

"Peter: In Christ Our Failure Become Our Benefit"

For the last 5 months, we have been focusing on the message series, "Life's Crisis Management, Learning From Our Mistakes".

It is already May. On the 18th next month we will be holding our church's general meeting and starting that day, I hope to start a new message series we are preparing. Next week is our annual picnic and the week after, which is the first Sunday of June, we will have a Pentecost message, thus ending our series on June 11th with John.

When we chose something, we try to choose the better no matter how small the difference is. That is the same whether it is in choosing the right toothpaste or the right marriage partner. No one deliberately buys a faulty car or old, ripened bananas. When hiring a man for a job, we interview each applicant and chose the most capable to carry out the job.

2000 years ago, the plan Jesus Christ had in mind was beyond any other. It was a grand project to change the world. It was not a project aimed to last 3 years, 10 years, 100 years, nor 300 years, but the whole world from what it was before.

It is obvious to us that when we chose a partner for a project, we consider their knowledge on the subject, experience, and character. But surprisingly, Jesus did not look for such qualifications and instead chose 12 men who could not be further off the mark from such ideals. And what is even more surprising is that from these men came Christianity which to this day continues to change the world, carrying out his plan.

Among the 12 disciples, there is one who is called the first: Peter. We can examine his life and character through the bible. The names of the 12 disciples are listed 4 times in the bible, all in different orders, except Peter who is written first. Those who came to them always asked Peter first (Matthew 17:24), he acted as the mediator through the days leading up to the pentecost (Acts 1:15-26), and It was also Peter who stood and preached first on the day of the pentecost (Acts 2:14). It was also that Peter was the eldest among the disciples, but it was also that Peter had something beyond just that. But he at first was also a rough and unpolished.

Peter's name appears 160 times in the new testament, and there would be no end if we were to mention them all, but we can examine many aspects of his character. He was a passionate man, and also truthful. When he was called upon, he did not hesitate to leave everything and follow the Lord. (Matthew 4:18-20, 19:27) He quickly accepted the divinity of God and confessed that "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) Another thing is that he was also first to run his mouth and he continuously made mistakes because of it.

Peter saw Jesus walk on water and begins to do so himself immediately but then he begins to drown when he saw the fierce wind. When Jesus began to wash the feet of his disciples, Peter said, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" (John 13:9)

There are many descriptions that describe him. But today, we would like to examine the series of events that occurred to him within a single day. Jesus had taken Peter, John and Jacob up to Gethsemane to pray.

At that time, the men who had come to capture Jesus were already there so close. It was right before Jesus had been put on the cross. Jesus had described this event as the cup he must drink from. Jesus had told his disciples that "**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death**". He prayed as his sweat dripped like blood onto the ground.

He had brought the three disciples along with him so that they may pray with him in such time. Yet they did not understand Jesus' suffering and had fallen asleep. They were woken twice by Jesus and still fell asleep the third time. Among them was Peter. We can easily fall asleep even in times when told by someone that their soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

At this time Judas, one of the twelve, came with an armed crowd sent by the chief priests, teachers of the law, and the elders. They had arranged a signal that the one he kisses is to be arrested. Jesus said to Judas who had come to betray him, "Do what you came for, friend". Yes, He had called him a friend. Even Peter who had been falling asleep must have woken to such alarming circumstances as he drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. (this became Jesus' last

healing miracle) He could not contain the emotion that had swollen up inside of him.

Jesus picked up the man's ear and healed him saying, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11) And thus, Jesus was soon captured. If Jesus had not healed the man's ear, Peter would also have been captured. Then after, everyone fled from the scene while Peter alone followed after from afar, into the courtyard of the high priest. That is when the happening we all know well occurred.

Many, such as the high priest, teachers of the law, and the elders had gathered around Jesus to falsely accuse him. There was not a single person there to speak in his defense. As Jesus was being questioned and accused, Peter had sat there warming himself by a fire. Then a servant girl came up to him saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." (**Matthew 26:69-71**) But Peter quickly denied saying, "I don't know what you're talking about" and went out into the entryway. Maybe he was trying to get out from the courtyard.

Another servant girl said to the crowd, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth" (**Matthew 26:71-72**) but he denied again saying "I don't know what you mean!"

Then some men standing there came up to Peter and said to him, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives it away." (**Matthew 26:73-74**) Then Peter swore to them, "I don't know the man!" and immediately a rooster crowed.

In fact, a few hours before this had occurred, Peter had said to Jesus "**Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.**" (**Luke 22:33**) He could not have forgotten these words he had just said. Jesus had then replied that this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (Matthew 26:34) It says in the bible that Peter remembered this, left the courtyard, and wept bitterly.

To deny Jesus three times means that even if he had made a mistake the first time, he had the chance to correct it twice. But Peter having said, "I don't know what you're talking about" the first time, said not long after, "I don't know what you mean!" and swore to them, "I don't know the man!", lost all of his chances.

At this point, Peter would have been remembered as a betrayer, coward, and laughing stock. But Jesus appeared to such man after his resurrection and gently spoke. He appeared by the sea of Galilee asking Peter, "Do you love me?" three times.

