

Life of Peter-The Original Rocky

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THE LIFE OF FIRST PETER THE ORIGINAL ROCKY by Lowell Johnson

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THE ORIGINAL ROCKY John 1:35-42

Before reading the Passage

I want to begin a study on the life of Simon Peter.

- Someone called Simon Peter the Big Fisherman...and so he was. Tradition says Peter was a big man. John 21 records that Peter and six other disciples are fishing...all night and caught nothing. Jesus on the shore said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you'll find some." They did and the net was filled with 153 large fish. John said, "Peter, that's the Lord." And Simon Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore. The six others with Peter were struggling to pull the net full of fish to the shore and the Lord said to them, "Bring some of the fish you've caught to me." Peter took off, grabbed the net full of fish and he dragged by himself the fish to Jesus.
- I could call him the Big Fisherman, but instead, I want to call him The Original Rocky.

- Sylvester Stallone has gotten rich playing the boxer, Rocky. There have been Rocky I, II, III. But it was our Lord who named Simon, Rocky.

Let me introduce the study with a detail you might not have thought of:

- Simon lived during a time much like ours in this respect: I believe we are living close to the second coming of Jesus. All the signs are ripe for Jesus to come again. Peter lived in the time of His first coming – and he knew it. You say, "How did he know it?" Daniel 9 said Messiah would come 483 years after his prophecy. Both Simeon and Anna knew the time was close. Simeon prayed he would not die until he had seen the Lord ...and he didn't.

- John the Baptist came forth preaching, “Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand.” Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 4 both speak of the forerunner, John the Baptist. God gave the people of that day a sense that He was about to do something special just as He is giving people today that same sense.
- They felt that Israel was about to be restored.

Read the Passage

Peter was the most colorful of the twelve disciples.

- He was a man of action – he never did anything halfheartedly.
- He was a take charge kind of person – a born leader. He never got lost in a crowd – you always knew where he was and what he was thinking.

Two things I want you to see:

I. Peter's Introduction to Jesus

1. Picture this: John the Baptist in the Jordan baptizing when he sees Jesus and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Two of John's followers are there – Andrew and John. They follow Jesus – Jesus asked them why are they following Him. They respond, “Where are you staying?” Jesus said, “Come and see.” “They came and saw where He was staying and remained with Him that day.”

1. Notice John 1:39c “Now it was about the tenth hour.” Don't run past that!

- It had been about 50 years ago when John wrote this, but he never forgot it – nor will you if you have ever met the Master.
- I'm not saying you will remember the year or month or day or time – but you will never forget that life-changing experience. Some write the date of their trusting Jesus in their Bibles.
- Meeting Jesus opens up a whole new world to a person.
- He has a new nature in his heart – a new influence in his life – new confidence and outlook on life...he laughs at impossibilities.
- Meeting Jesus releases the conscience from the weight of guilt...it purifies affections...forms character...gives a new direction and aim to life.
- There is a new sense of happiness, usefulness, honor, safety.

Mosie Lister writes:

Then I Met the Master

For all things were changed when He found me
A new day broke through all around me
For I met the Master, now I belong to Him
Now I met the Master, now I am one of His own.

I've Been Changed

I've been changed...I'm new born now.
All my life has been rearranged.
What a difference it made
when the Lord came and stayed in my heart.
Oh, yes, I've been changed.

Notice John 1:40-41

Andrew was known as Simon Peter's brother.

Andrew stands in sharp contrast to Peter – not flamboyant.

- Andrew preached no sermons... made no rash promises... and was always behind the scenes.
- Andrew had one claim to fame – he was always bringing people to Jesus. In John 1 he brought Peter, in John 6 – brought a lad and his lunch, in John 12 – brought some Greeks to Jesus.
- Most folks have never heard of Edward Kimball. He was the Sunday School teacher who won D.L. Moody to the Lord.
- A law preacher in a primitive British chapel preached, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ends of the earth” and Charles Haddon Spurgeon was saved.
- If you are a timid, behind the scenes kind of person, take courage. That one you introduce to Jesus may be

of more service to Christ than you'll ever be.

- If all that Andrew ever did was to win Peter to the Lord, that was a great day's work.

- And what if Andrew had not gone after his brother? Jesus could have chosen another to reach Peter, but He chose Andrew to teach us a lesson.

- Many great servants have been won by little known folks.

- Dr. James Travis was told by some seminary professor, "What you're doing in this little college at Blue Mountain is but a drop in the bucket." He said, "Maybe so, but my drop is in the bucket." Five of his students have been president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

II. The Insight of Jesus Concerning Peter John 1:42

John 1: 42 – "Jesus beheld (looked at) him" means to gaze, fixed his eyes, a searching – x-ray kind of look.

"You are" (diagnosis) Simon – means a hearer – suggests a man who follows every voice. Pictures a sail boat in the sea – unsteady, easily led.

Simon – I know your weaknesses, strengths, insecurities, disappointments.

"You shall become" (promise) Peter – strength, stability.

- Here is the Lord's challenge – "Peter, let me take you, remold you, change you. Peter, are you willing to let me change you?"
- How far are you willing to go to allow God to change you into what He wants you to be?
- "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all of him there is."
- When we meet Jesus, He doesn't just see what we are, but what we can become – the potential within us.
- Because Jesus knows what we can become, He shows amazing patience in helping us to grow into it.

A Christian is not merely a sinner minus his sin, but a new creation – a heart transformation takes place – it is not instant, but the potential is there.

Have you ever met the Master?

John 1: 41 – Andrew found his brother

John 1: 42 – He brought him to Jesus – he had to overcome some resistance.

A preacher preached on "And He Brought Him to Jesus." Walking home his daughter said, "I liked that sermon. I think I'll bring somebody to Jesus." "Who?" "I think I'll bring myself."

Most folks know what to do in coming to Jesus – they just haven't done it.

FISHIN' WITH JESUS

Luke 5:1-11

Before reading the Scriptures.

Fishermen have a reputation for being notorious liars.

- In a barber shop there is a plaque that reads, "The only time a fisherman tells the truth is when he calls another fisherman a liar."
- That may not be an exaggeration. One fisherman says he caught a fish so big that when he took a picture of it, the picture itself weighed eleven pounds!
- I must confess, I'm not much of a fisherman. Most of the time when I go fishing, I just drown a bunch of worms, donate blood to the mosquitoes and come home empty handed.
- True fish tale: Peter, fishing with Jesus, let his net down one time and caught almost four tons of fish.

I want you to remember an important Bible principle: There is a parable in every miracle Jesus performed, and there is a miracle in every parable Jesus tells.

In this miracle, Jesus calls Peter to be a fisher of men.

Read the Passage.

This is the first of five miracles that is recorded which Christ performed which involved the Sea of Galilee.

- The Sea of Galilee is called by three names in the New Testament. It is called the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1), and the Sea of Galilee.
- This sea is about 13 miles by 7 miles and the Jordan River flows through it.

Peter and his fishing companions – probably James, John, and Andrew – had fished all night and the KJV says they had “taken nothing.” The words mean, “not even one.” They did not have even one single fish to show for their whole night of fishing. The fishermen were tired, exhausted, dejected, and probably in a foul mood. Luke points out that the men were now “washing their nets.” After a fishing trip they would bring their 100 foot nets to shore, wash them, mend them, fold them, and put them back into the boat so they would dry and they could use them the next day. Jesus had been teaching the people. The crowd continues to grow and Luke says “pressed upon Him to hear the word of God.” That means that the people keep getting closer and closer to Jesus until He finds Himself backed up to the edge of the water. It is then that Jesus sees two boats that Peter and his company own. He asks Peter if He can borrow his boat and use it as a floating pulpit. The lake acted as a sound system or sounding board. All could hear without Jesus raising His voice very much. Now Jesus has finished teaching the crowd, but instead of going back to shore, Jesus tells Peter to head out for the deep water. Jesus has finished His teaching to the crowd; now He is about to deal with Peter personally.

I want you to see first of all:

I. The Assignment Luke 5:4-5

Remember that Peter and his friends had fished all night and had caught nothing. Now the Lord was sending him back to the same place – the place of his failure and fruitlessness.

Sometimes God sends us back to the place of our failure and fruitlessness to teach us the lessons He wants us to learn.

There's an important truth here: God often prepares us for his call by allowing us to endure personal failure. Until we sense our need for Him, we will not be ready to follow Him.

Why did Peter fail? Why didn't the Lord allow Peter to catch fish the night before? There were plenty of fish in the sea as we'll see in a moment.

Peter failed because the Lord wanted to teach him a much needed lesson: “Without Him you can do nothing.”

- John 15:5 There's another important verse.
- Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.”

The words of Jesus to Peter contain both a command and a promise.

- “Launch out into the deep” – the command.
- “Let down your nets for a draught (a good catch of fish, a huge haul) – the promise.

It's not as if Jesus is saying, “Let's go out into the deep water, put down the nets, and we'll see what happens.” Jesus is promising that if Peter will obey, he will catch fish.

We can learn some useful lessons from this:

1. God never gives foolish commands – through they may look foolish at the time.
2. God intends to bless those who obey Him without hesitation.
3. God's greatest miracles usually require our cooperation.

Have you ever had to do something that you didn't want to do – maybe a dirty job nobody wanted to do? You may have done it out of a sense of obligation or duty or respect.

I've heard folks say, “If your heart isn't in it, then you might as well not do it.” That's wrongs thinking. Sometimes you can't trust your heart. Jeremiah 17:9

- God will reward your obedience if you will go ahead and do what He told you to do.
- We should serve God from the heart (Ephesians 6:6), but when the heart doesn't cooperate, obey God anyway.

II. The Argument Luke 5:5-9

I've heard a lot of sermons on these verses that made Peter out to be the hero. “Lord, we've fished all night and caught nothing, but

at your word – just because you told me to – I'm going to be faithful and do what you asked me to do.” But that's not what's happening here, and Simon is no hero – anything but.

Look back at what Jesus told Peter to do: “Let down your nets” (plural). Peter said, “I will let down THE NET.”

Peter said this with disgust and a little sarcasm: “I'll do it, but I don't want to. I'm going to obey, but I'm going to do it the cheapest, easiest way I can. Don't think I'm going to unfold all these nets I've just washed. I'm not because nothing is going to happen anyway.”

The word “master” in verse 5 is not the usual word for Master used to address Jesus as the master Teacher; the one with authority. It is the word for “ship's captain” and again it is said with a hint of disgust.

Peter is saying: “Listen, I'm the expert in boats and fishing. You are a carpenter. What does a carpenter know about fishing? About as much as a fisherman knows about carpentry!”

- It's the wrong Time – it's best to fish at night.
- It's the wrong Place – you don't fish in deep water, you fish in shallow water.

Here's the saddest point of all: Peter is going to let down just one net to prove to Jesus He's wrong.

- “Just to make my point, I'll let down a SINGLE net.”
- “Just to humor you, Lord, I'll let down A net.”
- “Sorry, Lord, but it's not worth all the trouble to let down all the nets.”

What will Peter do?

Notice Luke 5:6-9

By the way, God can work in the midst of our doubts, if we will obey Him anyway.

Peter began to pull the net back into the boat as he did all night long. Suddenly the net stopped. Maybe his first thought was, “Oh, great! Now I'm hung on some rock!”

- But then he felt the movement of the fish transferred through the net into his hands. There's always a sense of expectation involved in fishing. Even if you're fishing with a hook, there is usually a time between when you catch the fish and when you see the fish.
- How big is it? What kind is it? There's always the element of surprise.
- Peter kept pulling until he could see fish – hundreds of them – thousands! His net was under such strain until it began to break. He needed help. Quickly he called for James and John and Andrew. Together they hauled the huge catch into two boats and the boats were about to sink.
- The average fishing boat of that day was seven and a half feet wide and twenty-seven feet long.

Each could hold more than two tons of fish. That would mean the catch was about four tons – with one drop of one net!

Peter's response is surprising. I would have expected Peter to say something like. “Wow, Lord, this is great. Look at all these fish! I want you in my boat every time I go fishing.”

Instead, Peter falls to his knees in the slimy pile of fish and says, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

In Luke 5:5 Peter calls Jesus a ship's captain. In Luke 5:8 he calls Jesus “lord”, which means “boss.”

Peter repents! Why? He did what Jesus asked him to do and the results were greater than he could have imagined – except that Peter knew that his heart was not right and he knew that Jesus knew it, too.

He did what Jesus asked him to do, but he did it with the wrong motive and the wrong heart.

Peter said, “Depart from me, Lord.” But I can tell you that Peter was grateful that Jesus didn't depart from him. It would have crushed Peter if the Lord had departed from him.

III. The Analogy Luke 5:9-10

Peter had been catching live fish and watching them die. Now, he would catch spiritually dead men and watch them come alive!

The verse really reads, “You will catch men alive!”

- On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter threw the Gospel net out and pulled in 3,000 men of all races and

languages.

- In Acts 10, Peter goes to the house of Cornelius and introduced the Gentiles to Christ.

What a fisher of men he became!

IV. The Allegiance Luke 5:11

Notice: "They forsook all and followed Jesus." That means Peter and the others abandoned the record catch of fish. What price would they have brought down at the first market?

- He left his boats, his nets, his livelihood, and followed Jesus into an unknown future.
- For Peter it meant leaving behind the old life. Letting go of all that would hinder his walk with Christ.

And he followed Jesus: The word "follow" means "to walk the same road." That's what a disciple does – he walks the same road as Jesus.

He gets on the "Jesus Road" and follows it wherever it may lead. No guarantees, no deals, no special promises. He simply walks that road every day, following in his Lord's steps.

Don't be afraid to follow Jesus. You'll only regret that you waited so long to do it.

If you'll just let yourself get caught by Jesus, you'll never regret it.

Satan is a fisherman, too. He's got his nets out everywhere.

- When we are hooked by Jesus, we live and become more alive than ever.
- If you are hooked by Satan, there is pain, suffering, death eternal.

Jesus wants to rescue you from Satan's net. 2 Timothy 2:26

When we hook a fish, they struggle to get loose. I've seen that when the Lord tries to hook us. Don't struggle. Let Him catch you.

He wants us to be fishers of men. We catch them; He cleans them.

ROCKS DON'T HAVE TO SINK

Matthew 14:20-33

After reading Matt. 14:20-23 ... This may seem like a strange place to start reading about the miracle of walking on water, but I want you to see the background of the miracle.

- Jesus had been teaching all day to a crowd of 5,000 men plus the women and children. It is getting time for supper and Jesus takes five loaves and two fish and feeds the multitude.
- John 6:15, which records this same event, says that after the miracle the crowd wanted to take Him by force and make Him king...and the disciples were for it, too.
- That's why Jesus sent His disciples into the boat and sent the crowd away.

1. The crowd tried to do what Satan had tempted Jesus to do in the wilderness – take the crown without going to the cross – you can be king and bypass the cross.

2. Jesus sent them away because it is not good to stay around those who would try to persuade you to depart from the will of God.

Read the Passage

This miracle is really five miracles in one:

1. Peter walked on water
2. Jesus walked on water
3. Jesus saved Peter from drowning
4. Jesus stopped the storm instantly
5. Jesus caused the boat with the disciples to move instantly to its land destination from the midst of the sea.

To see the miracle clearly you must see it in a kind of split-screen: Jesus up in the mountain praying and the disciples in the midst of the sea in a storm.

