

## Special Delivery

In 1885, the US Postal Service began offering “Special Delivery,” whereby a piece of mail was delivered to the addressee immediately upon receipt. The message was deemed urgent because of the special significance it held for the recipient. In today’s Templates of Truth, Jesus has a message marked “special delivery” for his friend, Peter.

When the women came to the burial tomb of Jesus on the third day following His death, they found a tomb empty of the body of Jesus but occupied by an angelic messenger. His announcement to them was that Jesus was not there – He had risen! The angel’s command to them was, *Go, tell His disciples and Peter (too)* (Mark 16:7). That portion of the message, *and Peter too*, was the part that made it a “special delivery.” Here’s why:

Peter had all the character traits of a great leader, he was just subjected to a rather challenging learning curve because of his tendency to fall all over himself and his over-confident arrogance (I can make that call because I, admittedly, tend to be a lot like him). One of Peter’s favorite words was, “Never!” The first time Jesus revealed his death to the disciples, *Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall NEVER happen to You!”* (Mark 16:22). When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, Peter thought it was such a degrading action for Jesus that he declared, *“NEVER shall you wash my feet!”* (John 13:8). And then when Jesus told them that they would all fall away from their loyalty to Him after He was arrested, Peter once again insisted, *“Even though all may fall away because of You, I will NEVER fall away!”* (Matthew 26:33). Growing up, I was always warned about using that word, “never.” I’ve learned over the years that when we say we will never do something, we will often be looking back in regret for having done something we said we would never do.

Such was the case with Peter. In response to his insistent, “never,” Jesus said to Peter, *“You yourself this very night, before a (rooster) crows twice, shall three times deny Me.”* (Mark 14:30). Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. The same is true of us. As Mark reveals the details in 14:66-72, Peter did exactly what Jesus said he would do – he denied even knowing who the man Jesus was; and, denied having any kind of personal association with Jesus. Once Peter heard the sound of the rooster crowing in the distance, he realized his terrible sin and ran away *weeping bitterly* (Matthew 26:75). That is what the conviction of sin will produce in the life of a believer – shame, deep regret, genuine remorse and a contrition that drives you away into personal isolation. In that desperate loneliness, sincere confession and repentance surely was expressed in Peter’s life. His frail human spirit, still bruised from its failure and guilt, could not help but wonder, however, where it now stood with God.

That is where the compassionate grace of Jesus came to the forefront with a special delivery marked specifically for Peter. The directive to the women was intended for all the disciples, but God wanted Peter to know expressly that it was for him too. In spite of his grave failure, God wanted Peter to know that he was forgiven and that he was still a part of God’s will, plan and

purpose for Kingdom ministry. Peter needed that special element of personal affirmation and God lovingly sent it.

Has failure and sin caused you to wonder where you now stand with God, even though you have poured your heart out to Him in genuine confession and sincere repentance? It is not a question of whether God has forgiven you or not, for He promises that *He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (I John 1:9). It is that sense of unworthiness that overwhelms a fallen, yet forgiven believer and causes us to question our usefulness to God ever again. The message of Paul is clear – *the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable* (Romans 11:29). Even though their application may sometimes change, God still has you equipped with spiritual gifts and He still has a role for you in Kingdom work & ministry.

In spite of his failure, Peter went on to be one of the greatest leaders of the New Testament church. In spite of your sin, you too, can realize your divine destiny and role in God's great Kingdom. He wants you to know that He still loves you, He has completely forgiven you, and He still has a work that you are worthy to assume – it's a message marked "special delivery" just for you.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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