

## ***Peter’s Spiritual Crisis: A Willing Spirit with Weak Flesh***

### **I. WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT JESUS**

- A. Jesus asked the disciples a foundational question for their spiritual life, “Who do you say I am?” Was Jesus a man like *John the Baptist*, a fiery holiness preacher, or like *Elijah*, with great power to confront the powers of darkness, or *Jeremiah*, who was known as the weeping prophet?
- <sup>13</sup>He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” <sup>14</sup>They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup>He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon... <sup>18</sup>I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church...” (Mt. 16:13-18)***
- B. Jesus gave Simon a new name, calling him by the Greek name, Peter (means “a rock”; Mt. 16:18). This new name emphasized Peter’s *stability and reliability in leadership*. Jesus gave him this name, knowing that Peter would deny Him and later yield to the fear of man as in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14).
- C. The human heart was created with a longing for the ***assurance that we are enjoyed by God***. Our life is revolutionized as we see how Jesus feels about sincere believers in their immaturity and struggle with sin. The enemy accuses us, seeking to convince us that Jesus is exasperated with us. A life of accusation with shame leads to a life of sin. If we feel “dirty” before God, then we will live “dirty.”
- <sup>10</sup>...the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night... (Rev. 12:10)***

### **II. PETER’S JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

- A. Peter had more confidence in his own commitment to Jesus than in Jesus’ commitment to him. He sought to relate to Jesus based on *his promise* that he would not stumble again in a specific area.
- <sup>31</sup>“All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night...” <sup>33</sup>Peter answered... Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” <sup>35</sup>Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” (Mt. 26:31-35)***
- B. Jesus informed Peter that Satan wanted to sift him as wheat, to reveal the “chaff” in his life. He told Peter that he would deny Him, but that *his faith would not fail* (Lk. 22:32). Stumbling refers to a short-term compromise. Failing speaks of quitting or giving up on seeking wholehearted obedience.
- <sup>31</sup>“Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup>But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren... <sup>34</sup>Peter, the rooster shall not crow...before you will deny...that you know Me.” (Lk. 22:31-34)***
- C. Jesus gave Peter a twofold description of his life— his spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak. A willing spirit speaks of the sincere desire of God’s people to obey Him.
- <sup>41</sup>“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt. 26:41)***

- D. Peter denied Jesus three times (Lk. 22:56-62). God is not surprised by our sin, even if we are. The battle for our faith is waged in knowing what God is thinking about us when we discover the weakness of our flesh. Some determine that it is too painful to reach for the highest things in God because they believe that they will fail. Thus, they give up on walking in wholehearted obedience.
- <sup>56</sup>A certain servant girl...said, "This man was also with Him." <sup>57</sup>But he denied Him...<sup>58</sup>After a little while another...said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" <sup>59</sup>Then after about an hour had passed, another...affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow was with Him..." <sup>60</sup>the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup>And the Lord turned and looked at Peter... <sup>62</sup>Peter went out and wept bitterly. (Lk. 22:56-62)*
- E. An angel told Mary Magdalene to tell Peter that Jesus was going to speak to him in Galilee.
- <sup>7</sup>Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him." (Mk. 16:7)*

### III. IN GALILEE PETER WENT FISHING IN SEEKING A SPIRITUAL COMFORT ZONE

- A. Peter was resigning from his leadership in the kingdom to return to his occupation as a fisherman. He had been a successful fisherman before being called by Jesus. He thought that if he could not stay faithful to Jesus before a young servant girl, how would he stay faithful for a lifetime with the pressures of leadership? "Going fishing" was a statement of Peter's despair—today, it speaks of letting go of our vision to walk in the fullness of our calling and relationship with Jesus.
- <sup>3</sup>Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They...got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup>But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. (Jn. 21:3-4)*
- B. Jesus asked Peter the same question three times to break the shame of his three denials. Will you give yourself to Me even after you stumble spiritually? Will you reset your heart to love Me fully? When God asks a question, it is not because He needs information. Jesus wanted Peter to discover information about his own heart. Peter did not know where he stood with Jesus after his failure.
- <sup>15</sup>Jesus said, "Simon...do you love Me more than these [the fish]?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord" ...<sup>16</sup>He said to him again a second time, "Simon...do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, "...do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said...the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." (Jn. 21:15-17)*
- C. The fact of our sinful flesh is *part* of the truth about us, but *it is not the whole truth of who we are*. Jesus broke shame off Peter by making him say, "I love God." Jesus was saying, "Peter, I see your love for Me." Peter was restored to confidence in his relationship with God.
- D. Jesus defined Peter by his willing spirit (sincere intentions to obey God), not by his weak flesh, even though Peter had defined his life by his weak flesh. Our victory begins with our sincere intention to obey God.
- E. The Lord wants us to have a *threefold confidence*. First, we are to be confident that He loves us in our weakness. Second, we are to be confident that He esteems our weak love for Him as genuine. Third, we are to be confident that He still entrusts us with the calling that He originally gave us.