Two things I want you to see:

I. The Faithfulness of Jesus – on the mountain

II. The Failure of Peter – on the sea

I. The Faithfulness of Jesus on the Mountain Matt. 14:23-24

A. Purpose of the Lord in the Storm

- These disciples didn't set sail on their own. They were sent there by Jesus.
- Matt. 14:23 – Jesus “constrained” them to get into the boat – He commanded them...made them...strongly urged them.
- The word “straightway” means “immediately.” He told them to get into the boat immediately...He would join them later.
- They were in the storm because Jesus sent them there!
- They were not out of the will of God; they were IN the will of God.
- Sometimes people say, “I know why he/she is having so many problems; they are out of the will of God. They may be in the will of God.
- Obedience to the Lord doesn't make us immune from storms. They obeyed and a storm came.
- Most of what I've learned, I learned in a storm.

B. Prayer of the Lord During the Storm

- They couldn't see Jesus, but Jesus could see them.
- Mark 6:48 says, “He saw them toiling in rowing” during the storm.
- Jesus was keeping His eye on the disciples in the storm. The same is true of us – He does not forsake us.

C. The Patience of the Lord in the Storm Matt. 14:24-25

- The fourth watch was between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. That means that for at least eight hours they had been rowing in the storm.
- The Sea of Galilee is 7 miles by 13 miles. It usually took about two hours to cross the seven miles by boat. They had been there eight hours and were only half way there. And the Lord was watching them the whole time in the storm. What patience!
- Have you ever wished the Lord wasn't so patient? I have. I've wanted Him to hurry up. But He's never late nor early.
- He got to the disciples just in time. If He had been later, they may have gone under. If He had come when the storm first hit, they would have said, “Well, it was tough, but we could have made it without Him.”

D. Presence of our Lord in the Storm Matt. 14:25-27

- It's one thing for Jesus to pray for them while they are in the storm; it's another thing for Him to come to them in the storm.
- They wanted His presence.

II. The Failure of Peter – in the Sea

Can you see those disciples in the storm? It is dark – the only light comes when lightening lights up the sky. For eight hours they have been rowing – knife-like pains are in their backs...cramps are in their forearms. It seems they are rowing in place. They are filled with fear. Amidst the flash of lightening they see a figure coming toward them. They become more fearful for they think it is a ghost. Finally, Jesus shouts to them, “Don't be afraid, it is I.”

According to John, Jesus had walked between three and four miles on water.

With the split-screen in mind, I want us to go to the sea.

A. The Desire of Peter Matt. 14:28-29

- Why did Peter request to walk on the water?
 1. Wasn't trying to be a show-off.
 2. Not so he could show the other disciples what a sensational feat he could perform.
 3. Not because he wanted to have and enjoy an unusual experience.
 4. No. He wanted to walk on water so he could be with Jesus.

- He asked permission: “Lord, bid (command) me come to you on the water.”
- And the Lord said, “Come.” Jesus confirmed the request as acceptable.
- Once when a man requested some great thing of Alexander the Great that request was instantly granted. When questioned as to why the request was so quickly granted, Alexander said the request honored him because it was such a great request. The greatness of Peter's request honored the Lord.
- Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water. He was so focused on Jesus, he didn't even see the wind and waves!

B. The Distraction of Peter Matt. 14:30-31

- We don't know how far Peter got, but he was making steady progress as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus.
- But, then, Peter got distracted. Dr. Herschel Ford humorously suggested that maybe Thomas, the doubting disciple, saw a big wave coming towards Peter and shouted, “Look out, Peter, there comes a big wave!”
- Many people are like that; they don't encourage us in our walk of faith or our attempts to do great things for God. They are full of negative remarks. They see nothing but obstacles in our way, and belittle our ability to do anything.
- We often get our eyes on storms around us – magnify the storm – rehearse storms in our minds.
- But that wasn't why Peter failed. He got distracted on his own because he got his eyes on circumstances instead of Christ.
- Circumstances seldom encourage us to do much for God.
- Peter's biggest obstacle was not the storm, or waves, but doubt.

C. The Desperation of Peter Matt. 14:30-32

- When Peter began to sink, the most natural thing to do would have been to swim – in his own strength.
- This call for help was an act of faith.
- “When he began to sink” – most pictures of this event show Peter up to his arm pits; arms in the air.
- I think Peter cried out when the water got over his sandals.
- Some have never failed because they have never attempted anything of significance. Those who never step out of the boat shouldn't be critical of those who do. A believing Peter who is wet is better than a Thomas who is dry.
- How do you think Peter got back to the boat? He walked!
- Why would the Bible record this kind of miracle – walking on water?

1. I can understand curing the deaf, lame, blind, raising the dead.
2. God is teaching us the importance of taking steps we've never made before. He says, “Come” walk where you've never walked before – through the storms of life.

D. The Deliverance of Peter Matt 14:31-33

- I think Peter was the first one on his knees, worshiping Jesus.
- Walking on the water is a supernatural act; walking after Christ is a supernatural act. It's just as difficult.

Turn yours eyes upon Jesus
 Look full in His wonderful face
 And the things of this world will grow strangely dim
 In the light of His glory and grace.

Rocks don't have to sink!

THE HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Mark 1:29-31

Before reading the Passage

There have been some insensitive – even rude – things said about mothers-in-law. In fact, I've even heard a lot of mothers-in-law jokes.

- Now, I want you to know that I would NEVER do that. It's just not my sweet nature to tell mother-in-law jokes.
- But there are those who say that the reason that Peter denied the Lord three times is because He healed his mother-in-law.

Actually, there are two instances in the Bible where mothers-in-law are mentioned by name and both seem to be good and godly women.

- In the Old Testament we are told of Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth.
- In the New Testament we are told of Peter's mother-in-law who was the subject of one of our Lord's miracles.

Peter was personally associated with eight miracles of our Lord. More than any other disciple.

It was the Sabbath day and our Lord had just cast a demon out of a man that was in the service as Jesus taught the Sabbath service.

As far as we know, this is the first time Jesus has cast a demon out of a person and it happened to be in the synagogue.

After the service, Jesus, along with Peter, James, John and Andrew, head to Peter's house for Sunday (or Sabbath) lunch.

You will remember that after our Lord's baptism and His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus went back to His hometown of Nazareth to begin His public ministry, but they were disrespectful to Him. They asked Him to leave, didn't believe Him, and even tried to kill Him. Jesus left Nazareth and established new headquarters in Capernaum.

Peter offers his home to the Lord and the other disciples where He could rest and get away from the crowds. Peter's home became a sanctuary for the Lord.

Our Lord would say that "He had nowhere to lay His head," but when He came to Capernaum, Peter offered hospitality at his home. That would mean that he already knew Peter's wife and mother-in-law.

Read the Passage.

Jesus had just performed a miracle in His Father's House; now He would perform a miracle in a Friend's House.

Notice that these four men brought Jesus home with them after church. So many today leave Jesus at church. They come home to the same old arguments, worries, and worldly attitudes. You'd never know on Monday that they had been with the Lord on Sunday. The truth is, a lot of folks are in church physically but not spiritually.

By the way, if Peter had a mother-in-law, that means that he had a wife also. That's a real problem for the Roman Catholic folks who insist that Peter was the first pope and insist that their popes and priest be unmarried.

We don't know much about Peter's wife, but she must have been a wonderful and remarkable woman.

- It would take a pretty remarkable woman to be Peter's wife!
- I Corinthians 9:5 indicates that Peter's wife accompanied him during some of his ministry in the early days of the church.
- Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius wrote that Peter and his wife were martyred together and Peter was made to watch as his wife proceeded him to the place of execution. Clement also stated that as she walked to her death, Peter called her by name and said, "Remember the Lord!"

Four things I want to share with you about our Lord's healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

I. The Condition of Peter's Mother-in-Law

Luke 4:38 says Peter's mother-in-law was "taken with a great fever."

- The word "taken" means "to be gripped."
- The word "fever" is derived from the Greek word "pur" which means "fire." She was burning up with fever.
- Church historians tell us there were three kinds of fever prevalent in Palestine, but the most annoying was malaria. Swamp lands at both ends of the Sea of Galilee, where the Jordan River entered and left the Sea, provided excellent breeding grounds for the malarial mosquitoes. This kind of affliction was often accompanied by jaundice and was distressing to those who suffered from it.
- The Bible says she had a great fever. It was no trivial sickness. It put her to bed. It came upon her suddenly and progressed quickly in a matter of hours.

As soon as they came into the house, they told Jesus about her. Why? They knew He cared and could do something about it.

Could I just say a good word about Peter here? It says something about the care and character of Peter, having his mother-in-law living with him.

Last Tuesday at the Pastor's Prayer Breakfast, as we were having prayer request, one of the pastors said, "Pray for me and my wife. My mother is going to be moving in with us, so there will be a lot of changes in our home, a lot of restrictions." Basically, he was saying that it was going to cramp his style. I told him that I now have my mother living with me and for me it was not a DUTY but a DELIGHT.

Then I told him about a father who moved in with his son and his family. The man's wife didn't want the man there. One day at the table the old man dropped some food. In anger, the wife got up, got a wooden bowl, dumped the food off his plate into the bowl and said, "If you're going to eat like a pig, you can eat out of a wooden bowl like a pig in your room from now on."

About a week later, the mother saw her little son, sitting on the back door steps, whittling a piece of wood. When the mother asked the boy what he was doing, he said, "I'm whittling a bowl for you and daddy for when you get old."

I Timothy 5:4, 8. but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. (5:8) But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

II. The Compassion of Jesus Mark 1:31

The healing miracles of our Lord are called "miracles of Mercy." Mark 10:45 - "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Miracles of mercy are an active display of love and compassion for someone in need. It is stooping down to meet the need out of compassion. One of the most visible ways Jesus demonstrated mercy to needy people was when He healed them of sickness and illness.

Often people who asked Jesus for healing would put it in these terms:

- Mark 5:19 When Jesus healed the Gadarene (demon possessed man), Jesus told him to "go home and report what the Lord has done for you and how He had mercy on you."
- Mark 10:47 Blind Bartimaeus cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."
- Matthew 15:22 The Syrophenician woman said, "Have mercy on me and heal my daughter."
- Matthew 17:15 The father of the epileptic boy who often fell in the water and the fire said, "Have mercy on my son."

The most profound way that God demonstrates His mercy is through saving us, who are hopeless and unworthy sinners, through His sacrifice on the cross.

I Peter 1:3; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:4

Listen: Jesus doesn't just go to church with us. He makes house calls.

Watch how Jesus demonstrates His compassion to Peter's mother-in-law:

A. Through His Presence – Mark 1:31

"He came" to her. He didn't have to do that. He could have healed her from a distance or without even seeing her. He had done it before.

B. "He Stood over her" – Luke 4:39

He bent or stooped over her. That is, He humbled Himself before her. It is the posture of one who is concerned and has compassion for someone.

C. He Rebuked the Fever – Luke 4:39

It is the same word that is used when Jesus rebuked the demon and cast him out and when He rebuked the wind and stopped it from blowing.

D. He Touched her Hand - Matthew 8:15

This is a display of tender compassion. It is like when your child has a fever and you touch the child's cheek with your cheek to check for fever.

There's something about a personal touch that says, "I care." Later He would touch the eyes of a blind man and touch the leper and touch the ear of Malchus.

E. He took Her Hand and Lifter Her Up - Mark 1:31

III. The Cure of Peter's Mother-in-law Mark 1:31

The fever left her...immediately!

- If it had been a natural healing, she would have needed time to rest and recover.
- Have you ever had the flu and when the fever broke, you knew you were on the mend, but you still felt drained and weakened?
- But her healing was supernatural. Complete. On the spot.

IV. The Contribution of Peter's Mother-in-law Mark 1:31

"And she served them." No one asked her to. She just did it out of gratitude and thanksgiving. Her response to His mercy in her life is that she got up and ministered to others.

Notice: Jesus had to minister to her before she could minister to Him and others. That's always true.

- She didn't have to tell anyone she was healed. It was obvious by the way she conducted herself.
- There was no better way this woman could prove her healing than by serving Christ immediately. And so, with our Spiritual healing. When the Lord Jesus cleanses our hearts from sin, our service to Him is the best way we can show the world the dynamic difference He has made in our lives.
- We are saved to serve.

Sadly, many Christians don't know how to spell "service." They spell it "serve us."

Jesus is still performing miracles of mercy to all who will call out to Him in mercy. If you have not received mercy from the Lord, it's simply because you have not called on Him for mercy.

PETER'S GREAT LOYALTY

John 6:48-71

Before reading the Passage

John 6 gives us two very busy days in the life of the Lord Jesus.

- On the first of the two days Jesus has taught all morning. The longer He teaches the larger the crowd grows. By noon there are 5,000 men plus the women and children.
- It is past lunch time and the people are hungry, but where do you get enough food to feed a crowd like that? One of the children in the crowd – a small lad – has a sack lunch of five loaves and two fish. It seems that in a crowd of 5,000 plus, this child is the only one with anything to eat. Jesus takes the lunch and, with a miracle, feeds the 5,000 plus and takes up twelve baskets full.
- It is getting toward evening. The crowd is so amazed at what Jesus has done; they are going to force Him to be their king. Jesus sends His disciples into a ship to go across the Sea of Galilee while He sends the multitude away.
- While going across the seven mile wide sea, a storm comes up. The wind is so strong that they row for eight hours and are only half way across.
- Jesus is on the mountain praying and about 3 A.M. comes walking to them on the water. He has walked about 4 miles on the water in the storm to get to them and then Peter takes his brief walk on the water.
- Tired from the day before and the night's storm, Jesus and His disciples have had little rest and the next day about noon, the people who were fed by Him the day before are back for more food. Jesus uses the miracle to give them a message. He had fed them with bread, but He was the true, living, spiritual bread from heaven.

Read the Passage

Four times in John 6 Jesus declares Himself to be the Bread of Life (see John 6:35, 41, 48, 51).

I. The Declaration of Jesus John 6:51-55

Now, don't get carried away with the symbolic speech, like the folks in Jesus' day did, and miss what Jesus was teaching.

Many commentaries spend all their time talking about the symbolism and miss what Jesus is saying – He is not talking about cannibalism.

Don't take symbolic speech and expressions literally:

- Jesus also said, "I am the Door." That didn't mean He was a board that swung on hinges.
- He also said that He was the Vine. That didn't mean He literally had roots in the ground and ran up some fence.
- When He said that He was bread, He didn't mean some loaf like you buy at the store.

In fact, Jesus explains what He means: (see John 6:56-57, 61-63) John 6: 63... "Eating my flesh would profit you nothing. The words assimilated into your heart and life is what gives you life."

Eating physical food becomes part of you and gives you physical life; eating spiritual food becomes part of you and gives you spiritual life.

II. The Defection John 6:52, 60-61, 66-67

Here is the declaration: Jesus said, "I...and I alone...am the Bread of life...The words that I ...and I alone...speak to you are spirit and they....and they alone...are life."

- If Jesus is right; all others are wrong – you can't walk in two directions at the same time.
- If Jesus was partly right and partly wrong, He was unworthy of their allegiance.
- If Jesus is right, He is in a class all His own.
- John 14:6

Salvation is all of God. If salvation were 95% of God and 5% human effort, we'd never be sure we had done our part.

The real reason for the defection was that they couldn't accept that Jesus and Jesus alone was the only way to salvation.

Many do not believe that Jesus is THE only way. Allen Diseriech, O.J. Simpson's lawyer, substituting for Larry King, asked a preacher, "Do you really believe – with all these other religions – do you really believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven?" The preacher said, "Yes." He said, "That is the most arrogant bigoted thing I've ever heard and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for even thinking it."

The great danger to Christianity today is not persecution, but polytheism – the belief in many gods – tolerance of all gods – many ways to heaven.

I don't marvel that there is only ONE way to heaven. I marvel that there is ANY way to heaven! None of us are worthy to go to heaven.

Many don't believe there is one way – Jesus!

