

"Overcoming Failure" Part 2 - Simon Peter Gets Warned

Matthew 26:31-35

In our last lesson we learned how The Apostle Peter "Stepped Up;" it was a confession that the rest of the disciples were also in agreement with. Perhaps during great pressure and temptation to walk away from the Lord like the overwhelming majority of the people did, Peter stands up with boldness and proclaims, **"Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."** We might think that after making such a bold statement that Peter would have never looked back. We might also think that making such a statement would have set him on the path of spiritual success with the absence of blunders and flaws, but it did not. We really cannot be too sure but perhaps making such a bold statement like this may have set him up for temptation more than it increased his strength. We know that the Bible warns us of placing ourselves in a position of self-confidence.

1 Cor. 10:12 - Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Upon observation and study of the text in **John 6** where we read this statement made by Peter, I believe that we can say with confidence that his heart was in the right place and his motives were pure. Yes, he did mean all that he said about Jesus, and he was also correct in what he said. In a practical way he even lived that out in his daily life. And yes, he did make some mistakes along the way and so will we. Peter did learn, and we might say that he learned the hard way. He made no mistake at all by making this statement, but he might have made the mistake of thinking that he was stronger than he was. Have we not done the same? Have we not made bold statements that have not played out the way that we may have liked them to play out? The statement that Peter made in **John 6** was at the beginning of his walk with the Lord and the story that we read in **Matthew 26** was near the end of the earthly ministry of our Lord.

As we learn from this example in Peter's life, we are not doing so to make it seem that we are not capable of doing the same thing. In fact, what we can learn is that we are all still capable of denying our Lord just like Peter did. However, the one great advantage that we have is that we can see how this unfolded in Peter's life and better prepare ourselves to avoid making the same mistake or avoid making it again. There is no sense in us pretending that in some form or fashion we have not denied the Lord ourselves. Whether we have denied His presence, His provision, His power, or all of the above, we have denied him in one way or another.

We can say that in this area of Peter's life, he did fail and perhaps we might say that he failed miserably. But we can also say that his failure did not define him as a failure. Failure, if we are not careful, can make any of us discouraged and defeated. But failure can also make us resilient and stronger if we learn from it. For the remainder of our lesson, we will try to learn from this occasion in the life of The Apostle Peter and make application in our lives in order that we might avoid falling into the same trap.

Matthew 26:31-35 - Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

- 1. Verse 31 - What Jesus said and what God had written. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended (fall away) because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.**

Jesus communicated to His disciples the prophecy in **Zechariah 13:7**. His disciples, despite what Peter thought and what Peter said, would desert Him that very night. Jesus knew that they would be so frightened by the circumstances that they would not have the courage to stay with Him. Jesus said, "**because of Me this night.**" It can also be read, "because of what happens to me this night."

Notice that Jesus said that ALL of them were going to be offended because of Him that night....not just a few of them. This teaches us that every one of us is capable of the same thing and we should guard against the same offence. Jesus had just recently revealed the betrayal of Judas but did not want them to rest secure in their own ability. Yes, they had only one traitor, but they would soon all become deserters.

Whenever we read of an example like this, we are reminded that we too have weaknesses. The reality of the desertion of these believers teaches us to guard ourselves from the possibility of doing the same. The best thing that Peter and the rest of the disciples could have done would have been to heed this warning and do all they could to avoid it.

Prior to this statement we read in **verses 17-30** the story of what we know as "The Last Supper". It was an appointed time in an appointed place where Jesus and His disciples would have a very personal time together for the last time until after His resurrection. Jesus revealed that Judas would betray Him, and they sat and ate together. At the conclusion of their time together we read that they had all sung a hymn and then went out to the Mount of Olives where He begins to describe their scattering.

Knowing this private and incredibly special time they had with the Savior and what follows teaches us that our preparation for unexpected trials can make all the difference in the outcome. At supper all was well and all were at peace; yet that very night all things began to change and change rapidly.

For some, coming out of the old life into the new life (**2 Corinthians 5:17**) was like coming out of a great trial or even a series of trials. As we begin to make progress it will always be to our benefit to stay focused on our growing and learning in order that we might better equip ourselves for the next trial that we will most certainly face in the future. When all things are going well it is the best time for us to prepare for when some things may not go so well.

Solomon said it best....

