

**John 18:1-27**  
**(Exodus 3:11-14; Romans 1:16-17)**  
**“Jesus said, ‘I am.’ Peter said, ‘I am not.’”**

## **Introduction**

Most striking in this passage is Jesus’ complete mastery of the situation. Although he is arrested, bound, beaten and interrogated, he is clearly the one in control. His hour has come. By facing his betrayer, he has become our advocate. By permitting himself to be bound, he has set us free. By dying, he has given us life. By embracing his destiny, he changes ours forever. For this he came into the world. He faces suffering and death with the words, “Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (18:11).

In stark contrast is the tragic unraveling of Jesus’ chief disciple, Simon Peter. Jesus’ steadfast perseverance stands in counterpoint to Peter’s instability and disintegration. Why? Is it the inevitable difference between the God-man Jesus and anyone who is merely human? No. Peter himself will later write, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Thus, Peter tells us that by God’s grace we should stand, rather than collapse as he had done, in the hour of crisis. Jesus made it clear throughout his ministry that in coming to us he had laid aside his divine prerogatives and chosen to live his life by those same means of grace available to all of us (see, for example, Philippians 2:5-8).

Why, then, did Peter fail the great test? Why did he collapse in the hour of crisis? And why do we so often fail to live and act as we thought we would when the great crises of life come, and we are called to make a costly stand for Christ? It is instructive to study the difference in these verses between Jesus and Peter, and to ask ourselves on which side of that divide we stand today.

## **Body**

- 1. Note the radically different spirit in which they approached the crisis.**  
Peter’s stubborn pride versus Jesus’ humble submission to his Father’s will.
- 2. Note the radically different way they prepared for the crisis.**  
Peter’s need of sleep (the flesh) versus Jesus’ need of prayer (the spirit).
- 3. Note the radically different way they responded to the crisis.**  
Peter’s explosive anger versus Jesus’ calm command and compassion.
- 4. Note the radically different self-identity they exhibited in the crisis.**  
Peter’s denials (“I am not”) versus Jesus’ affirmations (“I am”).

## Conclusion

The key, I think, to understanding all of this is that these four contrasts are not merely *manifestations* of the difference between Jesus and Peter, but are *reasons* for the difference.

- New life begins with the recognition of an entirely new identity.
- New life grows in power through intimate communion with the heavenly father through prayer.
- New life manifests itself in our relationships with one another as we learn to die daily to the old life of futilely pursuing our conflicting and destructive passions and desires, and instead begin to pursue with joy the only life worth living.
- New life stands the test in the hour of crisis as it simply manifests the habits of the heart, the consistent pattern of living, not for ones' self, but for others, not for my will, but for God's will to be done.

What of you today? How will you respond to the crises to come, to the challenges we all must face in life? Are you living in humble submission to the will of God? Are you seeking him and asking him to give you a submissive heart? Are you pursuing his glory rather than your own? Are you able to face disappointment without explosive anger and unbridled emotion because you know who is control of human destiny? Are you unashamed of your Lord and Savior before a world that mocks and seeks to silence him still?

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