I Timothy 2:3-5. Declare that outside the walls of the church and folks will declare you're a bigot.

To commemorate the events of Sept. 11, some people decided to design a poster to depict faith and they took the symbols of the 18 great religions of the world and put the 18 symbols of the world's faith on the poster and it became very popular across America – polytheism – many ways to the Father – the great deception. I'd like to ask you to design your own poster.

Take the 17 world religions and put them on one side of the poster, draw line down the middle and on the other side put the symbol of the cross. Above all 17 symbols of the world religions write one word – DO...and for the cross write – DONE

We don't work FOR victory; we work FROM victory.

III. The Devotion of Peter John 6: 61, 67-69

Does it offend you that Jesus and Jesus alone gives salvation? And that you can't do anything to bring yourself salvation?

"Will you also go away?" Jesus Christ will detain none against their will. His followers are all volunteers.

"To whom shall we go" To whom else can we entrust our very soul? We'd better not be wrong on this one!!!

- What are the Alternatives to Christ? Who are we going to Substitute for Christ? All others are Inadequate!
- Others promise wisdom...better life – even heaven. But no others promise to forgive sin!

Acts 4:12 – What would we gain by forsaking Christ? Can we better ourselves? Where could we go to find anyone better than Christ?

If you go away from Him, what will you do – in times of failure, temptation, loneliness?

If you go away from Him in:

- Childhood You lose the best example you could have.
- Teen Years How will you withstand the pressure from your peers?
- Young Adult How will you make life's choices?
- Middle Adult How will you face the pressures of middle age?
- Old Age How will you face death without Him?

David Livingstone – at his wife's death – wrapped her body, put it in a box, dug the grave, covered it...with the little band of natives said, "Lo, I am with you always." And said, "Jesus Christ is too much of a gentleman not to keep His word."

IV. The Dogmatism of Peter John 6:69

"We believe and are sure that you are the Christ." Peter, how do you know Jesus is right – that He is the only way?

- There is plenty of evidence: miracles, teaching. He died and rose again like He promised. He changed us. We are not the same! John 9 Once I was blind; now I see.
- I'm glad I don't have anything to do with my salvation. All the burden to come through is on Him – not me!

There was one disciple there who didn't agree with Peter. John 6:64, 70-71

- Religious privilege alone is not enough to save us. Judas witnessed His miracles, sermons, kept company with Him.
- Yet, Judas was not a part with Him – And He Knew It!
- He pretended to be – but Jesus was not deceived.
- One of you ...There may be some like that here today. You appear to be with Jesus, but Jesus knows better.

Peter wasn't as good as what he said, for he would falter and fail, but he would come back – and so, can you.

PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION **Matthew 16:13-20**

There are two things that Jesus said would last forever – God's Word and God's Church.

- "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall never pass away."
- "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome it."

This is the first recorded time that Jesus has spoken of His Church.

- Jesus loves His Church ...He owns the Church...He builds the Church...He empowers the Church (the gates of hell shall not stop the Church).
- The Church is His Bride – speaks of Affections.
- The Church is His Body – speaks of Action.

He walks with feet through us,
He works with hands through us,
He talks with lips through us,
He sees with eyes through us.

- The Church is His Building – speaks of an Abiding Place.

Several preachers were talking about which church Jesus would join if He were to come back to stay a while. The Church of Christ said, "Our church, we have His Name in our title." The Roman Catholic – "Ours – beautiful ritual." Baptist had said nothing...finally, "I don't see why He would want to change."

The timing of Peter's Great Confession is very important. It took place six months before Jesus went to Jerusalem to die.

- The first year of Jesus' public ministry – He was popular. The second year – there was some defection. The third year – much rejection.
- These last six months of His earthly life, Jesus is going to intensify His training of the disciples and prepare them for His death and their assignment after He has gone back to Glory.

The Inquiry of Jesus Matt. 16:14-16

Jesus asked two questions and got two answers:

A. "Who do men say I, the Son of Man, am?"

- "After two and a half years of listening to My words and seeing the works I have done, what is man's opinion of Me?"
- Answer: "Some say You are John the Baptist come back to life." Herod had cut off John's head for such powerful preaching. Others, Elijah – with courage. They expected Elijah to return. Even today the Jews observe Passover with a place set for Elijah with Elijah's cup. Others, Jeremiah – with a compassionate heart – a man of sorrows.
- They admitted that He was no ordinary man, but missing is any reference to Him being the Messiah. Only a few months earlier multitudes appeared to be convinced He was the Christ.
- Stop at Crosstown and ask folks in cars as they pass by who Jesus is. Some will say a good man, great teacher, moral leader, miracle worker. All of this is an INSULT to Jesus, because they fail to see Him as the Son of God and Savior of mankind.

B. Now, Jesus makes the question personal. "Who do you say I am?"

- It is the first recorded time Jesus asked them plainly and personally who they thought He was.
- It calls for an examination of the heart. Never mind what others think, what do you think?
- That is the question He asks each of us personally!

Peter had no question about the matter. Dogmatically and unashamedly he answered, "Thou are THE Christ THE Son of THE Living God. (There are four definite articles in the Greek. "You are The Christ The Son of The God. The Living One.)

Is that who Jesus is to you, personally?

II. The Insight of Peter Matt. 16:17

Where did Peter get that knowledge – that insight? It was revealed to him from God.

Ask Mary how she knew He was God's Son – "God revealed it to me." Ask Joseph – "God revealed it to me." Ask the shepherds – "from heavenly messengers." Ask Simeon – "the Holy Spirit revealed it to me."

Jesus pronounced a Beatitude on Peter – Blessed are you.

The greatest possession you can have is not money or material things, but the assurance of the spiritual knowledge that you know who Jesus is and that you know Him personally as your Lord. Flesh and blood didn't reveal it – your intellect didn't figure it out. God revealed it to Peter – and that's the only way you will be able to answer with the assurance of your heart.

III. The Instructions of Jesus Matt. 16:18-19

A. "You are Peter – upon this rock I will build my church." Four possible interpretations"

1. Peter, himself, is the rock – Roman Catholic – first bishop of Rome.
 2. I will build my Church on the rock of truth.
 3. I will build my Church on the rock-like faith of Peter and his confession.
 4. Jesus, Himself – upon His divine Person! Jesus pointed to Himself and said, "Upon this rock I will build my church."
- If Jesus had referred to Peter, don't you think Peter would have caught it? I Peter 2:4-7

- What did Paul think? Ephesians 2:18-20
- What did Jesus actually say? “You are Peter (Petros – masculine ending) and upon this rock (petra – feminine ending – pointing to Himself) I will build My Church.”
- If He had intended for Peter to be the foundation of the Church, He would have said..“You are Peter and upon THEE I will build My Church. “But He selected His words carefully:“Thou art Peter...a chip off the rock...a fragment...a little rock – I will build my Church.”
- Here is the tragedy: 800 million people believe this passage means Peter instead of Jesus and they have put their faith in the wrong rock – and they are following the Pope instead of Jesus.

B. “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

- We tend to read that statement and picture hell on the attack and the Church on the defensive. But a person does not attack with gates; he defends with gates. Jesus pictures the Church on the attack and the kingdom of Satan on the run.
- Hades represents the whole of Satan's domain: death, the grave, and hell itself. Christ's death and resurrection will break the power of Satan and Jesus will triumph over His foe and will enable His Church to do the same.
- It isn't the Church defensive, but the Church aggressive – not the Church defeated, but the Church triumphant! The kingdom of Satan is no match for the true Church of Jesus Christ. As the gospel is preached and the lost are converted, the power of Christ prevails and people are snatched out of the gates of hell and set free by the power of the gospel.
- I am so glad they took a song out of the hymnal because it is not true. Some of you will remember it:

Hold the fort, for I am coming, Jesus signals still
Wave the answer back to heaven, by thy grace we will.

The second verse says:
See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on
Mighty men around us falling, courage almost gone!

Instead we ought to sing:

Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus, going on before.
Christ our royal master, leads against the foe
Forward into battle, see His banner go!

At the sign of triumph, Satan's host will flee
Onward then Christian soldier, on to victory.
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise
Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.

C. Whatsoever you bind...loose Matt. 16:19

- Literally, “Whatsoever you bind/loose on earth shall have been bound/loosed in heaven.”
 - The “keys” are the authority and power of the Word of God to release and set free those who are bound by Satan. The authority of the Word of God has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven. The church's authority is not to determine whether a person is saved or lost, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word of God. • When the church makes judgment on the basis of God's Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord.
1. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God has already said about the person.
 2. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.
- If one invited Jesus into his heart, the church has the authority to say, you are saved.
 - If the person rejects Jesus as Savior, the church has the authority to say, you are lost.

What think ye of Christ? Have you accepted...received Him?

PETER'S GREAT CONFUSION

Matthew 16:21-28

I really enjoy the study of Bible personalities.

1. Joseph – such a man of integrity. He was greatly tempted to sin and, yet, resisted the temptation. In fact, though he was not sinless, the Bible doesn't record one negative thing about Joseph. I look at myself and know, I am a long way from what Joseph was.
2. Daniel – such a man of faith and courage. All the pictures you see of Daniel in the lion's den, one hand is on a lion's head and his eyes are looking to heaven and he's as calm as can be – and I realize I'm not there yet.

But when I come to the study the life of Peter, I identify more with him.

When Peter was good, he was very good; but when he was bad, he was very bad. Peter could say or do something brilliant one moment and the next do something or say something that was just dumb! One moment you find him with great insight; the next, no sight at all.

Peter had just come from a mountain top experience when he declared Jesus as the Son of the Living God; now he rebukes his Lord.

I. The Revelation Matt. 16:21

Matthew has already recorded five occasions where Jesus told His disciples He was going to die – and they never got it.

Now, it is six months before the cross and Jesus knows He must prepare them for the cross and so He tells them as plainly as He can again. He tells them the PLACE (Jerusalem)...SOURCE (religious leaders) ...EXPERIENCE (suffer many things) ...EXTENT (death)...OUTCOME (He would be raised again).

In fact, the closer Jesus got to the cross, the more often He told them. See Matthew 17:22-23; Matt. 20:18-19.

II. The Rebukes

A. Peter Rebuked the Lord Matt. 16:22

"Peter took Him" Here is the picture: Have you ever grabbed a child by the shoulders, looked in his eyes and said, "Are you listening to me?"

Peter said, "Never, Lord." You can't call Him "Lord" and say "never" and Him be Lord. You can say "Whatever, Lord," but not "Never, Lord."

Do you realize that Peter was saying the same thing to Jesus that Satan said to Him in the wilderness temptations? "Avoid the cross. By-pass the cross. "Bow down before me," Satan said, "and I'll give the kingdom of the world to you." Peter said, "The cross...it's not going to happen."

That temptation to avoid the cross was with Jesus throughout his ministry... In the wilderness, the enemy, Satan suggested it. After feeding the 5,000, the followers suggested it – they were going to take Him by force and make Him king. Now, a close friend suggested it.

To Peter's credit, he deeply loved Jesus. The thought of seeing his Master suffer such a death was too much. Peter, the one who loved Jesus supremely, became the very one who stands in the way of Christ's obedience – between Jesus and the cross.

Peter didn't realize that by encouraging Jesus to cancel Easter, he was making his own salvation impossible. He would have been lost forever, along with all of us.

B. The Lord Rebuked Peter Matt. 16:23

Notice: Jesus addressed Satan; not Peter. He didn't say, "Get thee behind me, Peter." But Peter had become the mouthpiece for Satan. Christ, had come with the express purpose of dying as an atonement for sin and those who would thwart His mission were doing Satan's work.

"You are an offense to me." The word "offense" means "a stumbling block...a snare...you are setting a trap for me." The bait used to catch an animal was called an offense. Jesus was saying, "Satan is using you as bait to catch Me off guard."

“You savorest not the things of God...” “You have no taste for God's way, but prefer man's way.”

Satan is able to put ideas into our minds, but we must discern between the voice of God and the voice of Satan. James 3:8-10 speaks of this – the tongue – can a fountain bring forth both fresh water and salt water...yet, that's how we speak.

We can sing praises to God one moment and gossip about a brother the next.

That strong rebuke rescued Peter from the snare of the devil.

III. The Reasoning Matt. 16:24-27

A. The Way of Discipleship Matt. 16:24

Being a disciple means desiring to please another person. It is the goal of his life. Is that your goal toward Jesus?

1. Deny himself

- a. It doesn't mean to deny yourself of things, like some do at lent – deny themselves of candy, dessert, habit.
- b. Jesus has just talked about going to the cross. He is going to pray, “Father, if it be Thou will, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.”
- c. Denying self is making the same choice Jesus made. It is the choice between selfishness and selflessness.
- d. It means to dethrone self and enthrone God.
- e. It is saying “no” to self instead of saying “no” to God, which is the basis of all sin.
- f. Jesus said, “I have yielded my desires, ambitions, and will to God, and you must too if you are going to be my disciple.”

2. Take up your cross (not His)

- a. Your cross is not headaches, or your wife and children.
- b. “Your cross” represents God's will for your life.
- c. Jesus' cross is different from ours. His was the cross of world redemption. For Jesus the cross was a violent, degrading death. It was a call to life-or-death devotion.
- d. If you are to please him, yours must be a life-or-death devotion to God's will to your life.

3. Follow Me

Follow His example of character – conduct – consistency.

B. The Way of Deliverance Matt. 16:25-26

- Everybody knows that death did something terrible to Christ, but not everybody knows that Christ did something wonderful to death.
- When Jesus spoke of sacrifice, suffering and crucifixion, Peter thought only of death, doom, and defeat. That's how we mortals think. But out of death was going to come life – out of crucifixion was going to come resurrection.
- God's way is this: It's only as we share in His death by faith that we will share in this glorious destiny.

C. The Way to Destiny Matt. 16:27

Your decision about trusting Christ as your Savior will determine your destiny. Choose against Christ and you will deny yourself the blessing of peace in your heart; of a cleansed heart; of the assurance of God's favor; of peace when death comes.

Choose against Christ and you will experience pains of hell; the condemnation of God as you hear Him say, “Depart from Me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Chose Jesus and you will hear Him say, “Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

ON THE HOLY MOUNT

Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:28-32; 2 Peter 1:16-18

Before reading the Passage

If there is one incident that I would have liked to be a part of it is the transfiguration of Jesus. It was a mountain-top experience for Him.

In fact, Matthew records five (5) mountain-top experiences of Jesus:

- Matthew 5 Sermon on the Mount
- Matthew 17 Mount of Transfiguration
- Matthew 24 Mount of Olives – longest prophecy dealing with second coming
- Matthew 27 Mount Calvary
- Matthew 28 Where the resurrected Jesus commissioned His discipleship

This is a night scene. Jesus, along with Peter, James and John, are going to hike 12 miles up Mount Hermon, the mount that is snow covered all year long.

Read the Passage

The transfiguration is a miracle, but it is different from every other miracle. In every other miracle Christ is the Giver of grace; in this miracle He is the Receiver of glory.

He takes with Him Peter, James, and John –

- Why does He take these three? Why didn't the rest of the disciples get to see the transfiguration? Three times these three got to experience something that the other nine did not.
- The transfiguration – the raising of Jairus' daughter – Garden of Gethsemane – each of these have reference to death.
- God does not have favorites, but He does have intimates. It is not that He loves some more than others, but some seem to love Him more than others.
- These men were trustworthy – faithful – committed – teachable.
- How can you and I become one of His intimates?
- James 4:8

Three of the Gospel writers record the transfiguration.

It is important to know the background of the transfiguration. Peter had just made his great confession, but he had also demonstrated great confusion. (Lord, be it far from Thee. This shall never happen to You.) Peter had just discouraged the Lord from going to the cross; Moses and Elijah are going to encourage the Lord to go to the cross.