Before any of this had occurred, Jesus had already said to Peter, **"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)

Jesus had already known what Peter would do. That it is something that would be as though Satan sifting them. That Peter would be shaken by it. The strange thing is that Satan wished for this and it was allowed. Why was it allowed to happen? Was it not because Jesus believed that even though the sifting and shaking, Peter would be able to stand back up. Not only that but that by experiencing such an event once, his foundation of confidence and strength needed to crumble. Otherwise he could not be used in the Lord's work.

This was why Jesus had prayed for his faith and strength. When the disciples woke each morning, Jesus would already be up, praying alone in a lonely place. What had he been praying about? He had been praying for his disciples and for Peter. So that he may not lose his faith; so that when he does turn back, he could be the man with enough strength to strengthen his brothers.

"And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Along with these words of Jesus, the words of my teacher from seminary school remains in my heart. This teacher had dropped out of school 17 times. Normally, you cannot drop out 17 times even if you wanted to. As you can guess, he had been quite a problem child. Such a man is now a paster so it is clear God's plan is far beyond our own. This teacher had always said "Only those who have stumbled can help those who are stumbling" And Jesus had just as well applied this to Peter.

Peter could have kept it secret that he had denied Jesus three times in the courtyard of the high priest. We would think twice about recording our own mistakes. He may have been able to whisper into the ears of his friends who wrote the gospels, "please, I beg of you not to write of this". But Peter's mistakes are

clearly written of in the gospels for all the world to know. (Matthew 26:69-, Mark 14:66-, Luke 22:54, John 18:15-)

Even so, what does it mean for all four gospels to have this event recorded? I would say that Peter was okay for this to be made public. Why? He must have seen God's love through his mistakes, and believed this to be important for future generations to know. So rather than hiding it, he may have repeatedly spoken of this story. The more he told it, the more he could tell of Jesus' great love. The reason why he could speak of his failure was because he had won victory over it through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4 describes these events that occurred, Peter's meeting of the resurrected Jesus, and his receiving the Holy Spirit. **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12) The men who heard this were astonished by such great words because they know that these men were unschooled. When the people commanded them not to teach any further, he said, **"Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."** (Acts 4:19-20) Here we see Peter as a changed man from the fearful man he once was before.

When Jesus first met Peter, when he left his boat and nets to follow Jesus, what did Jesus say to Peter? **"You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas"** (John 1:42) "Cephas" means "rock". He who had once feared the winds, drawn and swung a sword around, who had been greatly disturbed by the words of a servant in the high priest's courtyard, had changed into a grounded, solid rock. Jesus had called him a rock before he had even made his series of mistakes. Yes, although he knew his weakness, He knew that his weakness would be changed into the strength of a rock that helps the stumbled get back up.

We also make mistakes. If we continue to grieve in them, mistakes will only continue to exist as mistakes. But through those mistakes, if we are able to encourage those who walk the same path, our mistakes become our treasures. We can encourage and understand as many people as we have made mistakes. This is what happens when our mistakes are overcome by Jesus Christ.

Why does Christianity exist today? Among the key individuals is a man named Paul. He had once persecuted the church and worked to take the lives of Christians.

Because he had once been the polar opposite himself, he understood the hearts of those who stood in that position, and was able to spread the teachings of Jesus beyond Jerusalem to the world. His life before of persecuting the church was not a waste. Because of it we have Christianity as it is today.

The movie "The Case for Christ", which is currently showing in theaters, is based on the true life story of the journalist Lee Strobel who had set out on disproving the existence of a God. His conviction that God does not exist was strong, thus the relationship between him and his Christian wife was in crisis. Just as he would in his occupation as a journalist, he pursues Jesus Christ's cross and his resurrection through collecting information from scholars all across America, eventually coming to Christ in seeing the pieces he had collected. Because he had lived without God, he found convicting evidence that no one else has had before, and continues to travel the world with it.

When a beggar came to Peter and John, they looked straight at him and said to him, **"Look at us!" (Acts 3:4)** It is as though to say you should see all that I am. "I cannot give you anything. I am a weak man who has made many mistakes. Look." And Peter said, **"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you."** What is it that Peter had? It was the many mistakes and Jesus' love that engulfed each and every one of those mistakes. He did not focus on his mistakes but he focused on Jesus who pulled him up from those mistakes. That is why there is no need to hide our own mistakes. If speaking of our own mistakes can show the love of Jesus, he spoke of them to make his love clear. He had no gold nor silver but he had as much of Jesus' love as the number of mistakes he had made. That is what Peter had to offer.

Dear brothers and sister's in Christ, Peter's mistake seemed like one too great to come back from. But Jesus brought him back to his feet, changing him into the rock he was to be. Just as Jesus had said, he became a messenger in leading people to Christ through his encouragement. This will also happen in our lives. The biggest setbacks and mistakes we see will be used for the Lord. Who could have ever imagined such a life. Jesus Christ is leading us even today, into such a surprising life. Let's pray.

Translated by Shirah Vogt