

Peter's Fall

Lesson 20

John 18

Opener

Ask: Can you remember a time when you really messed up...when you did something that you knew you shouldn't have done even while you were doing it?

How did you feel afterwards?

Have you ever fallen away from the Lord and felt like you could never come back into His presence?

Have you ever made a promise to somebody that you didn't keep?

Peter, one of the disciples, had a similar experience when Jesus was arrested. Peter is known as a strong, outspoken man who often acted before thinking. During Peter's time with Jesus here on earth, he stepped out of the boat to walk on the water to Jesus, he confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Savior of the world. He, more so than the other disciples, promised to remain faithful to Jesus. He promised that he would never betray Jesus. All of the four Gospels record Peter's promise to always stand by Jesus.

Scripture

Matthew 26:34 – “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

Mark 14:29-31 – Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “today – yes, tonight – before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”

Luke 22:33 – “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

John 13:37 – “I will lay down my life for you.”

Discussion

Yet during a very crucial moment in Jesus' life, Peter did not remain faithful to Jesus. He denied him. But, Jesus, who knew Peter better than he knew himself, knew the truth. He knew that even faithful Peter would fall away and leave Him just like the other disciples.

Peter was an ordinary man...he was scared of what would happen to him, of what others would think of him. Peter was like us. We also are ordinary people who often become more preoccupied with how others see us than our faithfulness to God.

We begin reading the account of Peter's fall in **John 18:15**

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself....

(v. 25) As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Peter has been following Jesus since he was arrested along with one of the other disciples. The Bible tells us that the other disciple was allowed to go into the high priest's courtyard, but that Peter had to wait outside. He was left alone. His support was no longer there and he fell. He denied his Lord and Savior.

We too often face our toughest moments of temptation when no one else is looking. It is easy to be obedient, kind, loving, and patient when we are at church or when we know another believer is watching. However, it is the moments when we are alone, when our spiritual support has left for the day that we are most tempted to fall away from the Lord and sin. It occurs often in the quietness of our homes when we lose patience with our kids and families. Probably the hardest thing of all is to follow Jesus alone regardless of who comes along beside you. Your character is who you are when you think no one is watching.

Peter denies Jesus two more times, exactly like Jesus predicted and then the rooster crowed. Matthew 26:75 says the Peter went outside and wept bitterly. The moment the rooster crowed, Peter knew he had failed. In the moment when his Lord needed him the most; needed him to be strong, needed him to pray, he failed. He had not been able to stay faithful and this moment of weakness made him realize who he really was – he is nothing without Jesus (John 15:5).

We also fail. We also are not as strong as we need to be. We too have feelings of guilt and frustration when we realize how weak we really are. But this is the moment when God can really begin to work in our lives. The Bible says that when we are weak, He is strong. When we realize that **WE** can't save ourselves, and that **WE** can't be faithful, and that **WE** can't do what He asks us to do, He begins to take over because **HE** can do all of these things through us.

Jesus knew Peter. He knew that he would fall. But He also knew what Peter could be if he would just begin to depend solely on Jesus and His strength instead of his own strength. It was Peter who confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Savior of the world. It was Peter who stepped out of the boat to walk on the water to Jesus. It was Peter who followed Jesus after all the other disciples had abandoned him. It was Peter who became

the leader of the Christian church after Jesus' ascension.

Jesus knows us. He created us. He died for us. He knows when we are going to mess up. But He also sees us as we can be if would only rely on Him and Him alone.

Application

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In what ways have you stopped relying on Jesus believing that you can do it all on your own?

In what ways can you be more faithful?