- Luke is the only gospel of the three that tells us that Jesus took these three with Him up the mountain to pray. What was Jesus going to pray about? Likely, to plead for His disciples that when His death came their faith would not utterly fail. He also prayed that He might be strengthened as He communed with His Father. Like Luke 22:42 – Father, if it be possible ...He prayed for strength and courage to drink the bitter cup.
- And just as in answer to the prayer in the garden when the angels from heaven appeared to strengthen Him, the Father sent Moses and Elijah to strengthen Him.
- Isaiah 40:31
- Jesus waited upon the Father to renew His strength; to walk without fainting straight to the bitter cross.

I. The Heavenly Vision Luke 9:29

As He was praying the fashion of His countenance was altered – and that miracle still happens today. Nothing transforms the face and character like communion with the Father.

- Moses – Exodus 34:30; 2 Corinthians 3:7
- Stephen
- It is said of F.B. Meyer: Folks wanted to sit next to Meyer because they said you could see the glory of God on his face.
- Prayer leaves its mark on the character and on the face.
 - The look of care relaxes into peace.
 - Lines of anguish change into those of joy.
 - But it goes deeper than the face, it goes down to the very heart. Prayer removes hateful things from the soul, gives birth to love, hope, faith.

- Psalm 55:22 "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee." That's not what you expected. It doesn't say He'll take it away; but that He will give grace sufficient for the burden.
- That's what He did for Jesus. He didn't take the bitter cup away, but He strengthened Him.

After this experience, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem.

Notice again Matthew 17:2-3. The word transfigured is the word we get metamorphosis from. The veil of His humanity lifted for a brief moment and His true essence was allowed to shine through. It was both a glance back into His pre-human glory and a look forward into His future glory.

Revelation 1:13-16

Both His appearance and His apparel – His countenance and His clothes.

II. The Heavenly Visitor

What was the purpose of the transfiguration?

A. To encourage Jesus to go to the cross

- It served as an encouragement to Jesus – strengthened Him to bear the cross – to taste death for every man.
- Did Jesus need encouragement? Yes
- Peter had discouraged the Lord – "Be it far from thee" – this shall never be.

B. To enlighten the disciples Luke 9:32

- Peter must have been a deacon. He was always sleepy – he was asleep in the garden while he was supposed to be praying and he was asleep here while he was supposed to be praying.
- Baptist Prayer:

Now I lay me down to sleep.

The sermon is long, the subject is deep.

If he should quit before I wake,

Give me a nudge for goodness sake.

C. Moses and Elijah talked with Him Luke 9:30-31

- What did they talk about? His decease – His departure – His exodus
- It must have been a rebuke to Peter. Heaven could speak of nothing else but the cross. It was the only subject Moses and Elijah cared to speak about. Not His miracles, or earthly kingdom – death. It was the most God-like thing He could do – to give His life a ransom for many. It has far-reaching results.
 - Moses – Lord, your death would mean emancipation and victory. Think of all the Passover Lambs. All the innocent lambs slain on the altars would be worthless without Your death. Redemption that all the saints were already enjoying would be revoked.
 - Elijah – All that the prophets wrote and spoke about the Messiah coming to pay the price for sin would be untrue if you did not die. The eternal salvation of human souls was at stake.
 - Exodus – The cross is not presented as death to be endured, but an exodus which He is to accomplish – not something He suffered; something He achieved. The word "exodus" suggests emancipation, redemption, deliverance – that's what the cross meant for us. Not defeat – deliverance.
 - To the disciples it meant defeat, hopelessness and it messed up their plan.

Moses and Elijah – dead or not dead at all – more alive now than they ever were on earth (Moses lived 1400 years before this transfiguration; Elijah lived before this transfiguration 900 years).

- We will recognize/renew fellowship with loved ones.
- Yes, praise God, it's real – our Lord's death will bring us back to life.

III. The Heavenly Voice Matthew 17:5-8

"Overshadow" means enveloped.

Peter began to speak – Moses and Elijah were gone.

- Mark 9:6 – Didn't know what to say
- Luke 9:33 – Not knowing what he said

Booths on the mountain were of no value and impractical.

Mountain-top experiences are intended to prepare us for valley experiences.

Jesus did not answer Peter – the Father interrupted Peter. “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.”

The disciples legs wouldn't hold them up – Matthew 17:7. They saw no man but Jesus.

PETER'S LESSON ON FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:15-35

Before and while reading the Passage.

This passage deals with forgiveness and reconciliation – both. It is possible to forgive someone and not to be reconciled to them.

Jesus is speaking on two levels – in relation to the Church and in personal conflicts.

Matthew 18:15-17 gives us the prescription for church discipline:

- Go Privately – between you and him
- Go Promptly – nip it in the bud – don't delay
- Go Prayerfully
- Go Peacefully
- Go Persistently – If he won't hear you, take two or three with you.
 - Keep the circle small. The more you stir a stick the stinkier it gets.
 - If he won't hear two or three, take it to the church.
 - To treat as a heathen – treat him evangelistically rather than as a brother.

Notice 18:20 – Out Lord is not talking about poor attendance, but about forgiveness.

Now comes Peter's personal lesson on forgiveness.

Read the Passage.

There's a stupid little saying: “I don't get mad, I just get even.” That sounds cute and funny to some folks, but it's not cute nor funny. Did you know you and I are never more like the devil than when we seek revenge and retaliation, or evening the score.

You've heard me say before that you are never more like the devil than when you lie – for he is the father of lies. But you are never more like the devil than when you refuse to forgive and rather seek revenge and retaliation.

Because of his sin, Satan was kicked out of heaven and instead of repenting, he chose revenge – getting back at God through His crowning creation, man. Men going to hell is not going to help Satan, but it is going to hurt God and Satan is eat up with bitterness and resentment towards God and doesn't realize his bitterness is hurting himself.

You and I have a choice – revenge or forgiveness. No one goes through this life without being hurt and hurting someone else. But we have a choice in those times: revenge or forgiveness.

C.S. Lewis said, “Forgiveness is a beautiful word until you have something to forgive.”

Forgiveness is never easy...for the person you have wronged or for the person who has wronged you. Have you ever gone to someone you have wronged and asked them to forgive you the wrong? It's tough.

Three things I would share with you from this passage:

I. The Interesting Suggestion Matt. 18:21-22

Some rabbis taught that if someone wronged you, you forgave them three times – and that would be the cut-off point. Other rabbis taught that Amos 2:1 and Amos 3:1 taught you are to forgive seven times – and that was the cut-off point.

“Lord, if my brother blackens my eye, how much am I expected to take from him? Till seven times and then I'm free to retaliate?”

Now, don't be too critical of Peter. Most of us don't forgive seven times.

**Here's Peter's attitude – and the attitude of most of us. He was concerned about forgiving too much rather than about forgiving enough. He wanted to know what was the minimum requirement to satisfy God. He didn't want to do more than was absolutely necessary.

I know folks like that who deal with other areas of the Christian life that way. They figure up the tithe to the penny. They don't want to give too little, but they sure don't want to give too much!

What does it mean to forgive?

A. What forgiveness does not mean:

1. It does not mean that you approve of what someone has done. I have known folks who think, "If I tell them I forgive them, they'll think I approve of what they have done."
2. It does not mean forgive and forget.
 - We cannot forget – only God has the divine ability to forget.
 - We can't just snap our finger and forget a matter. So many have heard forgive and forget and they live in guilt because they can't forget and they say, "I must not have forgiven."
 - There is not a verse in the Bible that tells us to forgive and forget.
3. It doesn't mean you must feel the same way about them as you did before.
 - Here is someone who has sexually molested a child. You can forgive them, but that doesn't mean you have to put them in charge of the preschool class.
 - Here is someone who embezzled \$10,000 from the church. You can forgive them, but you don't have to make them the treasurer.
 - Paul and John Mark – Paul never took him on another missionary journey, but he called for him when he was in prison and said, "He is profitable to me in the ministry."

B. What forgiveness is.

1. The word forgiveness means to dismiss from one's mind – to disregard a matter – to discuss the matter no more. It is not forgiving and forgetting – it is forgiving and forsaking. Let it go and go on.

When Robert E. Lee came through an area after the Civil War, a lady in Virginia showed him a tree on her property that had been damaged by the Yankee artillery. She had cleaned around it, and put a marker by it. It was a reminder of the hurt the Yankee's had caused her. So, she nursed the memory. Lee's straightforward advice to her was, "Cut it down dear lady, and forget it." To nurture damaged trees of wrongs done to us is to be a prisoner of our past.

2. A willingness to absorb the pain and hurt and wrong done to us and to do so without bitterness. Forgiveness means giving up your right to revenge when someone has wronged you. Keeping score is important in baseball, but there is no place for score keeping in forgiveness.

"Revenge evens the score; forgiveness wins the game."

It was 1 A.M. when the phone rang. When the man answered the phone, the girl on the other end of the phone was crying so, he could hardly understand her. She said, "Dad, I'm pregnant. I'm sorry. I don't want to talk about it. Don't call me back."

As the dad related the story to the mom, they got up; wrote a letter to their daughter who was away in college. In the letter they said, "We love you, support you, forgive you. Please let us help you. Love, Mom and Dad."

In a couple of days their phone rang. The daughter said, "I got your letter, but there must be a mistake. I'm not pregnant and I didn't call you. It must have been a wrong number. But I can't tell you what it meant to me to know that I have parents who will love me and forgive me unconditionally."

II. The Intriguing Story Matt. 18:23-34

There are some real dangers in unforgiveness.

1. You can't be right with God if you are wrong with your brother I John 4:20.
2. An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable Matthew 6:14-15.

3. Unforgiveness hinders our communion with God Psalm 66:18.

Luke adds something that Matthew does not about who we are to forgive – Luke 17:1-4.

Even if there is no repentance, there is to be no bitterness in our heart.

III. The Ignored Statement Matt. 18:35

Jesus is talking about real, from-the-heart forgiveness. It's easy to develop a false front. Jesus is not talking about improving your acting ability. Most of us are capable of academy-award performances

when it comes to acting nice to people we don't like. We can smile sweetly and shake their hands outwardly while we inwardly seethe with resentment toward them. Jesus is talking about forgiveness that flows from the heart.

The price of forgiveness is often high, but the price of alienation is higher.

Unlimited and unending forgiveness is not a luxury, it's a necessity.

During World War II Corrie ten Boom was confined in a concentration camp at Ravenbrook for her part in sheltering Jews from their Nazi oppressors. While she was there a certain SS guard would take her from her cell, walk her down a hallway to the shower and make her strip naked in front of him and take a shower. Then he would stand and watch her, making vulgar jesters and degrading remarks to her the whole time.

Yet, God's grace was real to her in the midst of all her suffering, and after the war she went to Germany to preach God's forgiveness. Following one service, a man came forward whom she recognized immediately as the same SS guard. Now he stood in front of her, with his hand out stretched. He said to her, "It is wonderful that Jesus forgives all sin, just as you say. I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me, and I would like to hear it from you as well. Will you forgive me?"

Corrie stood there paralyzed. She couldn't forgive. At the same time, she was ashamed that she could preach about forgiveness, but couldn't or wouldn't forgive. "Lord, forgive me. I can't forgive."

As she prayed, she felt not only forgiven, but set free. The hate melted within and her hand became unfrozen. As she reached out her hand and spoke her forgiveness, she felt another burden of her past fall away.

Is there someone you're mad at – bitter toward – have ill-will against? Are you ready to forgive them? How often? Again and again.

You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive, and never more unlike Jesus when you are unwilling to forgive.

How many times shall I forgive ? Love keeps no record of wrong – doesn't keep score. If you forgive 490 times you would be so good at forgiving that forgiveness would continue. It's rather arrogant to say, "I'll accept God's forgiveness, but I'm not willing to forgive others."

Why should we forgive? Simple: We have been forgiven!

Matthew 18:32-35 – Some have been delivered to the tormentors because of unwillingness to forgive. People are living in a prison in their own heart because they have refused to forgive.

STRAIGHT FROM THE FISH'S MOUTH

Matthew 17:24-27

Before reading the Passage

Matthew 17 begins with the transfiguration and ends with taxes!

I started to entitle the message, "Peter's Great Fishing Tale." You'll see why as we read the passage.

Read the Passage.

This event took place during the last visit which Jesus and His disciples made to Capernaum and Peter's home before His crucifixion.

There are some unique characteristics of this miracle worth noting:

1. It is recorded only by Matthew. Being a former tax collector, this miracle would have been of interest to him.
2. It is the only miracle Jesus performed to meet His own need. Satan had tempted Jesus to use His divine powers for Himself, but He refused. He did so here 'lest we cause them to stumble.'
3. It is the only miracle using money.
4. It is the only miracle using only one fish.
5. It is the only miracle which does not have the results recorded. We would expect another verse that would read: "And Peter went to the sea, cast a hook into the water, and drew up a fish; and when he had opened its mouth, he found there a coin, and used it to pay the temple tax for himself and Jesus." But Matthew 17: 28 is not there.

As we look at this passage, I want us to see four things.

I. The Special Collector Matt. 17:24-25a

This was not a civil tax; it was a religious tax paid by every Jewish male 20 years and older. The tax began in the wilderness. The tax was used to maintain the tabernacle/temple. Every Jewish male was required to pay a half-shekel tax – two days wages for the average worker. Exodus 30:11-16

Worship was expensive in that day as it is in ours.

It took money to pay the worship leaders, provide sacrificial animals, inspectors of sacrifices, custodial services, priestly garments, repairs on the building.

When asked if Jesus paid the temple tax, Peter quickly answered, "Yes." Peter didn't know if it was a loaded question or not. If he had said, "No" the answer could have been used as ammunition to further attack Christ. Peter didn't want to dishonor or endanger Christ.

II. The Serious Consideration

When Simon came into the house, before he ever said a word, Jesus knew something was troubling Peter....AND HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS! Jesus asked Peter, "From whom do the kings of the earth take taxes – from his own son or from his subjects ...strangers?" Peter answered, "From subjects...strangers."

"Therefore, sons don't have to pay taxes."

- Peter had confessed Jesus as the Son of the Living God. He had heard God the Father say so on the mount when he saw the glory of Christ, "This is my beloved Son...listen to Him."
- If there was any tax that Jesus was not obligated to pay, it would have been the temple tax. He was the one whom the temple was built to honor. He is the Lord of the temple. He called the temple "His Father's House."
- God would not be expected to pay for His own worship. Kings wouldn't pay for the crown which sat on his own head.

Matt. 17: 27 "Though I am under no obligation to pay the tax, I will do so lest I set a bad example to other people. I will do nothing to set a bad example."

Here was a principle Peter needed to understand. People are always watching us. By what they see we become either a stepping stone or stumbling block to them. We should never use our privileges or freedoms as sons of God so as to cause anyone to stumble away from God.

We must learn the importance of influence – giving up personal rights where it can serve the interest of others. Jesus did what He had a right not to do. He paid the tax.

Christians have a fishbowl existence. The world has a high expectation of us. Every Christian is a letter of recommendation for Jesus. Whether we like it or not, our life is an advertisement for Him.

Christians are evaluated and classified by these four things: (1) What we see, (2) How we look, (3) What we say, (4) How we say it. These are the ways we communicate to the world.

Ever heard the phrase, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" The world wonders the same about us. The world doesn't expect us to be perfect, but it does expect us to be Different!

The principle Jesus is trying to teach is more important than the miracle.

Notice verse 27: "Nevertheless, lest we offend them." The word "offend" means "to place an obstacle in one's path, causing one to

slip, stumble, or slide.” It means to go the extra mile in order to prevent an offense.

