

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 25 January 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Look

Matthew 26:69-75

When I was growing up, there were times when I disobeyed my parents, and got into mischief. (Yes, I know it's hard to believe; but I wasn't always a little angel!) Now, whenever I acted up, or disobeyed my parents, there were two types of facial expressions that I could expect to see on my parents' faces. The most common expression was that look of warning. Usually, my parents gave me this look when we were in a public place, and they weren't able to deal with me straightaway. They didn't have to say anything; all they had to do was give me that "look," and I knew I was in trouble. I remember one Sunday evening when my mom gave me "the look" during the church service. A guest speaker was with us that evening; and he was a rather fiery and animated preacher. At one point in his sermon, he suddenly lifted his voice, and became very loud; and for some reason, I decided that it would be cute to get dramatic about it. I threw my head back, as though I were being "blown away" by the sheer force of the decibels; however, I threw my head back a little too forcefully: and I ended up hitting my head against the back of the pew, and making a very noticeable cracking sound. The first thing I noticed after cracking my head was that people nearby were snickering; but the second thing I noticed was that my mom was giving me "the look." I knew what that look meant. It meant, "You're in big trouble when we get home!"

Now, the "you're in big trouble" look did instil a certain fear in me; and it did motivate me to stop what I was doing, lest I get into even bigger trouble. However, there was another look that was even more motivating to me; and that was the look of hurt and disappointment. *That* look was even more motivating, because it struck at my conscience even more deeply. I loved my dad and mom; and when I saw that I had hurt them, and made them sad, it compelled me to consider what I'd done. It compelled me to humble myself, and go to my parents, and ask them for forgiveness.

Now, if you have an operating conscience, you can identify with what I'm saying. You know what it's like when you've wronged a friend, loved one, or mentor, and you see that look of hurt in his (or her) eyes. Imagine, then, what it would be like if you could see the look of hurt in your *Saviour's* eyes, after you have sinned against Him, and grieved Him! *That* is the look that Peter saw in Jesus' eyes on the night of His arrest. This morning, we will be examining that "look"; and we will see how that "look" should motivate us in *our* daily lives. The title of this message is ***The Look***.

Read Matthew 26:69-75.

I. Peter's cursing (vv. 69-74)

What we've just read is the record of the most awful night in Peter's life—the night when his whole world suddenly came crashing down around him. In the middle of the night, his Lord, whom he loved so much, was suddenly arrested and taken away to the Sanhedrin, as though

He were a criminal. Peter's heart was pounding with fear, and his mind was filled with sorrow and bewilderment. At first, he started swinging a sword around wildly—only to be rebuked for it by Jesus. Then, as Jesus was being hauled off by the soldiers, Peter was overcome with terror, and ran away. Gradually, though, he plucked up the faintest bit of courage, and decided to follow after the mob from a safe distance.

Now, in **John 18**, we are told that when they arrived at Caiaphas' house, Peter was not permitted to go into the house; and so, he stood just outside the door. However, ***“another disciple”*** (who, many believe, was John) *was* granted entry into the house, on account of his acquaintance with the high priest. We don't know whether he was a relative of Caiaphas, or if he had some other kind of connection; but in any event, he was able to get into the palace. Some believe that this disciple wasn't John, but some secret disciple who lived in Caiaphas's house. (This certainly is a possibility. Even in Nero's household years later, there were Christian servants who worshipped Jesus secretly, right under Nero's nose.) But whether this disciple were John, or some other disciple, what we do know is that he went to the doorkeeper, and informed her that Caiaphas had given Peter access to come in. And so, Peter slinked in, and stood in the courtyard, along with the servants. Apparently, Peter was, from his vantage point, able to look into the council room, and see and overhear what was going on inside.

Now, *this* was the point when Peter's test began in earnest. Of course, Peter's test began in Gethsemane; but the trial at Caiaphas's house was a different kind of test altogether. Physical battle is one thing; but social pressure is quite another. Ironically, Jesus was on trial that night; but *Peter* was the one who was really on trial. The question in Peter's trial was, “Will you stand up for Jesus, or not?” In the heat of the moment, Peter had had enough bravado to take up the sword against a whole band of soldiers; yet, when an unarmed servant girl looked suspiciously at him and said, ***“Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee,”*** his courage evaporated immediately. He suddenly found himself muttering, ***“I know not what thou sayest.”*** I'm sure that Peter felt guilty for denying that he knew Jesus; but he was so overcome with fear, that he must not have fully realised that he was denying his Saviour. Perhaps he tried to justify his denial by convincing himself that “This is war; and in a war, you have to use deception. I'm just *saying* that I don't know Jesus so that I can live to fight another day. God understands.”

