



# **CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS**

**7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613**

**(319) 277-0924**

**[INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](mailto:INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

**[WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](http://WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

## Passion Scenes: Unfriended!

March 14, 2021

Rev. Steve Kramer

TEXT: Mark 14:66-72 (ESV)

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming Himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

---

Dear friends,

Have you ever been unfriended by someone? "Unfriended" is a term from the world of Facebook on the internet. People on Facebook have a list of other people that they have allowed onto their Facebook page as their friends. They communicate with them: news and opinions and pictures and so on. Sometimes, though, for various reasons, people will drop names from their list, or experience being dropped themselves. That's called "unfriending" someone. And for some people, that can be quite devastating. There is a writer named Mason Sabre who wrote an article on unfriending. He writes,

I was talking to my father's mother the other day. Lately, she and my older brother had been talking across Facebook. He had messaged her something – I

don't know exactly what, but once she didn't answer him, a few hours later, he messaged her to say, "Silence is a loud answer." She then realized to her dismay, he had unfriended her and blocked her. I told her he had removed me a while ago and I've never allowed him to add me back. This is a thing with me: if you remove me from social media, don't expect to add me back. I know we say "It's only Facebook," and we mean it, but in reality, being unfriended does hold emotional consequences. Being unfriended hurts.

If you attended a school as a child, and I'm almost sure you experienced, then, a level of rejection from your peers. Children can be fickle. One moment they're your best friend and the next they're not speaking to you ever again. Not only that, the children are not afraid to rally together to all not be friends with someone. From such an early age we learned the effects of rejection. Being unfriended as an adult hurts in exactly the same way, especially if you feel your actual identity is strongly tied in with your digital identity as it is with so many. It's experience as a form of rejection. It can be a blow to our sense of self-worth. Being unfriended hurts.

Today we see Jesus being unfriended by Peter. A prediction is being played out before our eyes. You see, earlier Jesus and His disciples, when walking towards the garden of Gethsemane, were talking and Jesus said, "Tonight you will all fall away from me, for it's written 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I'm raised up, I'll go before you to Galilee," Jesus said. And Peter responded that, "Hey, I'll stand by you, Jesus. Even if others fall away, you can count on me." And Jesus said, "Peter, on this very night before the rooster crows twice, you'll deny me three times." And Peter said emphatically to Him, "Even if I must die, I will not deny you."

Well, now we find Peter outside the high priest's house, down below in the courtyard. Got to give him credit, he continued following Jesus, even though it was from a distance. The other disciples had run away. But while Jesus is standing strong under the questioning in the house, Peter's not standing so strong out in that courtyard. He's falling apart. Peter "the rock" cracked under pressure. While Peter is standing there warming himself with the other bystanders by a fire, he caught the attention of the servant girl of the high priest. She asked Peter, "I saw you with him, deny it!" He denied even knowing what she was talking about, the rooster crowed. He started moving away from the fire. He's now at the gateway, standing a bit further back in the

shadows, but she keeps staring at him. He doesn't like her stare and the attention she's giving him. And then she said, "This man is one of them." And again, Peter denied it vehemently. By now, he wanted to run, I'm sure, but he continued standing there – after all, he told Jesus he'd stick with Him. But I'm sure he's sweating bullets by now. The other bystanders with the girl said to him, "Certainly you're one of them. You're a Galilean. We can tell by your accent." And Peter vowed to them, "Curses on me if I'm lying. I do not know Him." And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter, remembering the words of Jesus, broke down and wept. End of story.

Peter had unfriended Jesus – renounced Him, cut Him off. When the pressure was on, Peter said "He's no friend of mine. I don't know Him." Interestingly, upstairs, Jesus is retaining His integrity at the cost of His life, but in the courtyard below, Peter loses his integrity to save his own skin. He left Jesus to stand alone; disappointing behavior.

It's important, though, that we pay attention to the last half of verse 72, where it says "And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him." Jesus knew – He outlined this. Did this happen just as it was meant to happen? Could be. Biblical commentator N. T. Wright points out this passion scene highlights the solitariness of Jesus, betrayed by one of His associates, forsaken by 10 others, and renounced by his closest friend. Jesus now stands alone, defenseless before the Jewish court, before the world. This is important for the story that Mark's telling us. What Jesus has to do now He has to do all by Himself. No one else can give their life as a ransom for many. As Messiah, there comes a moment when Jesus must go solo, and that moment has now arrived. It's like that old spiritual says, "As Jesus walked this lonesome valley. He had to walk it by himself." Nobody else could walk it for Him or with Him. He had to walk it by Himself.

