

Before the Fire's Flickering Light
Peter

Performance Suggestions:

I have written each of the characters imagining what they may be like in – or near – our modern world.

Peter is a great evangelist. Read his sermons or even his letters and you can hear the cadence of an evangelist in his delivery.

I image him as someone like Billy Sunday or Billy Graham: forceful, persuasive, likeable. He's able to merge life experiences with theological truths. His voice should vary a lot. Ideally, a solid baritone with a voice that is smooth as honey (a minister from a Black church?).

The speaker is encouraged (after prayer) to make the part their own – the presentation can be adjusted/edited depending upon your life experiences (cut or edit to your heart's content). For some, that means talking like they would by a campfire, with their voice cracking at times, as Peter relives his failure. For others, it will be a powerful (loud) presentation that reaches people at the back of an auditorium without a mic (that's how Peter was at Pentecost).

DLD

The fire was warm. It cut through the chill of the night air. I rubbed my hands together.

Conversation guarded. Small talk. Nervous talk.

My Lord on trial. While I stood in the shadows. The shadows of the fire's flickering light.

Talking beside a fire. As I had so many times before. Before -- back when I was beside the seashore. Before He called me to be a Fisher of Men. Before He changed my name. Before I saw Him raise the dead and still the wind and call me to walk on the sea.

Before I proclaimed *The Truth*. That He was and is and always will be the Messiah.

Before . . . I denied Him.

Before. When I was sure, and secure, and confident.

Before. When I was strong and determined and part of a powerful movement.

Before. When I was a man. Who saw Him as he was. In dazzling white. And heard the voice. And saw the power. And marveled at the words that would change the world and change my life and change everything.

Before.

Before the girl said she'd seen me with him.
Before my accent gave me away.
Before I told the woman, "I don't know him!"
As a rooster crowed in the distance.

And I turned. As He looked at me.

And my breath escaped.

And I remembered. Remembered my promise and my pride and my falling asleep and rising to fight and to strike the ear and heard Him proclaim:

"Put it away. For My Kingdom is not of this."

And I went out.

Outside.

Into the alley. Where the shadows of my failures grew longer. And the flickering flames of my hour of trial and denial pierced my very heart and soul. And sapped the last of my strength. As I wailed. And realized The Truth: *I had denied my Lord.*

And he was right. And I was wrong.
And I failed to heed the voice
that warned of the choice
that sifted me like wheat. And I was chaff.

And the last sight of me He had before he died was of a miserable sinner, caught by his pride and his fear and his mouth. Telling a lie to conceal the Truth; that everyone knew in their heart.

For outside the Walls of Testing, is a dark alley of Failure and Regret. Filled with the tears of one sinner who was tested and found wanting. Who was warned but fell asleep. Who was called but failed to answer. In the cold of night when the flickering flames of promise were blown out -- by a rooster's crow.

And while I cried. He died. Beside him -- women. Women with more courage than I had shown. The courage to stand beside the man who was everything. In tears. But for their Lord, not for their failure. In tears. For the pain He suffered and the injustice rendered and the hope snuffed out. In tears -- of grief and pain and love.

* * * * *

The nights passed. The tears flowed. Until there seemed to be no more.

And another rooster crowed; as the dawn of Sunday morning broke over the horizon.

And the women went. And Mary heard her name. And cried more tears. Tears that couldn't be stopped. Tears of hope and wonder and love.

And I heard the news that changed the world and changed my life and changed everything.

For He arose. And He broke the curse and tore the veil and moved the stone and *crushed* the serpent. Saved from sin. And the pain of the venom that bites at my heal is overcome by the blood of the lamb.

For He arose. And I saw the tomb and heard Him proclaim "peace" in a locked room.

For He arose. And He called me. Again. Beside a seashore at Galilee. He called me to cast the net of my life into the deeper waters of sacrifice. Onto the other side -- into the living waters of His Will and His Direction.

