

Luke 22:58 And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

Luke 22:59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

Luke 22:60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!”...

The danger to Peter was very real. When a revolutionary leader was arrested, his followers were typically arrested as well. He loved the Lord so much that he was risking his life to see what would happen to Him.

Peter had fallen behind because of the fatigue of prayerlessness. He had fallen further behind because he reacted in his flesh. His denials around the fire were the result. He was still following Jesus; he was actually very close in physical proximity to where the Lord was being interrogated. But spiritually he had lost sight of the Lord.

**Sitting by the fire, surrounded by danger and unbelievers, Peter represents all of us as we venture out into a hostile world. We love the Lord and want to be effective in our witness for Him. But we can lose sight of Him if we're following from a spiritual distance.**

You see a few of the ways we are like Peter in the comments made about him as he sat by the fire. The first comment was that Peter was *with* Jesus. It doesn't take long for people to see that you have been *with* Jesus. When you get saved, God the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you. He begins to radically affect your motives and behavior. You change – and people see that there is Someone *with* you.

The next comment directed toward Peter was that he was *of them*. He had hung-out with the other followers of Jesus. When you get saved, you want to be around other believers. You start attending a fellowship; you get involved serving in it. People begin to see you are one *of them*.

Then they busted Peter because of the way he talked. In his case, it was his Galilean dialect. In your case, your language is affected as you are with the Lord and of His people:

1. First, you quit cursing – *or you should!*
2. Second, you begin to use a vocabulary unique to the Bible and Christians. Words like *fellowship, rapture, justification, sanctification*, and *spirit-filled* sneak their way into your speech. Phrases like 'the flesh' fall off of your lips.

You and I, everyday, are sitting by some fire in the world. It might be at home, or at work, or at school. We want to tell others about the Lord, not deny Him in any way. If we sit there fatigued because we are prayerless; if we sit there dominated in some area by our flesh; a denial of Jesus is communicated through our lives. It may not be as radical as the open denials of Peter. But it is a denial of His *presence* and His *power* in our lives.

Pray, and you will remain in His presence. You won't have spiritual fatigue; you'll keep up the pace.

Yield to the Holy Spirit, and experience His power. You won't give in to the flesh; you'll keep up the pace.

Jesus wants to encourage you in your following. You see it in His tenderness towards Peter, in the remaining verses.

#2 If You've Been Following At A Distance,  
You Should Look Straightway At Jesus  
(v60b-62)

We stopped before the end of verse sixty. The rest of the verse reads, "Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed." Then you read,

Luke 22:61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

Luke 22:62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Three things stand-out for us to consider. First, Peter remembered the word of the Lord. Think of it: At just the exact moment the Lord was in a place to make eye contact with Peter, a particular rooster had been appointed by God to crow. If the Lord could fulfill His prediction of a crowing rooster, then He *could* and *would* certainly fulfill the promise He had also given as a word to Peter. You saw it in verse thirty-two,

Luke 22:32 ...I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

If you've been following Jesus from a distance, He will somehow remind you of His word. Some rooster will crow in your life from the pulpit, from your radio, one of your friends. Remember God's Word, the Bible, and you will turn to the Lord.

Then there were the looks. Not just the look of Jesus. "Don't ever forget that the look of Jesus, however wonderful, would have been no good, if at the moment Peter would not have been looking His way" (Father Stanton, quoted by G. Campbell Morgan).

Anytime you have fallen behind – whether from following at a distance, or from open sin – look straightway at Jesus. Don't look to any others. Don't look for any programs. Don't look to any rituals. Look straight into His wonderful face and find your forgiveness and restoration.

Jesus was looking at Peter. I know His look was full of grace, mercy, compassion, and the like, because of what He had promised Peter. His look confirmed His heart. Even as Jesus was being abused and taken off to more illegal trials and beatings, His eyes were upon His wayward disciple, to restore him.

Peter **went out and wept**. His weeping shows his repentance. Sure, you can cry from remorse and not repent. But we know the end of this story; we know this was repentance.

Peter was no longer in the same physical proximity with Jesus, but he was now close to the Lord spiritually. He had closed the distance created by the fatigue of prayerlessness and his own flesh. Peter was back walking, running, climbing with the Lord. **In fact, the very next time you see Peter's name mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, he is running to the empty tomb of Jesus** (Luke 24:12).

Applying the Word...

If you are a Christian, chances are when you got saved someone handed you a pamphlet explaining how to grow in your new spiritual life. There are usually five things you are encouraged to do for the rest of your life:

1. Pray.
2. Yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. Fellowship with other believers.
4. Share Jesus with unbelievers.
5. Read and study God's Word.

Peter's denials remind us of the importance of all these simple steps:

1. He ought to have prayed, but didn't. His denials began with prayerlessness.
2. At the fire, they said Peter had been **with** the Lord. He denied it; but isn't it a reminder that you are with Someone in this life, as you are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit?
3. At the fire, they said Peter was **of them** who followed Jesus. He denied it; but isn't it a reminder to be in fellowship with other Christians?
4. At the fire, they said Peter talked like a follower of Jesus. He denied it; but isn't it a reminder to share the Lord with unbelievers?
5. Peter had forgotten God's Word to him – reminding us to stay grounded in God's Word.

The Christian life is built upon these simple principles. They are not hard; but they require commitment. If you begin to put other things ahead of them, you will find yourself following Jesus from a greater and greater distance. You will lose sight of Him. **Get back to basics!**

There are nonbelievers here. Sure, many times the Christians you know are blowing it – just like Peter. **Don't look at him; don't look at them.**

Look at Jesus. His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane; His six illegal trials; His several beatings; His crucifixion; all of it was for you. Look full in His wonderful face. You will find the forgiveness of your sins.