

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 14: 60-72

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week we'll be reading Mark chapter 14, and today we'll read from verse 60 to verse 72.

After Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was first taken to the house of Annas. Annas was the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas, and was a prominent figure in the priesthood system. Annas improperly used his influence to conduct the first round of trial against Jesus, which was illegal. Then Jesus was brought to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, where He faced another trial. Although members of the Jewish council, including priests, scribes, and elders, were present, this was not a legal trial. The rules of the Jewish council clearly stated that trials must be conducted openly during the day. Therefore, at Caiaphas's house, it was at best a process of gathering evidence, and this evidence-gathering process was a complete failure because the testimonies of those who bore false witness did not align with each other.

Verse 60: "And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?'"

High Priest Caiaphas was probably becoming impatient. He was determined to condemn Jesus to death, yet until now, no favorable testimony could be found. He decided to take matters into his own hands, which was entirely irregular. As the chairman of the council, he should have impartially presided over the proceedings without participating in the arguments for or against. However, he decided to intervene personally. He first asked Jesus, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" Jesus, representing the truth, naturally did not need to defend against the self-defeating false testimonies. More importantly, Jesus

remained silent to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah, as stated in Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

Verse 61: "But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again, the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?'"

Jesus still remained silent, not offering any defense or response. At this point, the high priest went straight to the heart of the matter, asking, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jews typically avoided directly mentioning the name of God to avoid breaking the third commandment, which prohibits taking the Lord's name in vain. Instead, they used the term "the Blessed" to refer to God. "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" The term "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew word "Messiah." The high priest must have heard rumors that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and knew that Jesus would testify to being the Messiah. So, he directly asked Jesus, "Are You the Christ?" Recall in Matthew 16:16-17, when Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus was greatly pleased. But now, it was the high priest asking Him if He was the Christ. In response to this question, Jesus could not remain silent anymore. He came for this purpose and had to testify about Himself. Of course, Jesus also knew that the high priest's question was not sincere and was intended to trap Him using His words as evidence against Him. But, so what?

Verse 62: "Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

Regarding the question of whether Jesus is the Christ, Jesus did not evade it at all; He directly answered, "I am." Moreover, He went on to inform the high priest of two things that would happen: First, "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power." This statement implied that the high priest's schemes would

succeed, as Jesus would indeed be killed, but He would also resurrect, ascend to heaven, and be seated at the right hand of God the Father. By using the term "Son of Man," Jesus emphasized that His humanity, after death and resurrection, would be exalted and seated at the right hand of God the Father, strongly affirming the resurrected Christ's elevation with His humanity intact.

The second thing Jesus mentioned was that one day, Christ would come again, riding on the clouds of heaven with glory. This aligns with Jesus' prophecy on the Mount of Olives, recorded in Mark 13:26, where He said that they would see the Son of Man coming in power and glory on the clouds. Regarding all the false accusations, Jesus completely ignored them, offering no defense, but when it came to whether He was the Christ, Jesus did not back down at all. He testified clearly, confidently, and powerfully. As Christians today, we should follow Jesus' example. We can withstand personal attacks, but when it comes to witnessing for Christ and the Church, we must stand firm, regardless of the cost.

Verse 63, 64: "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death."

The high priest was waiting for this very statement from Jesus. None of the various false testimonies could condemn Jesus, but now that Jesus openly admitted to being the Christ, the high priest immediately tore his clothes, putting on a show of great sorrow and indignation. However, this was entirely inappropriate. According to Leviticus 21:10, "The one who is the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair hang loose or tear his clothes." The high priest must always be mindful of his status, as he is ordained to wear the sacred garments and must not tear his clothes. This rule was emphasized in the case of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who were struck dead by God for offering unauthorized fire (Leviticus 10). When their deaths occurred, Moses instructed Aaron not to let his hair hang loose or tear his clothes, lest he die and incur the

wrath of the Lord upon the entire congregation. Instead, they were to mourn for the offense they had committed against God.

Therefore, the high priest's action of tearing his clothes was inappropriate, and Caiaphas likely did so as a theatrical gesture to emphasize the seriousness of Jesus' statement. He declared that Jesus had spoken blasphemy and that there was no need for further witnesses. Everyone present had heard it, so what was their decision? Consequently, they all condemned Him to death, but according to the trial regulations of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, a conviction could only be made after the votes of the 71 council members were cast the following day in the daytime.

Verse 65: “Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.”

We witness an illegal conviction leading to vile, wicked, and disgraceful behavior. Some among them spat in Jesus' face, expressing their disgust and disdain for Him. Others covered His face and struck Him with their fists, demanding that He prophesy who had struck Him. Even the guards joined in, slapping Him with their palms and humiliating Him. Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, endured the humiliation of the Jewish religious leaders to bear the sins of humanity. Faced with such insults, Jesus silently endured, not uttering a word, like a lamb led to the slaughter, silent before its shearers.

Dear brothers and sisters, this reminds us that we must establish an intimate relationship with Christ in our service to truly serve God. We must not serve in mere religious observance. The first to persecute Jesus were the religious leaders of Judaism. Religious convictions and ideologies can rationalize many irrational actions, bypassing one's conscience and numbing it, leading to despicable, wicked, and vile acts. When the conscience loses its function, the mind tends towards evil. Not only did the members of the Sanhedrin exhibit such behavior, but this evil mindset can also spread and affect Jesus' disciples. Mark then focuses on Peter.

