

Too Soon to Quit by Warren W. Wiersbe Chapter 11 – Peter, the Encourager
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October 14, 2020

I. Peter, the Encourager: He cares for you

- A. Peter never forgot he denied Jesus three times. What the Lord said to him in the upper room stayed in his heart. “Simon, Simon Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32).
- B. Peter was not a boaster, but an encourager. Yes, Peter had sinned; but had been forgiven, restored and recommissioned (John 21:19) not only to evangelize the lost but to encourage the saved.
- C. Peter maintained an encouraging outlook on life and shows us what we need to know to do the same.

II. We are Weak

- A. Three times in that upper room Jesus used Peter’s old name “Simon”. It was as though the Lord was gently reminding him that there was still enough of the old “Simon” left and he had better be careful lest he stumble and fall.
- B. Peter had come a long way since that day three years before when his brother Andrew brought him to Jesus (John 1:40-42). During that time he listened to Jesus teach, heal people and raise people from the dead. Peter was sure that he knew how to be a successful Christian.
- C. Courage and self-confidence were Peter’s strongest qualities and he failed miserably in both.
- D. How can knowing that we are weak sinners encourage us to become victorious saints?
 - 1. Paul gives us the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:7 (NASB) ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.
 - 2. Like a jeweler who displays brilliant diamond on pieces of black felt, so God puts the treasure of eternal life into vessels of clay, so that when His power works through us, people will be amazed.
- E. Peter the fisherman preaches a powerful sermon, heals a man crippled from birth, restores a paralyzed man, raises a woman from the dead all because of the gospel contained in him and the fact that the power of God could overcome any human weakness or failure.
- F. God does this so that He receives all the glory.

III. Satan is on the Prowl

- A. Peter was in Rome experiencing the great persecution under Emperor Nero. During this time Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith throughout the Roman Empire. 1. As we read Peter’s two letters, we discover he knew personally about suffering Christians. Peter announced that a “fiery trail” was coming (1 Peter 4:12-19) referring Nero’s persecution of believers. We know that eventually Peter was executed during the reign of Nero’s persecution.

- B. However throughout his letters, Peter magnified Jesus Christ and reminded his readers that Christ suffered for them, far beyond anything they would have to endure for Him; and that their suffering would ultimately lead to glory as it did with Jesus. The Holy Spirit would help them experience that glory and for that they should rejoice when suffering for Jesus' sake. (1 Peter 1:6; Acts 5:40-41). Even today we can rejoice when we suffer for Jesus sake as the apostles did in their day. (1 Peter 1:6).
- C. When Peter heard Jesus announce that He would be arrested in Jerusalem and crucified, Peter protested: "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" Jesus replied, "get behind me, Satan! (Matt. 16:22-23). Get behind me, Adversary! The word never was on Peter's lips more than once. In the upper room, he told Jesus, "No, you shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8), and he boasted, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Matt. 26:35). In the upper room, Jesus made it clear that God was in charge and that Satan could do nothing without His permission (See Job 1-2).
- D. The metaphor Jesus used was of a farmer sifting his grain: the grain would drop through the sieve but the chaff would remain and be thrown away.
 - 1. Satan sifted the eleven disciples but not Judas because was already under the control of the Evil One based on what Luke 22:3 and John 7:70-71 day about him.
 - 2. Peter wrote two inspired epistles. The first focuses on God's grace in times of persecution and warns the Christian community, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).
- E. The second letter emphasizes the dangers of false teachers, ministers of Satan who get into the church and spread lies. We see this at Corinth at Cor. 11:1-4, 13-15 and the churches Peter wrote to see 2 Pet.2.
- F. The serpent deceives and the lion devours; if one approach doesn't work, he tried the other; and we must be awake and alert to detect his strategy.
 - 1. Our Lord has already defeated the devil, and has given to us the equipment we need to overcome him and his hosts of demons (Eph. 6:10-20).
 - 2. We don't fight for victory; we fight from victory, the victory that Jesus won in His death on the cross, His resurrection and His ascension. He reigns today in heaven and is "head over everything for the church (Eph. 1:22). That word 'everything' includes the devil.

IV. Our Faith is Under Attack

- A. Beginning with his confession of faith recorded in Matthew 16:16 "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" - Peter had given a clear and courageous witness of the deity of Jesus Christ.
- B. But now Satan was attacking that witness and Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. The Greek word translated "fail" gives us our English word "eclipse". An eclipse of the sun doesn't extinguish the sun but merely covers the light temporarily. Eclipsed faith is temporary darkness until the light returns.
- C. Peter's courage failed, but not his faith for when the rooster crowed and the Lord turned and looked at him, Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken and "he went outside and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).
 - 1. God accepted his repentance, for "a broken and a contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (Ps. 51:17).
 - 2. After His resurrection the Lord met with Peter, forgave him and restored him to his ministry. (1 Cor.15:5; John 21).