Called again. Beside a fire.

Where the flickering flames lit up the scars on His hand and the smile on his face.
That proclaimed the promise all over again.

Called again to be a Fisher of Men. Called again . . . to care for the sheep.
Called again . . . to teach and to preach the Good News.
That death is undone
through the gift of God's Son.

And I am a failure and I am a sinner and I have denied my Lord; but I will still
proclaim the Truth that He arose. To fulfill the promise and change our lives and
change the world and change *everything*.

And while there is sin and there is failure and there are men who once were called
whose actions deny that they know their Lord; that doesn't change the truth
that He arose and there is love
and salvation freely offered by our God above.

To all who believe and proclaim
that they have failed and they were wrong
and He was right
and the flickering flames of conscience bring to light
that he forgives . . . and offers . . . *Hope*.

Hope over the tomb of our failures and over the bite of the serpent whose venom of
sin and hatred and deceit has entered our veins and cursed our lives and brought
death and pain and separation from each other and from our God.

Because he rolls away the failure and he rolls away the sin
and he rolls away a million tears that will never have to be shed again.

And there is no other name in whom men can proclaim
then the one whom God called and who now reigns.
And I saw the stone and heard His voice and felt His forgiveness.
And I will proclaim in the light of day and the dead of night that: I KNOW THE
MAN.
And He is the Way. And He is the Truth. And He is the Life.
And He is God's son.

And He forgives my sin -- which is now undone.

And I don't know what else to do
but to proclaim it anew to you.

So, I will follow the path that leads to the cross,
that offers hope to all the lost.
And I will cast my net on the other side,
where He leads and where He guides.

For after the failure and after the tears
and after sin's pain was felt for years and years;
God sent his son in the fullness of time,
to offer hope and love and forgiveness which are now mine.

And with my dying breath I will proclaim --
Jesus is the Risen Christ, Salvation is offered . . in . . no . . other . . Name.

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Dennis L. Dunn

dldunn_att@msn.com; 503-375-375-7722 or cell at 503-931-9671

The Alley of Regret
Dennis L. Dunn

Staging Option: Low lights.

(Choir)

liar,
denier,
failure
fraud.

You have failed Him
Denied the Son of God..

(Peter)

I remember the night
the fires flickering light . .
Why didn't I do what I said?
For with my Lord on trial,
I went in denial,
and now my Lord is dead.

What can I do?
What can I say?
And so in the shadows I wept
And I will spend the rest of my days,
In the Alley of Regret.

(Woman)(*Consider slightly eerie voice*)

I saw you
with Him
Your accent gives you away!

(Girl)

I saw you
in the garden
I saw you yesterday!

(Peter)

“I tell you I don't know Him!
Why don't you let me be?”

And as I turned a rooster crowed,
And Jesus was staring at me!

(Choir)
You're a failure, a fool, a liar
You're the most wretched of men!
You're the great denier!
You failed, your Lord, your friend!

(Peter)
What can I do?
What can I say?
I stand in my eyes condemned.
For while I wailed,
He was nailed,
They have crucified Him!

(Consider having members of the cast circle Peter, stepping in time to the music, pointing their fingers at him.)

(Choir)
liar,
denier,
failure
fraud.
You have failed Him
You're beyond the help of God!

(Peter goes to one knee, holding back tears. Quiet.)

*Bells: Jesus Loves Men
Interlude/Key Change/Melody Change*

(Soprano Solo – may use Mary Magdalene)
Peter do you know
He loves you so?
Peter do you know
Our God forgives?

Satan may have sifted you like wheat,
but your Lord lives,
and you must feed His Sheep.

(Choir Joins)

For He offers the world His forgiveness.
Salvation freely given to everyone,
and I will ever praise Him.

(Peter joins)

God Offers forgiveness through His Son.
God Offers forgiveness through His Son!

*(Suggested Song to follow (by Choir or Congregation): **Amazing Grace**)*