

EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Crack in the Rock

John 18:10–18, 25–27

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The gospel of John closes with Peter's behavior on full display. In fact, Peter's denial of Jesus in John 18 rivets our attention to how very alone Jesus was on His way to the cross. We will learn some valuable lessons from Peter's desertion, which Chuck Swindoll refers to as "a crack in the rock."

In the final chapter of John's gospel, Jesus gently put back together the broken pieces of Peter's heart, revealing His grace to be greater than any of our failures and His power to restore stronger than any of our regrets. Let's take a closer look at how Peter's downfall began.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As Jesus drew closer to the cross, the scenes John described toward the end of his gospel grew increasingly intense. Emotions were high—nerves at fever pitch—and judgment at times felt clouded, even failing. As you read this passage from John 18, try to imagine being right there watching everything. Think about the sounds. Consider the emotions that would have been at play among the disciples, the guards and soldiers, the Jewish leaders . . . and even Jesus. Take a few moments to write down your thoughts before you begin this study.



Observation: Looking at the Trials

Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation. John provided some compelling details in the opening verses of John 18 that help frame the intensity of the scene. Let's look closely at how he accomplished this.

Quotable

*This took place
the last night
Jesus was with
His disciples.
The cross loomed
large. In a matter
of hours, He would
be nailed to it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Reading back through John 18:1–11, what words would you use to describe the scene?

Who was present? Who were the acting players in 18:1–4?

How would you describe Jesus' demeanor during this ordeal based on these few verses?

What about Peter? What does his action reveal about his emotions and his response to the events (John 18:10)?

How would you contrast Jesus' response to Peter's rash behavior (18:10–11)?



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Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 18 provides a record of events that led to the false accusation and ultimate conviction of Jesus. The scene offers a window into Peter's character and his state of mind during this perilous time. Peter's response when the heat was on indicates the condition of his heart and his level of commitment toward the Savior.

Peter's failure to acknowledge his relationship with Jesus was not a sudden blowout but a gradual descent into shame.

The Process of Denial

First, we see *a reliance on the flesh when faced with opposition* (John 18:10–11).

What aspect of Peter's violent response to Jesus' arrest betrayed his reliance on his own flesh?

What emotions do you think drove Peter to commit such a gruesome act?

How might our emotions draw us away from relying on the Holy Spirit?



Second, Peter showed *a reluctance to stand alone when in wrong company* (John 18:15–18). Trailing the captive Christ at a distance, Peter began to weaken—the crack in his resolve to follow Christ to His death widened. All it took for his knees to buckle was a suspicious glance and a probing question from a young servant girl.

Why do you think the young girl’s remark posed such a threat to Peter?

What role does fear play when we fail to acknowledge publicly our relationship with Christ?

When you read this account of Peter’s quick denial, how does it make you feel? Why?

Third, Peter demonstrated *a resistance to identification with Christ when threatened by the outcome* (18:25). Too often we respond out of self-preservation instead of devotion to the Lord, especially when it’s dangerous to identify with Him.

In Matthew’s account of the same scene, Peter’s response to the question was even more emphatic as he declared, “I don’t even know the man” (Matthew 26:72).



Put yourself in Peter’s sandals. What do you think was going through his mind as he warmed his hands by the fire? Describe a similar situation in your life when fear kept you from publicly acknowledging Jesus.

Finally, Peter consistently *rejected the truth regardless of the circumstances* (John 18:26–27). With each successive denial, Peter’s emotions intensified. Again, we turn to Matthew’s account to see the intensity of Peter’s response:

A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, “You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent.” Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying—I don’t know the man!” (Matthew 26:73–74)

How can our fear cause us to act irrationally when threatened with danger?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

By looking back and then forward, you can bring into focus the passage you’re studying. For instance, Peter’s denials of Jesus become intensely powerful considering his earlier bold confessions of allegiance. Read the passages below, and in your own words describe how each sheds light on the significance of Peter’s failure.

Matthew 16:13–19



Matthew 26:31–35



Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering

How easy it is to stand in judgment and wag our fingers at Peter, highlighting his shameful missteps. But placing ourselves in the story so the Spirit can speak to us ensures that we apply truth to our own lives, not just to the experience of others. Chuck offers two compelling principles worth considering:

1. *When surrounded by wrongdoers, doing wrong comes easily.* One well-known pastor once said, “Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your destiny.” That’s a good word for anyone desiring to examine the influence—for good or bad—friends have on determining one’s future.
2. *The first step toward recovery is not to act like we’re strong but to admit we are weak.* No one can honestly condemn Peter. Who wouldn’t react as Peter did if faced with such difficult circumstances! Remember: most of the other disciples abandoned Jesus to stand alone before His accusers. At least Peter still followed Him.

How far are you willing to follow Jesus? Are you currently being questioned or ridiculed about your relationship with Jesus? If so, what is the circumstance and what are people saying?

Write down a prayer of commitment to remain true to the Lord. Ask the Father for extra grace to stand firm in your faith and speak boldly about your Savior even when you may feel weak.





A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for reminding me that You understand my weakness and show compassion when I admit my need for You. Give me courage today to stand for Jesus and to declare His goodness and grace to anyone I may encounter. Be near today to courageous believers around the world who suffer for His name, especially those who sit in prison cells because of their bold devotion to Christ. Deliver them, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.



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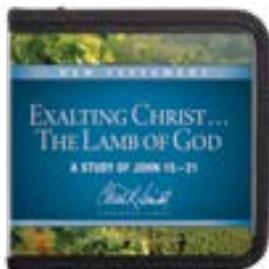
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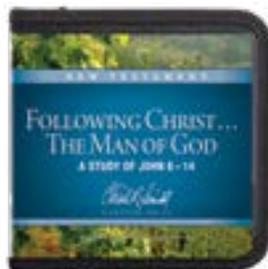
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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