But God did *not* understand; and Christ, his Saviour, did not understand. Peter had stabbed his Lord in the back. And it kept getting worse. The first time he was confronted, he said, ***“I know not what thou sayest.”*** The second time he was confronted (this time by another maid), he said, ***“I know not the man.”*** He didn't even pronounce Jesus' name! Instead, He called Jesus ***“that man,”*** as though He were some dastardly criminal, whose name he loathed to utter. The third time, when many people confronted him, he was not only terrified: he was angry. This time he not only denied the Lord, but he confirmed his denial by using the language of the unsaved: he cursed and swore. He actually brought God's name into his

denial of Christ; and he probably used crude language to seal it. In the strongest way possible, he was stepping back from his Saviour and saying, “I have nothing to do with Him.”

Folks, have you ever had a friend who was *supposed* to be your friend, but who became very silent whenever your enemies were mocking you? I have. When I was in secondary school, I was not part of the “cool crowd”; and of the handful of friends that I did have, a few of them became strangely quiet whenever others were making fun of me. They didn’t speak up for me, or defend me; and for that reason, it almost seemed that they were on their side. I remember feeling very alone, and very hurt. But imagine how much more it would have hurt if one of my friends had looked away from me and said, “He’s no friend of mine. I don’t know him.” Would it have meant *anything at all* if that friend had come up to me later, when no one was around, and said, “I hope you’re not offended. I had to say those things around those guys, so that I could keep my friendship with them.” I would have had to do a serious evaluation of our friendship, would I not?

Brethren, I would hope that none of you has ever actually pronounced the unthinkable words, “I’m not a Christian,” or “I don’t know Jesus”; but do you deny Him by your silence? When people are mocking your Lord, or speaking casually about gross sin, and it is clearly time to speak up for the Lord Jesus, and for righteousness, do you say nothing? Do you even side with the ungodly by participating in sin with them? Every time you decide to follow the world in word or deed, you are saying, “I don’t know that man”—even though you may not actually say the words.

Fear of man is a snare that catches and wounds even genuine believers. Let’s look at what Solomon and the Apostle Paul had to say about fear.

Read Proverbs 29:25.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7-8.

In **Proverbs 29:25**, Solomon says that *“The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”* That word “*safe*” (the Hebrew word *y’sūgahv*) means “exalted, set up securely on high, lifted up, safe, strong, or sound.” Now, that sounds much like what Paul said in **2 Timothy**, doesn’t it? Paul said that God has given believers the Spirit of *“power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”* Christians who are filled with Christ’s love will not be caught in a net of fear and confusion: they will have a sound mind and self-control, even in the face of the fiercest enemies.

Now, here's the irony: in order *not* to have the "spirit of *fear*," you must *have* the "fear of *God*." Throughout Scripture, God commands man to fear Him. Yet, what should the "fear of God" look like? Are we supposed to live in paralyzing terror of God? Paul answers that question here in **2 Timothy 1:7-8**. Paul says that those who know the Lord do *not* need to fear, or to be ashamed, of the "**afflictions**" that man might bring upon them. Fear of God and fear of man cannot coexist. If you fear God, then you will not fear what man can do to you. You will be filled with a holy boldness. Jesus promises all who trust in Him, "***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee***"; and because He has given us this promise, *we* may boldly say, "***The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.***"

Now, how does the world view those who fear of the Lord? The world views those who fear God as "unstable," weak-minded people who need some kind of "crutch" to get them through life. Our secular Western world, especially, says that fear is "negative," and that negative things hurt our psyches, and paralyse us. Yet, the Bible's message has not changed. God says, "Fear me!" **Psalm 34:9** says, "***O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.***" **Proverbs 9:10** says that "***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.***"

The clear, unabashed message of Scripture is that God commands us to *fear Him*. Yet, here's the amazing truth about godly fear: godly fear doesn't make you *shrink* from God: it causes you to *draw near* to Him!