- D. The Enemy seeks to weaken and then destroy our faith. The first statement of Satan in Scripture is an attack on our faith in God's truth: "Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden? (Gen 3:1).
- E. 1 Peter 5:9 wrote "9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.
- F. Peter understood that often lions would attack animals that were either sick, young or alone. Satan, the lion attacks believers who allow themselves to be isolated and pulled away from the fellowship of believers.
- G. According to Peter, the faith of God's people is "precious" (2 Pet. 1:1) and enables us to be shielded by God's power and filled with glorious joy (1 Pet. 1:5,8). Our faith is tested (1:7) but it endures, because it is grounded in the finished work of Christ and the eternal word of God.
- H. Peter summed it up in the benediction of his first letter like this ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.(1Peter 5:10).

V. **We're in This Together**

- A. If we keep in mind that we are made of clay and that we have an Enemy who targets our faith and wants us to fail, we will quickly depend on the Lord and trust Him to keep us from quitting.
- B. We must remember we are not alone in this battle. 1 Peter 5:9 tells us we are not the only "elect exiles" in this world. 1 Peter 5:9 (NASB) 9 But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.
- C. The perseverance of one believer encourages others to keep going. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (See 2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB) 12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
- D. One of Satan's most sneaky tactics is to try to make us believe that we are alone in the battle and that neither the Lord nor His people know our needs or care how we feel.
- E. We must remember that we are not alone in the battle and we must remember to minister to others, even as they remember to minister to us.

VI. **Jesus is Praying for Us!**

- A. Peter's next encouragement should especially thrill our hearts: Jesus prayed for Peter and He is praying for us today!
- B. Jesus prayed all night before He called the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-16), which means He made no mistake when he included Peter and Judas Iscariot.
- C. Throughout His ministry Jesus prayed for the apostles, and before He went to the cross, He prayed not only for them but also for His church today (John17). Today, Jesus is interceding for us in heaven. Hebrews 7:25 says [25](#) Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Redemption is His finished work in heaven. On earth Jesus died for sinners; in heaven He lives to intercede for the saints. (John 17:9) John 17:9 (NASB) 9 "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine;
- D. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us is also interceding for us ...the Spirit helps us in our weakness as we see in Romans 8:26-27.

- E. When our prayers are not in agreement with God's will, the Holy Spirit "edits" them and aligns them with God's will, and then He seeks to teach us what God's will is. The Spirit's ministry is something like the automatic pilot that helps to keep a plane on course. The Spirit will even stop us from praying about matters that are contrary to the Father's will.
- F. But we must pray also and Luke 22:40,46 show that twice the Lord told the disciples in the garden, "pray that you will not fall into temptation".
- G. Because Jesus and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding for us we can obey 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstance; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

VII. Repent and Be Restored

- A. Disobedience is not a dead-end street; it's more of a cul-de-sac that provides space for us to turn around.
- B. Satan is very subtle in his attacks. As we are being tempted he says "you deserve to enjoy this sin and you can get away with it". If we believe him and sin, then he says "you can't get away with this, God has rejected you, Give up!"
- C. Peter reminds us of this glorious truth in that magnificent benediction in his first epistle 1 Peter 5:10 (NASB) 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.
- D. In Peter's day the word translated "restore" was a medical term for setting a broken bone, it was also a fisherman's word for mending and preparing nets.
- E. Peter didn't lose his salvation because of his sin, but he did temporarily lose his fellowship with the Lord.
- F. At the empty tomb the angel said to the women "He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter...(Mark 16:6-7). It's generally believed that John Mark wrote his gospel with the help of Peter, so those words "and Peter" are significant. Jesus met with Peter and restored him to fellowship and discipleship (1 Cor 15:3-5; John 21:15-19. When he was a fisherman, how many times had Peter mended his nets so he could go back out on the Sea of Galilee and catch fish. Now we see Jesus doing the same with Peter's life. Jesus is not through with Peter, not is Jesus through with us.

VIII. Restored to Serve Others

- A. Luke 22:32 (NASB) 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Jesus said this to Peter and stills says this to us today.
- B. Satan wanted Peter to feel permanently damaged and therefore disqualified from the ministry, but Jesus had other plans. Peter's own experience of failure, forgiveness and restoration had taught him much about the grace of God and this helped to equip him for pastoral service to others.
- C. Peter strengthened young John Mark who he had led to faith in Christ. After the Lord delivered Peter from prison, he had gone to Mark's mother's house where a group of believers was interceding for him (Acts 12:1-17). Mark was probably there and must have marveled at what God had done for Peter.
- D. When Barnabas wanted to take Mark on the second missionary journey, Paul adamantly refused because on the first missionary journey Mark left them and

returned to Jerusalem. The team broke up. Barnabas took Mark with him and taught him how to serve. Peter would eventually accept Mark and work with him despite his previous choice to abandon an earlier mission.

- E. When you read Peter's two epistles you learn that he was sensitive to the needs of others, ready to give encouragement and always seeking to glorify Jesus Christ.
- F. Peter's failings have often been over emphasized. Yet, the church owes a great deal to Peter and the encouragement he had given to God's people over the centuries.
- G. Peter teaches us the value of not quitting after a failure. He challenges us to confirm our calling and election. In the midst of failure because of Christ's divine power we can live a life that honors God. (2 Peter 1:5-8).