Romans 14:21; I Corinthians 8:13; Galatians 5:13

There's an old story of a blind man who carried a lighted lantern at night. Someone asked him why he always went around with a lighted lantern since he couldn't see. He said, “To keep others from stumbling over me.” That must be our concern. We must see to it that no one stumbles along the way because of us.

The greatest handicap that Christ has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.

Five principles to help make decisions of right and wrong and protecting our influence.

1. Principle of Scripture What does the Bible say?
2. Principle of Secrecy Do I want to conceal my actions from other people? If I'm doing something I want to hide...don't want other people to know...
something I'm ashamed of – it's probably wrong. If I can't do it with a clear conscience, out in the open without guilt or shame, it probably has no place in my life.
3. Principle of Stewardship Will doing this harm my body? My body doesn't belong to me. It belongs to Jesus. He purchased it by His death on the cross.
4. Principle of Supplication What does God say to me through prayer when I consult Him about the matter?
5. Principle of Sacrifice How will it affect and influence others?

III. The Simple Command Matt. 17:27

He didn't say take a net – that would have paid taxes for all of them.

How many fish were swimming in the Sea of Galilee that day? I don't know – have no idea. There were 22 species in the lake. What are the chances of one fish having a coin in its mouth and that coin being the exact amount needed and being the one fish that took Peter's hook?

IV. The Strange Catch

We don't have a verse 28 giving us the result.

But I can see Peter going down to the sea, throwing in his hook, waiting for it to sink to the bottom, feeling a tug and bringing in the fish—with a coin in its mouth.

What a fish story!!

I wonder if he kept the fish.

JESUS AT THE FEET OF PETER

John 13:1-17

Before reading the Passage.

What a strange title. Shouldn't it be the other way around – Peter at the feet of Jesus? Well, in John 13, it is Jesus, not only at the feet of Peter, but at the feet of all the disciples.

Read the Passage.

In less than 24 hours, Jesus will be dead – hung on a cross for six long, painful hours until He is dead.

John 13-19 all take place within the last 24 hours of Jesus' life on this earth.

Last words are lasting words and these seven chapters are the Holy of Holies in John's gospel.

Luke 22:24 points out that on the way to the upper room, the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest among them. They believed that Jesus was about to set up His kingdom and they were all jockeying for a position. Like little kids they were fussing about who was going to sit next to Jesus at the table. Who's going to sit on His right side and on His left side?

In fact, at an earlier time, James and John got their Mother in the act. She said, “Lord, could one of my boys sit on the right side and

the other on the left when You come into Your kingdom?”

They were setting up a “Pecking Order” – like chickens, who peck the others away until one chicken is the top chicken. Truth is, Jesus came to abolish the pecking order!

The key phrase in verses 1, 3 is “Jesus knew...Jesus Knowing.”

His mission (verse 1); His resources (verse 3); His origin (verse 3); His destination (verse 3).

What a great build-up...and then, He rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel and washed feet.

I. The Perplexity of Peter John 13:4-7

Get the picture:

Jesus had sent Peter and John to get the upper room ready for Him and His disciples to take the Passover.

Everything was ready. Jesus is going to be on the cross, dying for them in less than 24 hours and what are they doing – arguing over who is the greatest. They go into that upper room and close the door. There by the door is a basin, a jar of water and a towel – but no servant to wash their feet – and no one volunteered to do so. They were still talking about who was the greatest – what about the seating arrangement at the Passover. Who's going to sit next to Jesus? They were worried about who was the greatest – but here's the heart of the matter – none wanted to be the least!

Most of us know we'll never be the greatest, but we certainly don't want to be the least. If we can't be in the top Ten, we don't want to be in the bottom Ten!

- They came in, looked at the basin and towel, and thought, “If no one else is going to do it, I'm not either.”
- “Someone with my position, influence, dignity, education ought not to have to do this.”
- Jesus said, “If no one else is going to do it – I will.” He rose from supper and laid aside His garments (the two top garments, leaving only the loin cloth like a slave) took the water, poured it in the basin, put the towel around Him and one by one washed their feet.

The disciples thought they were too good to wash feet, so all of their feet remained unwashed – INCLUDING THE FEET OF JESUS! Any one of them would have been glad to wash Jesus' feet, but not the feet of the disciples – so the feet of Jesus remained unwashed, too.

In Luke 7, Mary Magdalene washed Jesus' feet. Six days before the upper room experience in John 12, Mary, out of devotion, love and gratitude for raising Lazarus, anointed His head and feet with perfume and dried His feet with her hair.

Some churches practice foot washing today.

Thomas a'Becket wanted to keep the spirit alive, so he had 13 poor men daily come to his apartment, an hour when they would least likely be observed, and having washed their feet, kissed them, gave them a good meal and sent each away with four pieces of silver.

Washing feet today is much different than it was in Jesus' day. They wore – not shoes, but pieces of leather with a latch over their feet. All roads were dirt (mud), animals were on the street which meant the sanitary conditions were not the best.

Those today wear shoes and socks and, you can bet, they washed their feet before they went to service. Jesus never meant for this to be an ordinance. He didn't say, “do WHAT I do...but do AS I do.”

**Jesus was not saying, “Copy Me”...but, “Let this mind be in you...”

II. The Protest of Peter John 13:8

Jesus comes to Peter and Peter draws his feet up under him and says, “You shall never wash my feet.” Here is a disciple saying to his Master, “You shall never minister to me.” Peter felt uncomfortable because he knew that Jesus was doing what he (Peter) should have done. Peter didn't deny his need to have his feet washed, but he didn't want Jesus to humble Himself to do it. This wasn't humility, but pride.

Jesus said, “If I don't wash you, you will have no part with Me.” He is not talking about salvation; He is talking about fellowship. Note: “Thou shall have no part (not in me, salvation), but with me, fellowship.” The word “part” means “participation, having a share with Me.”

III. The Plea of Peter John 13:9-11

There are two Greek words here; both translated wash, but they are very different – note verse 10.

- “He that is washed.” “Louo” – to bathe all over – union.
- Save to wash his feet – “nipto” – to rinse certain spots – communion (James 1:27 to keep yourself unspotted from the world).

Some feel if they sin at all they need to be saved again. If that were the case, none of us could stay saved many minutes at a time. We don't need to be “louo” washed but one time, but we need “nipto” to have our feet washed daily.

- I John 1:9
- Psalm 119:9 “wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereunto the Word of God.”

You can measure your own spirituality by asking how long it takes to get back into fellowship after being aware of your sin.

Carnal Christians let their sins stack up; those who walk in the Spirit confess their sins at the very moment they become aware of them. It's called keeping short accounts with God. It means letting Christ cleanse us through we may be embarrassed for committing the same sin again and again.

Our world is a spiritually corrupt and dirty place. Every day we see and hear things that defile us and can affect our walk with God. Take time to let the Holy Spirit cleanse your mind, heart, and life with the blood of Christ. He is waiting...Towel in hand.

Notice 13:12-17. Three lessons are here...of humbleness – holiness – helpfulness – restoring and refreshing others.

It's easy to serve God – that makes us feel noble; but to serve people makes us feel humble.

When we wash our brother's feet:

1. Make sure the water is not too hot.

- It's painful to be confronted with our sin. Don't add to the discomfort by being judgmental or holier-than-thou.
- It should be done in love and a spirit of meekness.

2. Make sure your own feet are clean.

Take the beam out of your eye before trying to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

3. Be ready to submit your own feet to washing in the process.

- We are not infallible. We fall, too. It's kindness when we wash our brother's feet and kindness when done by our brother to us.
- We may fall into spiritual snares and not be aware of it until some kind brother opens our eyes to it. What a blessing to have someone who cares for you enough to wash your feet.

Bottom Line: If you've never been washed by Christ, you're dirty. No matter how pleasant you may look on the outside.

Judas was there. Jesus washed his feet, but it did no good because He had never washed his heart.

Have you ever had a spiritual bath – washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Object lesson: Pass the towel around as a reminder that He has called us to serve.

OVERCOME BY OVERCONFIDENCE

Luke 22:31-34; Mark 14:26-31

Before treading the Passage

The night before our Lord's crucifixion was a very bad night for Simon Peter.

It gave him the darkest hours of his life, for during that night Peter experienced his greatest spiritual collapse. He said things and did things that he would forever be ashamed. If there were one segment of his life Peter would like to blot out of his record, it would be that night. Step by step, in incident after incident, he went down in his behavior until he hit his all-time low as a disciple of Jesus Christ by denying Christ three times.

What caused his fall? If you could point at one thing that was at the heart of his fall, it would be Overconfidence.

While it is good to have self-confidence; it is dangerous to be overconfident.

Self-confidence is the first step to success; overconfidence is the first step to failure. The same Bible that says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" says "And without Me ye can do nothing."

Watch Simon's overconfidence:

Read the Passage

It is only about nine hours until Jesus is going to be crucified.

Jesus makes this statement to Peter, "You will deny Me three times before the rooster crows in the morning." Peter didn't think it possible that he would fall so low as to deny his Lord, whom he loved, in a nine hour period of time.

If it were possible for Peter, the leader of the disciples to fall, it's possible for us to fall as well if we become overconfident.

Have you ever heard anyone say, "If I know my heart, I would never"... The truth is, we don't know our heart – Jeremiah 17:9.

Two things about a person who is overconfident: They don't know how weak they are and they don't know how strong Satan is.

I. The Alarm Sounded by the Lord Luke 22:31-32

Notice that Jesus called Simon Peter by his old name. Jesus had given him a new name – Peter, the Rock...Stable One.

Jesus calls him, "Simon"...unstable one. In fact, He calls him that twice: "Simon, Simon." It sounds like the time when Jesus was in the home of Mary and Martha. Mary was at the feet of Jesus – listening, loving, worshiping Him; Martha was in the kitchen and cried out frustrated, "Lord, don't You care that I'm doing all the work in here and Mary is just sitting there at Your feet? Tell her to get in here and help me." Jesus said, "Martha, Martha..."

Simon, Satan has asked to have you...requested to have you. He wants to shake you like wheat – like one would take wheat at harvest time, put it on a screen tray and violently shake you back and forth to get rid of all the husks and chaff. Satan wants permission to shake you to expose what you really are."

It is the same thing that Satan asked to do with Job. "Let me have him. I'll turn him every-which-way-but-loose and he'll curse You to Your face."

"But I have prayed – interceded – for you." What did Jesus pray for?

- He didn't pray that Peter would not fail. That was Peter's choice!
- But that his FAITH would not utterly – totally – finally fail.
- It is the picture of a runner who falls down and refuses to get back up again;
- Or of a flame that flickers, and is about to go out.
- Or a camp fire where the embers have turned to gray ashes, but you can blow on it and the fire revives.

Why did Jesus pray that Peter's FAITH fail not? Because our faith is the most vital part of us.

It is when we are confident that we are unconquerable that Satan is getting ready to bring us down.

I Corinthians 10:1-5, 12-13

II. The Arrogance of Peter

When you tie all four Gospels together, you will find that Peter made four emphatic declarations of loyalty to Jesus. He said, "I will be loyal and faithful to Jesus, no matter what," but instead of loyalty that night, Peter was disloyal. The very thing he insisted he would not do, he did.

The first two declarations came in the Upper Room, the third and fourth took place on or near the Mount of Olives.

1. Luke 22:31-33 "Satan has asked to sift you like wheat...I have prayed for you." Peter: "Lord, I'm ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."
2. John 13:33, 36-37 "Why can't I go with You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."
3. Mark 14:27, 29 "You are going to stumble because of Me." "Lord, others might, but I never will."

4. Mark 14:30-31 “Peter, you will deny Me three times.” “I will never deny You.”

Just like the time Peter got out of the boat to walk to Jesus on the water, he was full of himself – and he is about to fall.

****Peter made at least three mistakes:**

1. He thought he knew more than Jesus

- These words of Jesus were intended to keep Peter on the alert.
“Satan has asked to sift you.” Yet Peter just pushed the warning aside – gave little weight to them – made no impact on him.
- Luke 22:40 “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Yet, Peter saw no need to pray that he would not enter into temptation.
- In the pattern prayer Jesus taught us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” We, like Peter, think we can handle things on our own. No need to ask for divine help. How often have you prayed, “Lord, I know I'm weak. Temptation is everywhere. Give me divine strength to avoid falling into temptation.”
- The Result of Peter's not praying:
 - In the Garden of Gethsemane...three times Jesus asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray with Him; three times He came back to find them asleep.
 - When Judas lead the soldiers to where Jesus was and Judas kissed Him and the soldiers started moving toward Jesus, one of the disciples asked, “Lord, shall we smite with a sword?” Peter didn't wait for the answer. He pulled out his sword and started swinging. There are two words for sword: There is a long, broad-blade sword which the soldiers used with both hands to crush the head of a man – the other is a dagger, a ceremonial sword used to prepare the Passover lamb, which is what Peter had. Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. Jesus performed His last miracle before the cross and restored the ear to its place. Jesus spends a lot of time restoring our cut-off ears – our hurts that we inflict on others.
- Peter's first mistake was failure to pray.

2. He thought he was too strong to fail.

Tell of lady whose husband had an affair...lady said, “Wish I was confronted with a temptation like that so I could prove I would not yield.” Six weeks later she had fallen.

3. He thought he was superior to others.

- He esteemed himself better than others.
- Peter thought he was the strongest, most faithful of the disciples, but before the night was over, he would become worse than all the other disciples, except for Judas Iscariot.
- Instead of being superior, he becomes inferior.

III. The Application for Us

If Peter, the acknowledged leader of the Twelve, fell, so can any of us.

I Corinthians 10:12

Notice Luke 22:32. The worst thing that can happen to you is not that you would fail the Lord, but that you would let that failure destroy your faith.... “that your faith fail not.” “When you are converted,” not saved again, but Recovered...Restored. It's best if you never fail, but if you fail, it is our duty after failure to allow Jesus to right the wrong in our life.

And when you turn from the valley of defeat, “Strengthen your brethren.” Who could better help a fallen brother than one who has fallen and been restored.

Satan will tell you that your fall is final. But, no, God is the God of the second chance. In a gentle way, help restore your fallen brother.

Don't be overcome by overconfidence. But if you have fallen, God is the God of the second chance. He will restore.

Before reading the Passage

We have come in our study of Simon Peter to look at Peter's darkest hour – the night that he denied his Lord.

We must not forget that Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him. They were intended to be words of warning to Peter. Jesus told him to watch and pray that he fall not into temptation, but Peter didn't take our lord's words to heart.

Jesus said, "Simon, Simon. Satan has asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat – to turn you every-which-way-but-loose. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not."

Jesus goes to the Garden to pray. Judas comes with a band of soldiers, identifies Jesus by placing a kiss upon Him, and the soldiers take Him away. All of the disciples flee. Then, two of the disciples muster a little courage and turn around and follow the soldiers with Jesus to the palace of Caiaphas. John goes inside the gate as they are taking Jesus through the gate, but Peter stays on the outside of the gate.

Let me describe the palace for you: The palace was facing the street. There was a wall around the house with one gate in the front. A servant girl kept the gate. As you came through the gate, the entryway was a covered archway which led up to the house. At the end of the archway was a raised porch which led to another raised structure which was the living quarters. Out from the archway was the courtyard where the soldiers and servants mingled while Jesus was being tried in secret by the Sanhedrin.

John is as close as he can get to the proceeding when he realizes Peter didn't make it through the gate with them. John knew the girl who is the gate keeper and asked her if his friend could come in. When Peter comes in, instead of staying with John, he goes into the courtyard and begins to mingle with the soldiers and slaves around a fire in the courtyard. It is there that Peter is going to deny his Lord.