Read 1 John 4:18-19.

If you truly *fear* God (because you have entered into a personal relationship with Him by faith), then you will also *love* Him. You cannot separate fear from love. True love for God and true fear of God go together. The Christian who truly loves God fears to do anything that would make God sad. A Christian who loves God doesn't stay away from sin merely because he is afraid of being *chastised* by God; nor does he stay away from sin because someone else in his life is standing over him, and prodding him to do right. Rather, he stays away from sin because he doesn't want to grieve the heart of His Saviour. He *fears* to grieve God, because he actually loves his God.

Now, to illustrate, allow me to tell you the story of a man whose life God radically changed. Back in the 1740's, a vile, foul-mouthed slave trader named John Newton, who, for years, had trafficked the souls of men between Africa and the Americas, fell under conviction of his sin, as he began to read the Scriptures. Having abandoned belief in God years earlier, he had sunk so far into depravity, and had become so vile and disrespectful toward everyone around him, that his own captain and crew sold him as a slave to a slave dealer off the coast of West Africa.

During his years as a slave, God humbled him by allowing him to be treated even more poorly than the African slaves were treated; and he began to consider again whether the God whom his mother had taught him about might really exist.

Yet, after three years in captivity, things took a turn in his life, when Newton suddenly found himself a free man. God providentially led Newton's father (from whom he had been estranged for many years) to send a sea captain friend to Africa to find his son, buy him out of slavery, and bring him back to England. However, on the voyage back to England, the fiercest storm that Newton had ever seen suddenly arose off the coast of Donegal. Newton (who had been under the conviction of the Holy Spirit throughout the voyage) cried out to God for help; and very quickly and inexplicably, the storm stopped. Struck by the power and mercy of God, Newton devoured the Scriptures all the way back to England; and by the time the ship arrived back in England in 1748, he had become a professing Christian. His life did begin to change dramatically after this; however, by his own testimony, he did not come to true, saving faith in Christ until about six years later. During those years, he continued to trade slaves (though he treated them much more humanely); however, God finally humbled him even more, by allowing him to suffer a stroke, which took him off the sea altogether. Newton placed his full faith in Christ, and then began to follow God's call to be a pastor. Over the next four decades, he not only led many people to the wonderful, saving grace of Jesus, but he campaigned to abolish the slave trade. It was through the influence of Newton, and of other godly Christian leaders of his day, that slavery was finally abolished in England in 1833.

But perhaps the most profound mark that Newton made on the world was through the words of the hymn that he penned in 1772: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now am found; 'twas blind, but now I see." Newton truly understood the depth of sin from which he had been saved; and he also understood the fear of the Lord. In the second verse of "Amazing Grace," Newton wrote: "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!" What did Newton mean when he said, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved"? Simply this: when God poured his grace upon him, and saved his soul, he became filled with true, godly fear (the kind of fear that keeps you from sin, because you don't want to grieve the God who saved you); and this same undeserved kindness of God, which had taught Newton to fear Him, also caused his *fear of man* to evaporate away.

The fear of God and the fear of man cannot exist. If you have experienced the grace of God in salvation, then you know what I'm talking about. However, if you haven't experienced God's wonderful grace, you don't have a clue what I am talking about. Perhaps you are afraid of the future—and, ultimately, of what lies beyond this life; yet, you are hiding that fear under a mask. If so, I am here to tell you that Jesus can take away all the terrors that are afflicting your soul. If you will repent of your sin, as John Newton did, and place your faith in Christ alone to save you, He will replace the fear of man with the fear of Him; and in His fear, you

will find true and lasting peace! **Romans 5:1** says, “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

II. Christ’s call to repentance (v. 75)

(Read Matthew 26:75 again.) Peter had just committed the most awful sin in his life—that of denying his Lord, and sealing it with a curse. Yet, Jesus had warned him that this moment was coming; and He had already assured Peter, in advance, that he was wheat, and not chaff. Peter *was* a true child of God; and though his sin was great, Christ was not going to let him fall away. The rebuke from the Lord was *immediate*. As soon as Peter uttered his curse, the cock crew, just as Jesus had foretold; and at that same instant, Jesus turned around and *looked* straight at Peter. In **Luke 22:61**, Luke records that “*The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*” Jesus didn’t have to use words of rebuke, because His look said it all. Profound grief, disappointment, rebuke, and undying love for Peter, were all combined in that one look.