So Jesus was unfriended, but for a purpose. He was unfriended so that we could be befriended by God. It's part of the plan. This was prophesied: "the shepherd would be struck and the sheep would scatter." Jesus had quoted that prophecy from Zechariah to the disciples. It's a judgment passage. The Good Shepherd must be struck. Why? Because of sinfulness. There is a great rift between God and us, and we can't mend the relationship. We can't come into His presence in our sinful state. It's a terrible predicament. All of us are sinners: by nature, by conduct, from birth. And because of this, we're alienated from God, separated from our Holy God. And this prevents every sinner from having a friendship, a fellowship with God, as the Bible says. He's too perfect, too holy to have anything to do with people like you and me except to reject us

and punish us forever. I really appreciate what Pastor John MacArthur writes about this predicament.

Such a series of realities is an indication that the most deadly virus in the world is the sin virus. And like many viruses, the sin virus can kill everyone it infects – not just in time, but in eternity. Not just physically, but spiritually. But praise God, there's a cure for the sin virus. God made it possible for sinners to be reconciled to Him through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. And now the message has come home: God will forgive. The hostility between the sinner and God can end now and forever because an amazing act of forgiveness has happened through Jesus Christ.

You see, God's plan to save a sinful world had to happen. Jesus must stand alone, facing the powers of sin, death, and hell, and lay down His life for us. Why? To cancel our debt of sin before a holy God and open the door to a relationship with him. In Romans 5, the apostle Paul talks about this reconciliation. He says, "While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son." I like the way the Good News Bible paraphrases this statement, by the way, says "We were God's enemies, but He made us His friends through the death of His son." Jesus must be unfriended so that we could be befriended.

And what a friend Jesus has been to us: Jesus, the son of God. It's true: "greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," as Jesus said. And it's important to know this. God was in Christ. God was in Christ – reconciling the world, you and me, to Himself. God in Christ is faithful to the end: even when I'm unfaithful, rebellious or self-preserving, as Peter was in this story, even though I turn my back on Him.

So how can I be sure of that? Well, after the resurrection, the angel told the women at the tomb, "Go and tell the disciples and Peter. I'll go ahead of them." Why did he specify, Peter? Was it his way of saying, "All is forgiven. Peter?" We have to remember, Mark got the story from Peter's preaching, who must have shared his painful story of denial and then finished his testimony with this "and Peter" part. In other words, "Look what he did for me. He forgave me. He did not unfriend me."

John Newton, who wrote the great hymn *Amazing Grace*, wrote another hymn that I really like. And in the second verse of that hymn, (it's called *The One There is Above All Others*,) he writes,

Which of all our friends to save us,  
Could or would have shed his blood?  
But this savior died to have us  
Reconciled in him to God.  
This was boundless love indeed,  
Jesus is the friend we need.

How true. This reconciled friendship with God is the most valuable thing you will ever possess. This friendship means salvation, forgiveness, eternal life with God forever. This friendship means that his presence goes with you in every circumstance. Nothing can separate you from the love of God through Jesus Christ. And this friendship came at quite a cost. Reconciliation isn't cheap.

Here's a story: in January 2001, Seiko Sakamoto, a plasterer working in a Tokyo subway station, fell into the path of an oncoming train. Lee Soo Hyun, a Korean student in Japan doing language studies, leaped down on the track to save Sakamoto. But both of them were unable to exit the path of the oncoming train in time, and they were killed. This selfless act by the Korean student on behalf of the Japanese laborer caused many people in Japan to reconsider their long-held prejudices directed against Koreans. Strong feelings of distrust between the two countries go back to World War II activities and atrocities inflicted on the Koreans by the Japanese. Many Japanese people, including the prime minister, openly expressed sorrow over previously held stereotypes of Koreans and began to talk about reconciliation. One person said, "I feel ashamed. A young foreigner sacrificed his life for a Japanese. This was not an easy thing to do."

You see, reconciliation rarely occurs without a sacrifice. And by giving His one and only son, God was taking the initiative to heal our broken relationship with Him. He made the move to save us. He made the supreme sacrifice for us so that we might be reconciled to Him. Jesus was unfriended so that we might be befriended.

So what am I to do with this? Well, for some of you, it might be a matter of turning around from the direction you're going. Come to Him who's beckoning every sinner to come home. Forgiveness is yours. He wants to be your friend forever. He wants you to come home to Him to open arms. Someone once said, "There is a God who would die before He would unfriend you." It's true. So why don't you ask Him in? And for others listening today, it might simply be a time to remember His faithful friendship and give God thanks, or put to rest any doubts of whether He really loves you or not. We have a

tendency, I know even myself, when bad things happen to us to wonder if God really cares. Put those doubts away. Look at the cross. And maybe today is a day to commit yourself once again to give your all to Him who gave His all for you. As hymn writer Isaac Watts said so well in his familiar hymn *When I Survey the Wonders Cross*,

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

How about giving Him who gave His all for you, your all in response. Amen.

Would you pray with me? Gracious God, who was in Christ reconciling us to yourself, thank you for the passion story, which reminds us of how deep your love for us really is. Help us to never lose sight of that truth and to trust in it every day of our lives.

Amen.