All four Gospels record Peter's denial, each one giving additional details, but I want us to look at Mark's account.

Read the Passage

I want us to look at the denial of Peter under three heading:

I. The Reasons for the Denials

How could Peter deny his Lord? How did he get to that point? The steps Peter took are the same ones we take when we deny our Lord by our words and deeds:

A. Overconfidence

We have looked at this already; so I'll just touch on it.

Peter thought he was strong enough to avoid temptation, but he didn't know how weak he was. Paul knew the danger of overconfidence, but Peter didn't. Listen to Philippians 3:3 "I have NO confidence in the flesh" ... "the arm of flesh will fail you" ... "when I am weak, then am I strong."

Paul said, "I know me. I don't trust myself around temptation. I'm too weak. But when I admit my weakness, live with the knowledge of my weakness, God gives me His strength to overcome temptation."

Our greatest danger does not always lie where we are the weakest, but sometimes where we are usually the strongest. Peter's strength was Honesty – he fell into Deceit; Courage – and he became a Coward.

Let me remind you that Satan attacks those who give themselves to Christ's service. It's not worth his time to waste his skill on nobodies; but he goes after those nearest to Christ.

B. He followed Afar Off (Three of the Gospel writers declare this.)

The first step to backsliding is slack-abiding. One step from Grace leads to Disgrace – one step from the Lord!

Peter put himself in the Danger Zone. The Lord's promise is that He will not allow His children to be tempted above that they are able to bear. But that does not apply to willful disobedience. If we willfully put ourselves in the place of temptation, the Lord will not override our choice.

How often we put ourselves in the Danger Zone and all the time the Holy Spirit is saying, "Be careful...do not go there...you're in danger..." and we pay no attention and wonder why we yield.

C. Peter identified himself with the enemies of Christ

John 18:18-19 – They built a fire and Peter stood with them, warming himself. Luke 22:55 “and Peter sat with them.”

He wanted to blend in with the crowd, so he gave the impression that he was one of them. He was in the wrong place with the wrong people. Be careful of the company you keep. Evil companions are more likely to drag you down than you are to lift them up.

****Poor Peter!** He wanted to be with Jesus, but he thought he had to be a part of the crowd too!

Charles Spurgeon tells of a girl who wanted to live for Jesus, but wanted to be a part of the world, too. He said, suppose there were a streetcar outside this tabernacle. You have three choices. You can put one foot on the streetcar and leave one on the muddy ground...but you won't stay that way long when the car begins to move. Or, you can stand with both feet in the mud and let the car go its way. Or, you can put both feet on the car and go to the place the car is going. But you can't do both!

II. The Record of the Denials

A. First Denial

This servant girl who let Peter in the gate saw him by the fire – she said, “I know you – you were with that Jesus of Nazareth” (said with feeling of contempt). Peter tried to play dumb and said, “I don't understand what you're talking about.”

Then the girl put the question to Peter in a negative form: “You are not one of His followers, are you?” He said, “I am not.” And Mark said that Peter went out on the porch and a rooster crowed.

That first rooster was saying to Peter, “Be careful.” Peter lied, and he knew it.

Why didn't Peter witness to the girl instead of lying to her? We are told not to give place to the devil – don't let him get his foot in the door. If you do, he'll take over.

I think Peter got blind-sided. He planned how he would defend himself against a soldier, but he was totally unprepared – caught off-guard by this servant girl. Your true character is shown when you are caught off-guard.

B. Second Denial

Another maiden saw him at the fire and began to study his face and then says, “I do know you. You're one of His disciples.” One of the men speaks and says, “Yes, your speech betrays you. You talk with the accent of a Galilean.” Peter said, “I do not know the man.”

What dishonoring words! In this great confession Peter had said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He called Him “Master” and “Lord,” but now he said, “I don't know THE MAN!”

When you tell one lie, you feel almost trapped to tell another lie, and it's easier to tell the second lie.

C. Third Denial

Luke says it was about an hour later. Peter tried to get a better look at how the proceedings were going. Standing around the fire, no doubt there was some jesting about Jesus – some course jokes. Peter listened and laughed with the rest. Peter made no protest because he had to keep up his deception. On that cold night, Jesus was being buffeted, and Peter was warming himself at the fire, trying to make himself comfortable.

By this time Jesus had been declared a blasphemer. He had been beaten, spat upon and taunted. Then a man kin to the man that Peter had cut his ear off, said, “You are one of them. I saw you in the Garden with Him.”

Then Peter began to curse and swear... “I don't know Him...” “And the rooster crowed while he was still speaking.

Curse – means to call down a curse – to make an oath. When a person made an oath, they assumed to make it in the presence of God. Peter called God to witness his lie! With an oath he was saying, “May God kill me if I'm not speaking the truth.”

Swear

- Peter reverted back to his old style of speech. Being a fisherman, he learned some raw language. Now he reverts back to his old habit.

- It's important not to acquire evil habits lest in some hour of weakness they come back to us. (Drinking/cursing – why important to be saved young.)
- People always get into trouble when they have to resort to defiled speech to enforce what they are saying. Foul talk only shows a lack of intelligence (vocabulary not large enough to express themselves any other way) and character. Some think foul speech is a sign of strength, but it is weakness. He is not a he-man, but a weak-man.

III. The Result of the Denials

Somewhere in the night a rooster stretches its neck, shakes its feathers, and crows an indictment. Most folks paid no attention to that rooster crowing. It was nothing out of the ordinary. But for Peter, the crowing of the rooster was like the blast of a trumpet! I think every time Peter heard a rooster crow after that, he remembered that night.

The Bible says that Jesus turned and looked at Peter – beaten, bloody. Jesus utters no words – nor does He shake His head in disgust or lower it in disappointment. It is not an “I-told-you-so” look. It was a look of pain, but also pardon.

Grace was announced before Peter fell. Jesus knew he would fall; He told him so. But He made it easy for him to return. “When you are restored, strengthen your brothers.”

Thank God the story of Peter doesn't end in failure – but in repentance. He begins to return and recover.

The true Peter is not seen in his denial, but in his repentance. He went out and wept bitterly! I wonder if he went back to the Garden of Gethsemane, where earlier he had felt no need to pray. Sin is a great provoker of tears. Tears tell us that sin only brings trouble and sorrow. In some private place he confessed his sin and sought forgiveness.

I wonder if he didn't pray as he did in Luke 5, “I am a sinful man, O Lord.” I think he prayed, “O, Lord, what have I done...what have I done? Give me another chance. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me from this stain.”

Peter is a smaller man now...without all that thick husk that once surrounded his life. Now he is broken...and the real wheat is showing...chaff is gone.

There is a little rooster inside all of God's children.

- The crucial question: How will we handle our failure?
- Proverbs 24:16 – The well of grace will never run dry!

“...AND PETER” OR ...HOPE IS ALIVE! Mark 16:1-7

When we last saw Simon Peter, he did something that he said he would never do – deny his Lord! And, yet, not only did Peter deny Jesus one time; he denied Him three times – and then the rooster crowed – and Jesus turned and looked at Peter.

When Peter saw His bloody face and His tender look of love, Peter was overcome with shame and sorrow and ran out the gate and into the street.

It was Peter's darkest hour.

Three things I want to share with you as we look at what comes next in Peter's life:

I. Peter's Regret

No one in Jerusalem suffered more that Friday night than did Simon.

Peter must have wondered: Would Jesus forgive me? Will I ever be able to forgive myself? When Peter fled the scene of his denial, that last look of tender love from Jesus haunted him.

Where did he go when he left the courtyard? I think he went to the garden – maybe to the very spot where Jesus had prayed – and wet the ground with his tears. Then it seems that he went to John's house where he would be hidden from prying eyes of others.

From the distance he could hear the crowd saying, “Crucify Him?” Then he could hear them say, “Release Barabbas!” He could hear

the ringing of the hammer as Jesus and the two thieves were nailed to the crosses.

Then he could see John coming toward the house, supporting Mary, the mother of Jesus, as he had to almost carry her into the house. I think as Peter met Mary, he wept the more saying, "I'm so sorry. How could I have denied Him?"

And I think he was ashamed to show his face in public.

- He didn't want to face the other disciples.
- He couldn't sleep – his appetite was gone – he was burdened down by guilt – and filled with regret.

He missed seeing Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus take the body of Jesus off of the cross.

Jewish law said they had to have the body in the tomb before 6:00 P.M. Friday. In a Jewish burial, they would wash the body and cover the body with strips of linen cloth except for the face, neck, and upper part of the shoulders.

The women watched as Joseph and Nicodemus prepared His body. They took 100 pounds of dry spices and inserted them into the folds of linen. They used aloe and myrrh. Aloe was a powdered wood, like fine sawdust with an aromatic fragrance; myrrh was a fragrant gum that could be carefully mixed with the powder. Jesus' body was encased in these. His head, neck and upper shoulders were left bare and a linen cloth was wrapped about the upper part of His head like a turban.

When they laid Him in the tomb, they had a large rock, 1 1/2-2 tons, placed in a large groove that was slanted in an upward angle. It would take 20 men to push the rock down the sloped groove to its resting place.

II. Peter's Return Read the Text – Mark 16:1-7

When you tie all four Gospels together, we find that four women – maybe more – went to the tomb, very early in the morning – Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James the Less, Salome, Joanna.

They kept saying to one another on the way to the tomb, "Who shall roll away the stone for us?" Not one of them said, "It's of no use. We might just as well go home." The cross had shattered their hopes, but it couldn't kill their love for Jesus.

Mary Magdalene got to the tomb first and saw the stone rolled away and the body gone. She ran to John's house to tell Peter and John and, no doubt Mary, the mother of Jesus.

- John 20:1-8 (explain) Three times the word "saw" is used – 3 different ways
- John 20:5 Belgo – suggest nothing more than sight.
- John 20:6 Theoreo – from which we get theory or theorize from – means trying to figure something out.
- John 20:8 Orao – to see with understanding.

What did they see in the tomb?

We say the tomb was empty, but it was not quite empty. The body was gone but the grave clothes were still there. Even the critics admit the tomb was empty, but they try to find ways around the resurrection. Alternative explanation:

Some theories by critics:

1. Wrong tomb theory

- That would mean the women, the disciples, the angels and the seal were at the wrong tomb.
- The leaders would have wasted no time getting the body if the wrong tomb theory was true.

2. Swoon theory

That Jesus didn't really die, just fainted, revived in cold tomb, came out of wrapping, moved the stone himself.

3. Stolen body theory

- His friends had too much respect for His body – plus the soldiers.
- His foes – did everything to keep His body from being stolen. They would have produced it if they could.

What did they see in the tomb? The grave clothes help to prove the resurrection of Jesus. Not pulled apart – but the grave clothes were in the same condition and arrangement they were in when on Christ – as though He passed through them, as He would later pass through the closed door. The only difference, because of the weight of the spices, the cloth had subsided. The napkin was lying separate.

If the body had been stolen, they would have taken the grave clothes.

III. Peter's Reunion Mark 16:7

The appearances of Jesus on that first Sunday: To Mary Magdalene, the women, Peter alone, Emmaus disciples, disciples without Thomas in the upper room.

There was both a Private and a Public reunion with Peter on that first Easter Sunday. It was a matter of grace, mercy and love that the Lord met with Simon Peter privately first. We are not told one word about what went on between the Lord and Peter – that was private – just between Peter and his Lord.

I'm so glad the Lord deals with us privately. He doesn't share the work He does in my heart when I fail Him with anyone else. If He exposed to you what He was dealing with me about – shouted my sins that He has to deal with in my life to others – it would be so embarrassing.

Though we don't have a record of the interview, from my own experience, I can fill in the blank page:

- There must have been bitter tears, broken words, long breaks of silence when words just wouldn't come.
- There was confession of sin – asking for forgiveness
- Maybe he repeated what he remembered of the prodigal son's words... "I am no more worthy to be one of your apostles, just let me remain as one of your disciples.
- "I just want You to forgive my sin and love me."

Watch this: The great desire of Jesus was to rescue His wayward friend and let him know He loved him still.

The Song of Solomon gives three traits of God's perfect love for us – see Song of Solomon 8:6-7.

1. Love can't be bought; only given away Song of Solomon 8:7b
2. Many waters cannot quench love Song of Solomon 8:7a
 - A lot of water – failures – had passed under the bridge – but they didn't quench love
 - Peter failed Jesus in the garden – broke his vows to the Lord that he would never deny Him –even swore he didn't know Him.
 - The Lord said, "Peter, that's water under the bridge. I've forgiven your sins. I want you to come forth stronger in spite of your failure.
3. Love is stronger than death Song of Solomon 8:6

This was the turning point in Peter's life. He never forgot that meeting with Jesus. The resurrected Lord caused Peter to look at life and commitment to his Lord differently.

Easter makes us look at everything differently, too...

It makes us look at the grave differently. To many, the grave is little more than corruption and decay. But with Jesus the grave brings rejoicing for we know if this earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

D.L. Moody tells of a 15 year old girl who was completely paralyzed on one side, nearly blind. She couldn't see, but she could hear. The doctor, standing by her bedside said, "She has seen her best days, poor child." She said, "No, doctor, my best days are yet to come, when I shall see the King in His beauty."

Her hope, like ours, is in the resurrection.

GONE FISHING!

John 21:1-17

Before reading the Passage.

Satan has a tactic he loves to use on Christians. He loves for them to fail. But that's not his prime objective. When he gets them to fail, he uses that failure to convince them that because of that failure, they have disqualified themselves from further service for the Lord.

And, like most of what Satan says, that is not true.

On New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played the University of California in the Rose Bowl. In that game, a man named Roy

Riegels recovered a fumble for California, somehow became confused, and started running in the wrong direction. He ran sixty-five yards before one of his own teammates overtook him and tackled him just before he scored for the opposing team. When California attempted to punt, Tech blocked the kick and scored a safety, which was the ultimate margin of victory.

That strange play came in the first half, and everyone who was watching the game was asking the same question, "What will Coach Price do with Roy Riegels in the second half?"

The men filed off the field and went into the dressing room to regroup. As usual they sat on the benches and on the floor – all but Riegels. He put a blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner with his face in his hands, and wept over his mistake.

As you know, coaches usually have a great deal to say to their team during the half-time. But that day Coach Price was quiet. No doubt, he was trying to decide what to do with Riegels and what to do to turn his team around. The timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before playing time. Coach Price looked at his team and said simply, "Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second half."

The players got up and started out – all but Riegels. He did not budge. The coach looked back and called to him again; still he did not move. Then Coach Price went over where Riegels sat and said, "Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second."

Then Roy Riegels looked up, his cheeks wet with a strong man's tears, and said, "Coach, I can't do it to save my life. I've ruined you. I've ruined the University of California. I've ruined myself. I couldn't face that crowd in the stadium to save my life."

Then Coach Price reached out and put his hand on Riegels' shoulder and said to him, "Roy, get up and go back, the game is only half over."

Roy Riegels did go back on to the field, and those who watched the game that day will tell you that they have never seen a man play football like he did that second half.

There are times when all of us, like Roy Riegels, get mixed up, confused, and run in the wrong direction. There are times when we fail our friends, ourselves, and even our Lord. When we do, we might expect the Lord to leave us in the locker room of self-pity or to place us on the bench of inactivity. But instead he comes to us to say, "Get up and go on back on to the playing field; the game is only half over. You still have a chance to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat." At the moment of our greatest defeat, we discover that the gospel is good news for failures... It is the gospel of the second chance.

If we are ever to achieve our highest potential in both character and career, we must learn this. We have to get up from failure and self-pity and get back into fellowship and service. The grace of God makes this possible.

Read the Passage.