Now, what was the difference between Peter’s denial of the Lord, and Judas’ betrayal of the Lord? Judas, of course, betrayed the Lord unto death, for a bag of money, whereas Peter had no such thought. Peter *loved* the Lord, whereas Judas *never* loved the Lord. Yet, in the end, both of them stood with Christ’s enemies, and disavowed the Lord. What is the difference, then, between a backslidden believer, and an apostate (a lost person who has completely walked away from the truth)? The difference is that a believer actually belongs to the Lord, and is being eternally *kept* by the Lord—whereas an apostate *never* belonged to the Lord. A genuine believer can become so weak in faith, and drift so far from the Lord, that he can look like an unbeliever. Yet, God does not let him go. He chastises His erring child, and brings him to repentance. An apostate, on the other hand, may show remorse (as Judas did); but he has only the “*sorrow of the world*” (“regret”), and not true repentance, in his heart.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

Read 2 Peter 2:1-3, 17-22.

For fourteen hundred years, the children of Israel had followed the dietary restrictions that God had given them on Mount Sinai. To the Jews, the pig and the dog were the epitome of unclean animals; and they would not eat them. Now, we know that in the church age, God has lifted the ban on eating unclean animals, because the wall between Jewish and Gentile believers has been lifted, and the illustration has served its purpose. Nonetheless, we still *remember* the illustration; and we still think of pigs and dogs as pictures of that which is spiritually unholy.

That is precisely why God used this illustration here in **2 Peter 2:22**. When we think of a "pig" or "dog" in the spiritual sense, we think of a person who is unclean and defiled with sin. By using the illustration of a "sow" and a "dog," Peter is saying that apostates have never received a new nature. They may have lifted themselves out of the "mud" of worldly pollutions, and have outwardly cleaned up their act; but they've never been truly converted. They have never received the new heart that Christ gives to His sheep: instead, they are still "pigs" or "dogs" in heart and mind. They are still unchanged in heart, and in love with their sin. That is why an apostate will, in time, likely go back to the "mire" of sin, and drop his mask altogether.

Now, this verse is often misinterpreted. Those who teach that a Christian can lose his salvation love to use this passage as their "proof text"; but they are wrong! Peter isn't talking about *once-saved* people who have lost their salvation because they departed from the truth: he's talking about people who *never were* saved, who have walked away from the truth they once *professed* to believe (and even taught to others). Escaping the "***pollutions of the world,***" and having a "***knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,***" does not make a person saved. Lost people may have a *knowledge* of biblical truth; and they may be able, by their own will power, to overcome worldly pollutions (such as alcohol, drugs, or sexual immorality). They may have even acquired a "*full knowledge*" of the truth. (The Greek word "*epignosis*" literally means "full knowledge.") Yet, they are not saved. You see, "full knowledge" does not mean "*personal, saving knowledge*"; it merely means "full knowledge." A person *can* have a full knowledge of Scripture, and know the Gospel well, yet never have truly been saved. The fact that the Lord "***bought***" him (as Peter said in **verse 1**) does not mean that he was ever born again. On the cross, Christ paid for the sins of every soul who would ever live; yet, most people refuse to be owned by Christ: and thus, they reject Him as Lord and Saviour. If you want to be saved, you must *personally* repent of your sin and *embrace* the Christ who died to purchase your soul!

I would ask: "Have *you* personally repented of your sins?" Do you have a *profession* of faith, but not true *possession* of faith? Do you have a head knowledge of the Gospel, without personally knowing the Lord? If so, don't gamble with your soul. Now is the day of salvation! Turn to Christ in faith and repentance of heart, and receive His gift of salvation!