Proverbs 27:1 - Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

2. Verse 32 - A word for future encouragement. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

How amazing it is that immediately after Jesus predicted that His disciples would betray Him and forsake Him, He assures them that He will not do the same thing to them. In no uncertain terms he says, "**Though you will forsake Me, I will not forsake you....we will meet again in Galilee.**"

This is and very well should be a word of encouragement for the backslider. Despite our turning our backs on God, He will never turn His back on us. The road back to God is a road that is traveled by way of repentance. Despite what you may have done, He still loves you. Despite where you may have been, He will meet you where you are. Despite all the damage that has been done, He still offers forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9, we know, was written to the Christian. Whenever we have strayed from our Lord and lived in a way that has been displeasing to Him, He always seeks our return with open arms. When we “**confess**” our sins it is the act of admitting or declaring our own guilt of what we are being accused of. The Bible says when we do that that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.

The Application:

- The refusal to “admit or declare our own guilt” in a matter in which we have been personally responsible for sinning against God will leave us in a condition of being out of fellowship with God.
- The longer we prolong repentance the more we run the risk of forfeiting the blessings and protection of God.
- We should really consider how foolish it is to prolong forgiveness when we have an invitation from the Lord to make things right.

3. Verse 33 - Simon Peter's bold statement. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

We might not think that Simon Peter could have been any more presumptuous than this to make such a bold statement. He bound himself with a promise that he would never be offended in Jesus; not just this night, but at no time would he do such an unthinkable thing.

Several things are exposed in the life of Simon Peter from the statement that he made to Jesus.

- He places himself better armed against temptation than anyone else and this turned out to be his weakness rather than his strength.

Perhaps the following verse that the Apostle Paul wrote reminded Paul of Simon Peter's personal testimony that he may have heard along the way.

1 Corinthians 10:12 - Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

- Though he thinks it might be feasible for some and even possible for all people to be offended in Jesus, He alludes to the fact that it might be impossible for him to do the same.
- He portrays an amazing amount of conceit and self-confidence to think that he might be safe from the temptations that are so common to everyone else.

There is a very common thread among many in terms of being overconfident in their own strength and stability. There are times when we suppose ourselves strong enough to grapple with the strongest of temptations and to bear great afflictions for Christ. But perhaps most of the reason might be because we really do not know ourselves and/or we do not like to be honest with ourselves. Throughout the ages history has recorded that those who fall soonest are most confident in themselves and those are least safe when they are most secure in their own ability. Sadly, Simon Peter would prove to be another example of this reality.

The Application:

- How privileged we are to have the mistake of Simon Peter in order that we might learn to avoid making the same mistake ourselves.
- Instead of saying that we would never do such a thing, we would do well to consider that if it is possible for others it is possible for me.
- When we embrace the possibility of the fall, we can then become better equipped to avoid it.

4. Verse 34 - A prophetic certainty. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the rooster crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Whether it was or not, this should have been the most alarming words that Peter heard. "***This night, you will deny me three times***". Not tomorrow, not the next day or even months from now Simon Peter, but **THIS NIGHT** you will do such a thing. When he was told by Jesus that he would deny that he even knew Him three times before the night was through, we might think that he would have at least considered the fact that it could happen.

Before we get too astounded by the negligence of Simon Peter, we need not look beyond ourselves to see that we have all done the same thing and I am certain many more times than just three. Every one of us have either read and/or heard of Bible truth that we have ignored only to find out somewhere down the road that they came to pass. Yes, we will all reap what we

have sown but sadly we may not always consider this Bible principle when we embark on our own way of doing things. It is not that Peter had a hearing problem; it's that he had a believing problem.

The Application:

- When the Bible says something, it means what it says. If there is a right way and a wrong way to do things then we might better find out the right way and fall in line with it.
- What we "think" will always get us into trouble if it does not line up with what God says.

Proverbs 3:7 - Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

5. Verse 35 - A contagious denial. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

For some reason Simon Peter takes his argument to the highest level of convincing....or so he thought. He stated that before he would deny the Lord, he would sooner die than do such a thing. It is interesting how he spoke so carelessly about death. Perhaps it was because death appeared at the time to be at such a distance that Peter just blurted out this insistent statement. We know now what he did not know then that he did not keep this commitment nor did he even consider death when he had the opportunity to stand up for Jesus.

No sooner did Peter make this statement then the rest of the disciples echoed the same thing..... **Likewise also said all the disciples.** We do not know exactly what was in the heart of Simon Peter. It may have been pride, carelessness, self-confidence, ignorance, or all of these things. But what we do know is that whatever it was, it was contagious. Perhaps we can place them all in the same boat and say maybe what they said was with good intentions but apparently it wasn't very well thought out before they said it.

The Application:

- It would do us well to think before we talk, especially when we are making bold commitments to our Lord about our faithfulness.
- It is not the making of the commitment that creates the problem; it is the breaking of one.