For 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus was ascending and descending between heaven and earth as it pleased Him. In fact, there were some 13 appearances of Jesus after His resurrection before He made His final ascension to His Father and was seated at His right hand.

The risen Lord had appeared to Simon Peter alone and assured him that he was forgiven, but Peter could not forget his lapse of love.

- Echoes of the rooster still rang in his mind.
- Peter had wept bitterly, but the tears could not wash the image from his mind.
- He would never forget the awful things he had done.
- Could he ever be what he had been again? Had he disqualified himself from fruitful service? Would he ever know peace again?

All that is the background to John 21.

I. The Inquiry John 21:1-8

Jesus had instructed His disciples to go to Galilee and wait for Him there. They had gone to Galilee and while they were waiting for Jesus to appear to them, Peter said, "I go a fishing" and six other disciples say, "We are going with you." Seven of the eleven go fishing.

Look who they were that went fishing:

- Simon Peter (the denier) and Thomas (the doubter) - put together
- Nathaniel

- James and John, the sons of Zebedee
- Two unnamed disciples – folks have guessed, Andrew and Phillip. I think they were unnamed so we could put our names there.

Here's the question Bible students ask...Was going fishing a Desertion or a Diversion?

- I think many of us have done Simon Peter a disservice over the years by saying this was a desertion.
- Peter and the others were in Galilee. That's where Jesus told them to meet Him.
- Fishing is not a sin unless it becomes the priority of your life...unless it (or anything else) keeps you from the business Christ has called you to.
- Fishing was therapeutic.

But they had fished all night and caught nothing. How frustrating it must have been for the disciples – all night long, throwing the nets out, drawing them in, straightening the nets out, throwing them back out again, and not a minnow to show for it.

At sunrise there was a man on the shore who calls out, "Have you caught anything?" "No!" they answered.

They thought Jesus was some early fish dealer. "Got any fish to sell?" "No!" "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." When they did, they caught 153 fish – all of them keepers.

John said, "That's the Lord." When Peter heard that, he put off his outer garments and jumped into the water to go to Jesus. This is the second time we see Peter jumping out of a boat to get to Jesus. The first time he walked to Him; this time he swam to Him.

We need to understand that this meeting with Peter by the Sea was not just for Peter's sake. It was also for the disciples.

Jesus knew that the Peter of the denial was not the real Peter, and since his future leadership depended on the other disciples knowing it too, the Lord was about to give insight to both Peter and the other disciples.

We will see that Jesus had it all planned – the fire, the fish, and the questions that He would later ask Peter.

II. The Invitation John 21:8-13

Verses 9, 12 – Jesus invited them to "come and dine" – "come eat breakfast with Me."

- Where did He get the fish and bread and fire – where did the provisions come from? Remember, He is the creative Lord!
- Jesus encouraged His disciples to bring some of their catch. He accepted their service and adds the results of their toil to the provisions He had already prepared. He could have multiplied what He already had, but He was teaching them that their works were of value to Him.
- On the shore Jesus became the Host...Cook...Waiter...Friend...Teacher.

III. The Interrogation John 21:15-17

There must have been an awkward silence at breakfast as they sat huddled around the fire.

Breakfast was finally over and Jesus spoke...to Peter.

Peter's heart must have skipped a beat when he heard Jesus ask, "Do you love Me?"

Peter's heart began to race: stomach began to churn; cheeks burned; eyes misted. It was a tense moment for Peter – for several reasons.

- Jesus had addressed him as Simon, which was his name before he met the Lord.
- The fire of coals on the beach reminded Peter of the fire of coals where he denied the Lord.
- Peter, who usually answered quickly now ponders the question.

Why did Jesus ask Peter that question – "Do you love Me?"

- Because there is nothing more important than loving God.
- Deuteronomy 6:4-5
- Without love all that we do or say is worthless – I Corinthians 13...speak with tongues of men and angels...faith to move a mountain...give my goods to feed the poor...sacrifice my body to be burned.

Was Jesus being cruel to Peter by asking him that question in front of the other disciples? No – the disciples needed to know what was really in Peter's heart, too.

- No one enjoys being questioned about a failure, but if you're going to move on from that failure, you need to

deal with the failure and then move on. Let the failure be used as a lesson to make you stronger.

- Didn't Jesus know whether or not Peter loved Him? Of course, He knew. He knows the depth of every heart. But He needed to bring Peter to examine his own love for Christ and to help Peter to publicly declare his love.
- Peter never asked Jesus if He loved him – but Jesus did question Peter.

It might seem that Jesus asked the same question three times, but as you look closely, there are three different questions:

A. "Do you love Me more than these?" John 21:15

More than these what? We do not have the privilege of seeing where the eyes of Jesus looked or where He gestured. Three possibilities:

1. More than these Fish?

- More than your old way of life...more than your accomplishments
- Are these priority in your life? Are these what you are going to invest your life in?
- If so, leave them out in the sun three or four hours and you'll want to get rid of them.

2. More than these Friends?

You think a lot about what your friends think about you, don't you, Peter? What they think about you and their opinion about you carries a lot of weight with you, doesn't it?

3. More than these other Followers love Me?

- Peter said, "Yes Lord, You know that I love You."
- Jesus said, Do you "agape" Me ...Peter answered, I "phileo" You.
- Peter had bragged, "these others might deny You, but I never will."
- Peter was through with bragging...I phileo You.

B. "Do you love Me?" John 21:16

Jesus leaves off "more than these" "Peter, do you 'agape' Me?" "Lord, I 'philo' You." "I've learned my lesson. I will not boast. I've failed one time. I can't say I agape You, but I will say I phileo You."

C. "Do you love Me?" John 21:17

"Do you phileo Me? Do you love Me that much?

"Lord, You know the best and the worst of me. You know I phileo You."

IV. The Instructions

Feed My lambs...My sheep...My sheep. Peter said, "Lord, I'm fond of You" and Jesus said, "I'm entrusting My sheep to you." We don't have to be without failure to serve the Lord.

We hear a lot about falling from grace. Is that what happened to Peter when he denied the Lord? No, he didn't fall FROM grace; he fell INTO grace. For Jesus takes the initiative to restore Peter.

Peter couldn't "undo" his denial of the Lord, but the Lord could restore him to usefulness.

I wish there was some wonderful place
Called the land of Beginning Again
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches
And all our selfish griefs
Could be cast like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

There is such a place. You can get up from your past failures and go on to become all God wants you to be.

Peter may have given up on himself and others may have given up on him, but not Jesus. Jesus entrusted His lambs and sheep to Peter's care. He entrusted him with a greater ministry than he had before.

The dark days of humiliation were over. Regret was replaced by responsibility, partnership and full acceptance. Christ's prayer was answered. Peter would restore his brothers.

Peter was not only to be an evangelist (fishers of men), but a pastor (tend my sheep). Success is not measured by the number of converts, but also the development of Christians – not just getting sheep into the fold and forgetting them, but feeding and caring for them.

I Peter 5:2-4

Millions have been made stronger because of the lessons Peter learned in the school of failure.

Those who are forgiven much, love much.

Suppose He came to each of us and asked, "Do you love Me?"

LORD, WHAT ABOUT MY BROTHER?

John 21:17-23

As you read the Gospel of John, it seems that John is going to close his gospel with chapter 20.

John 20:30-31

Then he picks up his pen again. I believe there are three reasons the Holy Spirit led John to add this last chapter:

1. John wanted his readers to know that Peter was restored to apostleship by the Lord Jesus. I think that John loved Simon Peter as a dear brother in Christ. The other gospel writers had written that Peter had denied the Lord, but none of them had written a detailed account of the reconciliation that took place between Jesus and Simon Peter, and the New Commission that Jesus gave to Simon Peter. Apart from the information in this chapter, we would wonder why Peter was so prominent in the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts.
2. John wanted to refute a foolish rumor that had spread among the believers that he would live until the return of the Lord (John 21:23). John makes it clear that our Lord's words had been greatly misunderstood.
3. John wanted to encourage us with the truth that failure is not final. Peter had failed, but Jesus would restore him and use him again.

Look again at the two words that Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in John 21:19... "Follow Me."

The last command Peter received from the Lord was the same as the first command he heard from Jesus – "Follow Me."

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Peter's Revelation from the Lord John 21:17-19

Peter had just said to the Lord when He asked, "Do you love Me?" "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You." "Lord, You know all things" ...and here is one evidence of that truth. Jesus is going to tell Peter that he is going to die on a cross.

Peter had said, "Lord, I'll be willing to follow You to prison or even unto death."

Jesus said, "Peter, you will do both – but not right now." In Acts 12 Peter goes to prison because of His Lord and he would later die on a cross.

That phrase – "Stretch out your hands" is a synonym for death on a cross. "Another will gird you and lead you where you do not want to go" pictures his hands being tied with a rope and one taking one end of that rope and leading him to his place of execution.

Jesus didn't tell Peter When he would die, but He told him How he would die. Some 30 years would pass before the words of Jesus would come to pass. Peter lived in the shadow of the cross. May I point out, Jesus knows our personal destiny.

I'm grateful that the Lord has not told us our future to the degree that He did Peter. If the Lord told us that we were going to have nine good things happen to us this month and one bad thing, most of us would worry ourselves silly over that one bad thing. Nine of ten good things – and we'd spend our time thinking about and trying to prevent the one bad thing.

Notice the contrast: "Peter, when you were young you did what you wanted to do and went where you wanted to go. When you are old, things are going to be different."

God's servants do not always have an easy life or an easy death. In fact, we can expect burdens and hard times. We are not told that if we serve Jesus, we will have a bed of roses. In fact, just the opposite is true.

Notice John 21:19, "You will glorify God in your death." He would honor God by the way he died. When some folks were finding fault with the doctrines and practices of the Methodists, John Wesley said, "At any rate, our people die well."

It is important that God's people not only live well, but that they die well. We may die well by demonstrating the inward peace that only Christ gives. Psalm 23:4.

II. Peter's Rebuke from the Lord John 21:20-23

I told you that Jesus had to rebuke Peter a lot. Here he goes again! Jesus had just told Peter what He wanted him to do and then, John caught his eye. "And, Lord, what about my brother?" Any parent with more than one child can relate to this question.

You tell one child to do something and they want to know what their brother or sister is going to do. They want to make sure they're not being asked to do more than the other child.

Jesus said, "Peter, mind your own business. Don't worry about what others are doing. Just be faithful to what God wants you to do in your life."

Following the Lord is a full-time job. I don't have time to worry about everybody else's business. When we start trying to tend to everyone else's business, it always causes problems.

"Trouble in the Carpenter's Shop"

There was trouble in the carpenter's workshop and the tools were having a row.

One of them said, "It's the hammer's fault. He is much too noisy."

"Nonsense," the hammer protested, "I think the blame lies with the saw. He keeps Going backwards and forwards all the time."

The saw shouted, "I'm not to blame. I think it's the plane's fault. His work is too shallow, he does nothing but just skim the surface."

The plane objected loudly: "I think the real trouble lies with the screwdriver, always going around in circles."

"That's ridiculous," the screwdriver said. "The trouble began with the ruler, because he is always measuring other people by his own standards."

The ruler was furious. "Then what about the sandpaper? Surely, he is always rubbing people up the wrong way?"

"Why pick on me?" said the sandpaper, "I think you ought to blame the drill for being so boring."

Just as the drill was about to protest, the carpenter came in and began to work.

Using every one of those tools, he eventually built a beautiful pulpit, from which the gospel of peace was eventually preached to thousands of people.

Jesus is saying to Peter, "Don't compare what I've called you to do with what I've called someone else to do."

The best way to waste time is to compare yourself with someone else.

God calls all of us to different kinds of service.

All are equally important – equally needful to the Kingdom of God.

- Peter – Fisher of Men – Evangelism
- Paul – Tentmaker – Building up the church of Christ
- John – Mending Nets – Restoration and giving assurance

III. Peter's Response to the Lord

Twice in this passage Jesus says to Peter, "Follow Me." They are the words Peter heard when he first met Jesus. But Peter failed! Peter learned a valuable lesson that all of us need to learn: Past failures can be forgiven. It is Peter who writes, "Love covers a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:8

Satan is going to kick you while you're down. Jesus will be there reaching out His hand to pick you up.

In 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge was completed, costing 77 million dollars. The work was done in two stages. The first stage was done slowly. Twenty-three men fell to their death. During the second stage, they put the world's largest net beneath the workers. The net cost 100,000 dollars. Ten men fell and were saved by the net and the work proceeded 25 percent faster. There is nothing like security to give life and hope. That's grace.

Grace gives God's people hope and security. We fail the Lord, but He does not disown us. In fact, we can learn lessons in failure that

will make us more useful for the Lord.

Peter did live to be an old man and then suffered martyrdom under Nero. Eusebius said, "Peter first saw his wife crucified before his very eyes, and then, with a willing heart, he submitted himself to the cross. But feeling unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord, he asked to be crucified upside down instead.

What the Lord said to Peter, He says to each one of us, "Follow Me." Are you following Him?

THE PENTECOSTAL PREACHER

Acts 1:4, 8-9, 12-15; 2:1-8

It was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who introduced Peter to Jesus. John and Andrew saw John the Baptist point to Jesus and heard him say, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John and Andrew followed Jesus and He changed their life. Andrew found Simon as soon as he could, told him of Jesus and the change He had made in his life and led him to where Jesus was.

Jesus looked at Simon and said, "You are Simon (unstable), but you shall become Peter, a rock." For three years Jesus has been working with Peter, trying to develop a rock-like man. Peter failed often, but in those failures, Peter learned to be more rock-like.

Here in Acts 1 and 2, Peter finally became what Jesus said he would become – a rock.

It had only been days since Peter denied His Lord three times before a little slave girl; now he is going to stand before a great multitude and boldly proclaim the risen Lord. What transformed Peter from a coward to a man of rock-like courage? Three things: The resurrected Lord – He saw the risen Lord, the 40 days of meeting with the Lord between His resurrection and His ascension, and the coming and filling of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Finally, Peter was transformed into a rock!

C.S. Lewis said, "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird, but it would be a lot harder to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. You must be hatched or go bad." God helps us to be hatched. "In the Gospels Peter is a cocoon; in Acts he becomes a butterfly."

When we think of Pentecost we usually think of the coming of the Holy Spirit and tongues and 3,000 being saved, but I want us to see Pentecost through the eyes of Peter.

I. The Preparation for Pentecost

Jesus had been crucified at Passover. Passover was celebrated each year at the same time that marked the Passover lamb being slain and its blood being put on the door-post in Egypt. Fifty days after Passover was Pentecost, also called the feast of first fruits, which spoke of new life and new beginnings.

For 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus would meet with His disciples. Then, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus' final Ascension would take place and He would be seated at the right-hand of His Father, on His throne, in heaven.

Notice Acts 1:4, 8-9. As Jesus began to rise toward the heavens – 10 feet, 25 feet, 50 feet – the disciples must have thought about how much they depended on Him. But turn that around. Jesus must have thought about how much He depended on them. He was leaving all the redemptive work in their hands! The last thing they heard Him say was, "You shall be My witnesses."

What is a witness? In a court of law and from a religious standpoint, a witness is one who has observed something and one who truthfully reports what he has observed.

Report this: He's Alive! Eleven times He showed Himself in those 40 days. He showed Himself indoors and outdoors – in the daytime and the nighttime. They heard Him speak, touched Him and ate with Him.

And, when you witness of Me, Acts 2:17, "I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh". The words "pour out" speak of the abundance of His Spirit. There will not be just a little trickle – but an overflow!