III. Peter's contrition (v. 75)

(Read Matthew 26:75 again.) The look of grief in Jesus' eyes quickly pierced Peter's heart; and he was immediately filled with sorrow for his sin. Because Peter was a genuine believer, he was not overcome with "***the sorrow of the world,***" which "***worketh death,***" but rather with "***godly sorrow,***" which works "***repentance.***"

Yet, the process of restoration wasn't over in 30 seconds. No doubt, Peter prayed to God immediately, and asked for forgiveness; and when he did, forgiveness was immediately granted to him. However, there was much soul-searching and confession that needed to be done; and the assurance that he really was forgiven surely didn't come overnight. How do we know this? First of all, because Peter was the first of the twelve disciples to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection. In **Luke 24** and in **1 Corinthians 15**, we are told that Jesus appeared to Peter at some point *before* He appeared to the other disciples in the Upper Room. Jesus singled out Peter, and talked just with him privately. Why? Because He knew that Peter was still dealing with deep guilt, and with uncertainty as to whether he was really forgiven, and as to whether he could still be used by God. However, even that first private meeting with Peter didn't bring him full peace of mind. Christ had to give Peter more time to work this matter through in his heart. Jesus appeared to the disciples eight days later in the Upper Room; and a few days after that, He appeared to them for the third time, by the Sea of Galilee.

Read John 21:1-17.

This was now the fourth time that Peter had met Jesus after the resurrection; and it is clear that Peter was feeling much more comfortable in Jesus' presence. When he realised that it was Jesus standing on the shore, he forgot about the fish, and made a beeline to Jesus! Yet, there was still a strain in their fellowship; and the problem wasn't on Jesus' end, but on Peter's end. Just as Peter had denied the Lord three times, so Jesus asked *Peter* three times, "***Lovest thou me more than these?***"; and all three times, Peter affirmed that he did love Him. However, Peter couldn't bring himself to use the same word for "love" that Jesus was using. You see, the first two times that Jesus spoke, He asked Peter, "***Agapas me?***"; but Peter kept responding with "***Philo se.***" The verb for "love" that Jesus was using was *agapao*, which is the highest, noblest, most self-sacrificial kind of love. However, the word that *Peter* was using was *phileo*, which is an *affectionate, brotherly* love, but not the highest, noblest kind of love. Peter now realised how weak he was; and for that reason, he feared to say that he really loved Jesus with the highest, most sacrificial kind of love. And so, the third time that Jesus spoke, He gently said, "***Phileis me?***"—"Do you love me with *brotherly* love?" Jesus now used the same word for "love" that Peter had been using! It was as though Jesus were saying, "Very well, Peter. Even if you *don't* love me with the purest, noblest kind of love, the proof of your love for me is still the same. If you love me, then feed my sheep with the Word of God." In other words, Jesus was saying, "If you love me, then show your love by *obeying* me."

By the way, immediately after this, Jesus informed Peter that he would, in the future, die a martyr's death for Him. Being willing to die for the Lord requires the highest kind of love—*agape* love; and Peter *did*, indeed, rise to that kind of love. For the rest of his life, Peter hazarded his life for the Lord Jesus Christ, and finally died a martyr's death. Like all of us, Peter was a weak and sinful man, who was capable of denying the Lord that he loved; but by His wonderful grace, God moulded Peter into a man of power, love, and a sound mind.

Conclusion: Christian, some day you will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ; and though you will be in your sinless, immortal body, you will be filled with profound grief when you look into Jesus' eyes, and remember all the times when you denied Him either by your silence, or by your playing around with sin. Thank God, the tears will be wiped away, and God will reward you for what you *did* do for Him; but the grief will be real. Christian, don't wait until the Judgment Seat to look into Jesus' eyes: look into His eyes *right now*. Seek His face *right now*, by reading His Word, and talking with Him in prayer. If you have unconfessed sin in your life, let that piercing "look" of grief, rebuke, and love pierce your heart, and compel you to repent, and get back into close fellowship with the Lord. **If you are not sure that you are a child of God, and on your way to Heaven**, I urge you to *repent and be saved!* Your sin has earned you eternal death, in a real place of fiery torment called "Hell"; but you don't have to end up there. Christ has made a way for you to escape God's judgment. God the Father poured His judgment for sin upon His own beloved Son Jesus, as He hung on the cross. Christ paid *your* sin debt in full; and if you will simply repent of your sin in your heart, and put your complete trust in what *Jesus* did for you on that cross, He will give you eternal life. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today, and be saved!