Among the eleven disciples, John had connections with the high priest's family, allowing him entry into the high priest's house, as detailed in the Gospel of John. Initially, Peter fled with the other nine disciples, but he later returned, unable to shake off his concern, and followed Jesus from afar.

Verse 66-67: “Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.’”

Peter followed from afar in the courtyard below the high priest's house, faintly seeing and hearing the accusations and insults hurled at Jesus by members of the Sanhedrin. His heart must have been filled with questions. Wasn't his Master powerful, able to cast out demons, heal the sick, and even raise the dead? Why was He now subjected to such humiliation and abuse? In that moment, he had no answers. Jesus had previously foretold His suffering and even death, but evidently, Peter had not fully grasped His words. Now, witnessing Jesus' humiliation, he found it difficult to accept. At that moment, a servant girl of the high priest approached, recognizing Peter warming himself by the fire. She said to him, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." The servant girl looked at Peter with contempt, as if he were a criminal, and spoke as if Jesus had committed an unforgivable sin, and Peter, as His associate, was complicit, both being from Nazareth.

Verse 68: “But he denied it, saying, ‘I neither know nor understand what you are saying.’ And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.”

Peter himself was also filled with doubt, now accused of being an accomplice of Jesus. In a response driven by his fleshly instincts, Peter said, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." This highlights why Jesus had repeatedly forewarned His disciples, three times, that He would suffer and even be killed upon coming to Jerusalem. He wanted to prepare them so that when the events unfolded, they would know how to respond. Unfortunately, the disciples did not

take His words seriously and failed to truly understand them. Peter denied the servant girl's accusation and immediately moved away. He went from the courtyard below to the front courtyard. At that moment, the rooster crowed, but this first crowing of the rooster did not awaken Peter.

Verse 69: “And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, ‘This is one of them.’”

The servant girl seemed unwilling to let Peter off the hook. She followed Peter into the front courtyard. At this point, Peter stood among another group of people. Peter still didn't want to leave; he wanted to know what would happen to Jesus in the end. His heart still loved his Master. Then the servant girl said to those standing nearby, pointing at Peter, "This man was also with Jesus." She must have pointed directly at Peter and warned others to be wary of him.

Verse 70: “But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, ‘Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.’”

Peter denied it a second time. After a little while, those standing nearby said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away. You are a Galilean." Matthew 26:73 adds the detail that it was Peter's accent that exposed him as a Galilean. John 18:26 adds further detail, revealing that the person making the accusation was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, and she had seen Peter in the garden with Jesus. Now it seemed the evidence was clear. All eyes were on Peter, and at this moment, Peter became agitated.

Verse 71: “Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this Man of whom you speak!’”

When faced with a situation, if we cannot return to our spirit, our flesh will react promptly, and the response of the flesh always leads to worse outcomes. At this moment, Peter became agitated and began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the man you're talking about!" In Matthew 26:30-31, when Jesus foretold that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice, Peter vehemently denied it, saying he would even die with Jesus and never disown him. However, human beings are weak. We should not doubt Peter's love and loyalty to Jesus. He loved Jesus and was loyal to him; otherwise, he would not have followed Him all the way. But love and loyalty cannot guarantee that a person will always be brave, never stumble, or never be weak. Peter became so weak that he even resorted to cursing and swearing that he did not know Jesus.

This incident of Peter cursing and swearing is only recorded in the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel was spoken by Peter and recorded by Mark. It is not mentioned in Matthew, Luke, or John. When writing, the other authors still carried grace, but Peter was willing to record his own worst side, showing his weakness to future Christians. Peter truthfully testified to what kind of person he became, entirely by the grace of God. Therefore, he was willing to expose his weakest and most shameful side to everyone.

Verse 72: "A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

When he thought about it, he wept. Immediately after Peter swore and denied knowing Jesus, the rooster crowed. This was the second crowing; the first one didn't awaken Peter. Now, the rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered Jesus' words that before the rooster crows twice, he would deny Him three times. And when the rooster crowed, Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). According to John 18:24-27, it was the officers who arrested Jesus, bringing Him from the house of Annas to Caiaphas the high priest. As they passed through the courtyard, Jesus turned and looked at Peter.

Though Peter didn't admit it verbally, his heart still loved the Lord. Now, as their eyes met once more and the rooster crowed again, Peter remembered Jesus' words. He felt overwhelming guilt in his heart and went outside to weep bitterly. He was deeply disappointed in himself, questioning if he was truly worthy to be called Jesus' disciple. But as he remembered Jesus' words, his thoughts became clearer, and he deeply repented of his actions, weeping outside.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are not stronger than Peter; we just haven't faced the same circumstances. Because Peter was utterly disappointed in himself, Jesus, after His resurrection, specifically remembered Peter and deliberately restored his faith. When Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark, Peter was not only restored but also entrusted by God to open the door to the Gospel for the Gentiles. He became an apostle filled with hope. He wanted Mark to record his weaknesses to testify to the completeness of God's grace, just as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You that Peter faithfully recorded his moments of weakness, illustrating the completeness of Your grace. In fact, all of us are like Peter, often falling into the flesh and even to a state that we are too weak to acknowledge You. Lord, but You are merciful, and Your grace is sufficient for us, for Your strength is made perfect in our weaknesses. shines even more fully in our weaknesses. Help me not only know but to experience your complete love. No matter what situation I am in, help me to turn back to you again, to come to You and seek your grace. Help me today, to turn to You in every failure situation to partake your grace again. So that I can also testify how Your grace is perfected in my weaknesses. Bless my life today, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!