How did they prepare for Pentecost? Prayed – for 10 days. Acts 1:12-15

What did they pray for? Two things:

1. That they would be right with each other. Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46
 - "One accord" – Pentecost began in the disciples – first!
 - God did a work in the lives of the disciples first, so He could use them in the lives of others.
 - They prayed 10 days; preached 10 minutes and 3,000 souls were saved. We pray 10 minutes; preach 10 days and wonder why nothing happens.
 - I Peter 4:17
2. They prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit and His filling Acts 1:4
 - Before Jesus began His public ministry, He was anointed with power of the Holy Spirit.
 - The coming of the Holy Spirit couldn't have come at a better time – Pentecost!
 - Acts 2:5. Jews and proselytes had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from at least 16 different countries.

II. The Power of Pentecost Acts 2:1-4

"There came a sound from heaven ...and filled the whole house." Not wind – they did not feel the wind – but there was a sound of wind – like a tornado – all around the city. The consequence was that a multitude soon gathered around the house where they were staying.

There appeared to them tongues AS OF FIRE (not literal fire, but something that looked like fire) which were distributed and resting on each of them. Acts 2:5-6: "Everyone heard them speak in his own language." Some call this the miracle of tongues, but it might be called the miracle of ears – for each heard in his own language.

The results?

1. "All were amazed (beside themselves) and marveled (filled with wonder). Acts 2:7
2. Acts 2:12 – Amazed and (perplexed) doubted – what meaneth this? They didn't know what to make of what was happening.
3. Acts 2:13 – "Some mocked. They are drunk." Mocked = to throw out the lip and jest.

The Preaching at Pentecost

The first thing Peter did was to deal with the mockers and explain the unusual goings on – Acts 2:14-17. The character of the messenger is vital; so, he put the false charges to rest.

Peter now preaches the first sermon ever preached by the church. It was a model sermon for it was based on Scripture and centered on Jesus Christ.

1. It was based on Scripture
 - Peter's sermon has 22 verses and 12 are quotations from the prophets and Psalms.
 - Don't miss the boldness and courage of Peter as he preached – Acts 2:22-23, 29a, 36, 38; Acts 3:14-15.
 - Pentecost transformed midgets into giants!
 - Peter was pointed and courageous. He didn't flinch or find soft words for sin.
 - The people could tell that Peter had experienced what he preached.
 - What a difference from the coward who denied his Lord before a little slave girl.
2. It centered on Jesus Christ – deals with four things:
 - A. The validation of Christ Acts 2:22
 - Approved by God – Authenticated by miracles – Attested by many
 - B. The crucifixion of Christ Acts 2:23
 - Peter says, "You thought you delivered Him up to be crucified, but God was in control; not you. He just used you to carry out His purpose and will. But you are not guiltless...you did it with wicked hands."
 - Peter indicated them Acts 3:14-15
 - C. The resurrection of Christ Acts 2:24-27
 - Peter says, "David was not referring to himself." David died, was buried and his tomb and remains are with us to this day. He was speaking of Christ who is alive.
 - D. The glorification of Christ Acts 2:33-36

The results of Peter's preaching? Acts 2:37-41

The preacher had preached and the congregation gave the invitation. What shall we do? Repent and be baptized BECAUSE your sins have been forgiven (Acts 2:38).

IV. The Possibility of Pentecost

The Holy Spirit bore witness to the word that Peter preached and their spiritual eyes were open. They were “cut to the heart” – personal conviction came upon them and 3,000 were saved.

That wasn't just emotionalism or a temporary thing (Acts 2:42) for they continued steadfastly in their commitment.

How can a condemned sinner be saved? Through the resurrected Savior who shed His blood in our stead. The basis of our hope is the risen Lord!!

Have you trusted the risen Lord?

THE CRIPPLE WHO DANCED IN CHURCH

Acts 3:1-10

Before reading the Passage

In Acts 2 the church was born – 3,000 spiritual babies were born in one day. In Acts 2:43 we are told that “many wonders and signs were done” by the hands of the apostles.

From the many miracles that were preformed, Luke selects this one because it is a picture of what sin does to the individual and what salvation can do for an individual.

Sin cripples – salvation corrects!

Read the Passage

Notice the last part of Acts 3:10 – “and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened.”

Can our church do anything that amazes folks in our community? Is our church doing anything amazing?

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas called on Pope Innocent. The pope was counting a large sum of money that had come into the church. The pope said, “See, Thomas, the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'” “True, holy father, but neither can she now say, 'Arise and walk.'”

The disturbing question is whether or not we can say to broken and crippled humanity around us, Arise and walk.”

- We have the provisions, but do we still have the power?
- We have the coins, but do we still have the compassion?

I. The Cripple Acts 3:1-6

“Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer.” They were going for fellowship, prayer, worship, and discipline.

Peter and John had been with Jesus for three years in the flesh, heard Him teach, saw Him heal, went inside the very tomb that Jesus had been laid in, but was now empty, saw the risen Lord, experienced Pentecost with the sound of wind and tongues like as to fire when the Holy Spirit came. And they still felt the need for daily fellowship and discipline.

We never outgrow our need for fellowship and discipline. If we neglect it, our inner life will dry up!

There were three hours of prayer for the Jews. But notice, they went up at the ninth hour – 3 o'clock – the same time Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished,” bowed His head and delivered up His spirit to His Father.

And a man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried every day and laid by the Gate Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple.

- Acts 4:22 tells us this man was over 40 years old. Every day friends or family would bring him to the same spot, leave him there, pick him up that evening. What a pitiful existence.
- There were gates at the temple. This was probably the Eastern Gate that led into the court of the women.
- Where else would a person in genuine need be more apt to receive alms than in front of the temple?

- Note: He asked alms of those going into the temple; not coming out, for folks thought they could catch the attention of God if they gave when they went in.
- Think about this poor cripple: over 40 years old. His parents never saw him take his first step. He could not share in the games of the other children. When he came to adulthood, he was unable to work, so he had to beg.
- Put yourself in the beggar's place. Can you feel his despair? He can go nowhere without help – he relies completely on others. All he can do is ask for handouts. His only purpose for living is survival.

But, if all you see is this cripple man, you have missed what God wants you to see. All of the miracles were given to teach us spiritual lessons. This lame man represents fallen humanity. We were all crippled by the fall. There are moral cripples...emotional cripples...mental cripples...and spiritual cripples...all because of sin. Sin cripples everything it touches.

II. The Christians

This man, over 40 years of age, must have been placed there daily for at least 20 to 25 years.

That means that Jesus, who came to the temple regularly, saw this man often. Why didn't Jesus heal him? It is not God's will that all be healed – and, too, God could get more glory through this man being healed by Peter and John. This healing gave Peter and John the opportunity to preach the gospel and many were saved.

A. These were men of Perception

That Peter noticed the lame beggar is evidence of the Spirit's ministry. Peter and John may have seen this man many times before and may have contributed to him before, but now Peter saw that cripple's life as God meant for it to be – whole, sound, healthy, and vigorous. Now Peter looked upon him with compassion and he saw a life that Jesus could touch and transform. This man needed the touch of Jesus!

Two boys were fighting on the school playground. Another boy came running to the teacher and said, "Teacher, two boys are fighting and the one on the bottom would like to see you."

This cripple needed to see Jesus! No doubt the cripple had heard about Jesus – His teaching – healing – death – stories about the empty tomb – the ascension from the Mount of Olives – the 3,000 who were saved on Pentecost. He had heard of Jesus, but he needed to meet Him personally

B. They were Men of Passion Acts 3:4-7

Peter said, "Look on us" and the man expected to receive some precious gift from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none." The beggar must have thought, "That's a poor joke to play on me. Couldn't you find something better to do than to make fun of a cripple man?"

"Silver and gold, have I none" – in fact, the beggar probably had more money than Peter! There are some things more important than money: health – happiness – acceptance with God.

There are four classes of people in the world:

1. Those people who have neither silver nor gold nor anything else to give – no blessings, no encouragement, no helpfulness – they go through life without helping anyone – they just withdraw into their little world. These are the driftwood of society.
2. Those people who have silver and gold but no moral values. They keep the silver and gold for themselves. They are the paupers of the universe.
3. Those people who have neither silver nor gold but they are filled with vision, faith, love, encouragement, a healing touch. These are the rich toward God.
4. Those people who have silver and gold and spiritual riches besides. They, too, are rich toward God.

Peter continued, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you. In the name of Jesus rise up and walk. Peter took him by the hand and lifted him up." The power belongs to Jesus and the hands belonged to Peter.

Silver would have only satisfied for a day and then he would be right back at the gate, begging again!

Time Magazine did an interview with Mother Teresa, a woman of few words. They asked:

1. What did you do this morning? "Pray."
2. When did you start? "Half past four."
3. And after prayer? "We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, and to Jesus. That

helps us put our whole heart and soul into doing it.”

4. What is God's greatest gift to you? “The poor.”

5. How are they a gift to you? “I have an opportunity to be 24 hours a day with Jesus.”

At the end of the interview the reporter said, “People who work with you say you are unstoppable. You always get what you want.” “That's right. All for Jesus.”

6. What are your plans for the future? “I just take one day at a time. Yesterday's gone, tomorrow hasn't come, we have only today to love Jesus.”

7. And the future of your order? “It is His concern.”

Jesus does not expect us to give what we do not have. Most of us do not have the gift of healing, but we do have something precious to give – the gift of prayer, a listening ear, compassion.

The Change Acts 3:6-10

The first place the man who was healed went was to the temple. With great joy he entered into the temple area from which he had always been excluded because of his congenital deformity.

Notice his spirit of discernment: He was not praising Peter, he was praising God! He was grateful to Peter, but he glorified God.

“And all the people saw him walking and praising God.” What a testimony he must have given! “I was lying in the dust and heard, 'In the name of Jesus rise and walk' and in a moment I was changed.”

It was a full grown miracle! Who walks perfectly the first time? Who is able to leap and jump with his first step? He had never stood in his life; yet, in the name of Jesus he could!

When he walked out of the temple, right past the Beautiful Gate, he must have cast a passing glance at the spot he had been only that morning and thought of all the bitter memories he had experienced in that spot in the past. But no longer.

Without Jesus, we are all cripples, but in the name of Jesus there is spiritual healing. He can give you power to rise and walk!

HOW TO CONFRONT HYPOCRITES

Acts 5:1-11

Let's play pretend!

Children love pretending. But they aren't the only ones who play pretend games. Adults play them as well. How often have you asked a deep question to appear intellectual? Or given money to appear generous? Or exposed another's sin to appear holy? All of these can be games of pretend and they can be described in one word – hypocrite.

The word hypocrite means to play the part or role – it is an actor. It is a desire, usually, to look better than we really are.

How do you deal with hypocrites?

Simon Peter, who was the leader of the infant church at this time, had experienced opposition outside the church, but now, the opposition came from inside the church. The truth is, opposition inside the church does much more damage than opposition outside the church.

If you were the devil, where would you put the people who could do more harm to the cause of Christ and His church? If Satan can't conquer the church; he'll seek to corrupt it. Satan's thought was: “I'll let some ole hypocrite become active – that will do the job.” He still uses that method today.

In Acts 4:32-36 Luke describes the glory days of the infant church. They were of one heart and one soul.

Then, abruptly, the wind shifted. The selflessness of Barnabas in Acts 4 give way to the self-fulness of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

Barnabas didn't want it this way, but you can imagine the talk and the honor given to him because of his gift and kindness. Ananias and Sapphira must have said, “Good ole Barnabas...that's all we hear down there at the church. We ought to get in on a little of that honor.” So, they conspired together on how they, too, might share the honor.

The name Ananias means God is gracious and the name Sapphira means Beautiful...the names suggest righteousness and beauty, but they did not live up to their names.

I. The Defilement of the Couple Acts 5:1-2

Outwardly, the act of Ananias was no different from that of Barnabas. Their actions were not impure, but their motives were impure. They wanted to be noticed. They desired the attention – the applause – the honor more than they feared God. That's why we sin anyway. We desire the pleasure of sin more than we fear God.

Romans 12:8 – He that giveth, with simplicity ...with no fold, no hidden motive, without seeking something for yourself.

II. The Detection of the Couple Acts 5:3-4, 7-9a

It is through divine discernment that Peter perceives that Ananias is lying – that he is being deceitful.

- Like Nathan who rebuked David for his adultery
- Like Elijah who interrogated his greedy servant, Gehazi

Notice Acts 5:3 – “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie?” Some have said that Peter's reaction was too strong. After all, Satan ought to have been blamed. He's the one who put it in the heart of Ananias to do what he did.

Temptation is no excuse for iniquity. Temptation is to be resisted; not yielded to. Only, when we yield to it, are we guilty! No man sins until he wills to sin. Every man is responsible for yielding to sin. We can't throw the entire blame on Satan!

What was the hideous sin?

- Verse Acts 5: 3 – You lied to the Holy Spirit and kept back part of the money.
- Verse Acts 5:9 – You agreed together to test the Holy Spirit of the Lord.

A. It was a Deliberate Sin

The deed was premeditated. It was not an innocent mistake or oversight. They planned to deceive the apostles from the start. They planned it between them.

B. It was a Deceptive Sin

They wanted their gift to appear to be more of a sacrificial gift than it was. The heart of the action was pride. Their real desire wasn't to make a donation to the church, but to grab glory for themselves.

C. It was a Defiant Sin Acts 5:9

They agreed to tempt the Lord. What does that mean? They had determined to put the Lord to the test – to see whether or not God could find out their wickedness and do something about it.

Jesus told Satan at His temptation, “Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Psalms 78:18-19 “Let's see if God can find out our deception.” It is a serious thing to test God. At a public meeting a woman in England shouted, “If there is a God, I give Him ten minutes to take my life away.”

When I say it was a defiant sin, they lied to the Holy Spirit, who is God! The all knowing, all seeing God. We cannot hide anything from God – Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139:1-12

Their conversation was overheard in heaven, as all such conversations are.

D. It was a Disengaged Sin

It was uncalled for. They went out of their way to commit it. They were under no obligation to sell their land or give the proceeds to the church. They could continue in good standing even if they had not sold their land.

But under the desire to have a good reputation and gain favor with man, they lied to the Holy Spirit.

III. The Denouncing of the Couple

When Ananias presented their pretentious gift, Peter had the x-ray vision of the Holy Spirit to see into his soul. He saw not only what Ananias was doing, but what it would do to the church if it was not dealt with. It was needful for the church to face and deal with the problem of sin in its midst.

And three hours later, Sapphira made her entrance – Acts 5:7-9. Why did they come separately? The people would first praise

Ananias; then repeat the praise when Sapphira came in; that way, all would be repeated and they would be noticed all the more.

What the couple thought was known only to them was known to the Holy Spirit who revealed it to Peter, who revealed it to the church and has been revealed to multitudes through the Word of God. Be sure your sin will find you out.

IV. The Death of the Couple Acts 5:5-6, 9-11

"You have lied to God." Those were the last words the couple heard on earth before God took them out into eternity to face Him.

What a shameful way to die – desiring honor, lying in dishonor – and for 2,000 years their names have been disgraced.

"Great grace came upon all..." for other Barnabases were developed.

Great fear came upon all – God's judgment not only dealt with the guilty, but it served as a warning to the righteous – and instruction as well.

The result: Greater respect was given to Christ and His church.

Someone said, "That early church was not a perfect church, but it was a powerful church. Not even a lie could live there."

What if God did that today? What if He brought death to all the hypocrites and those who lie about what they give to God – where it be the gift of money or talent or commitment.

What if He brought death to those with wrong motives in service?

He still does bring death! When God sees our hypocritical motives, we bring nothing but dead, unblessed efforts before Him.

We may deceive others, but never God. He sees our hearts.

I challenge you to look at the right kind of people (Barnabas) and not the hypocrites.