

# Peter's sifting experience as our example (Quality: Very good)

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Preacher: Crowter, Harold (1923-2011)

[ 0 : 00 ] This evening I will ask your attention to the portion of scripture in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26 and verse 75.

Matthew 26, verse 75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And he went out and wept bitterly. This evening I want just to say a few things regarding the situation spiritually as it concerned the Lord's servant and apostle Peter.

And Peter was very prominent in many respects as his character was sanctified. He was very forthright.

He was very outspoken. He was ready in many ways to attend to things in the worship and the apprehension of God's will concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the way appointed for him.

[ 1 : 39 ] Now, he was by nature, as you probably all understand, he was with his brother a fisherman. And it pleased the Lord to choose those two brethren to be among his disciples and ultimately to become apostles in the discharge of the high calling of God granted to them.

And they followed the Lord Jesus Christ in many early experiences and of his earthly pilgrimage.

And they also did those things concerning the outworking of God's will in the will of Christ, in the relationship with them, in their experiences.

Well, now, the text brings us and Peter remembered the word which Jesus said unto him. There seems to have been many instances in the life of Peter when the Lord's dealings with him were exceedingly personal.

You remember his call. You remember when he was in the boat upon the Sea of Galilee and the situation arose when the Lord was approaching the situation and Peter raised the question, if thou be the Christ, bid me come unto thee on the water.

[ 3 : 36 ] Now, what a great strength of faith appears to be in the question, if thou be the Christ, bid me come unto thee upon the water.

Peter then ventured out from the little boat to walk upon the water. And while he kept his eye on the Saviour, he was able to do what we would judge to be a miraculous thing, that is, to walk upon the face of the sea.

But when his faith faltered and we see Peter looking away from Christ to the winds and the waves that were besetting the sea at that time, he began to sink.

Now, my friends, there's a volume of interpretation and application in that very experience of Peter to teach us a volume of instruction that it is profitable for us not only to read but to apply to our individual experiences.

Oh, what wonderful things have been brought through faith centering in the Lord Jesus Christ and relying implicitly upon his word and command.

- [ 5 : 21 ]      Nevertheless, when Peter took his eye from the Lord, he began to sink. And he cried.  
And what a wonderful cry that was. And what a wonderful cry it is when it is from the heart of somebody feeling to sink.  
Lord, save me. What did that bring forth from the Lord himself as a token of salvation to Peter?  
Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him. And my friends, that's indicative of a spiritual experience.  
There is such a thing as the hand of Christ intervening in one's heart and experience when he saves us and saves us securely because Peter was found to be with the Lord in the boat and they got safe to land.
- [ 6 : 29 ]      well, that's one instance and we could go on to other instances recorded in the scripture concerning the apostle Peter and this is not any vain reason for me choosing to read this evening from the gospel by Luke concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in Peter's experience once more.  
The Lord said unto Simon, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. Now, what a warning of Satan's purpose.  
he wanted as it were to exercise his great power upon Peter and who was Peter in and of himself but a poor, weak, insufficient personality to come into conflict with the mighty power of the evil one.  
But here is the key to Peter's preservation and continuance. the Lord said, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.  
My friends, what a wonderful indication of the interposition of the Lord in a believer's experience as Satan.
- [ 8 : 14 ]      Satan, that great power of darkness has the desire to sift him as wheat.  
And the secret of the success in the issue that associated with Peter's deliverance was, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.  
when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And how many of the brethren through the generations have been strengthened by the experience recorded of Peter and the sufficiency of the Lord to deliver him from the power of Satan, that tremendous power that designs the destruction and ruination of the people, the people of God as well as the people of the world are the subjects of satanic influence and it's a wonderful thing.  
If the Lord is on our side and if God be for us, who can be against us? The Lord is stronger than all the might of Satan.  
Now, that's a wonderful experience again of Peter. Look at the strength of assurance must have caused Peter to grow in grace as the Lord led him about and took him through those fiery trials of experience nevertheless to establish him in the ultimate sufficiency of the Lord as his strength that he may be more than a conqueror through him that had loved him.
- [ 10 : 14 ]      And then do we not continue by thinking of the warning that the Lord himself gave to Peter when Peter was in the most solemn condition of denial.  
Or we say, well, you know, what a depth of weakness is in evidence when he enters into the presence of those people who are willing to cast it into his teeth that he's identified with the Lord himself.  
Therefore, such a relationship is detrimental. And Peter comes to the point a little maid, a little maid, says that thou art also one of them.  
What a great blessing. It underlies the truth of that. Peter was loved of the Lord.

Peter was chosen of the Lord. Peter was an intimate disciple of the Lord. And Peter was under the continual sanctification of experience to confirm him in the faith, to build him up, so to speak, in the knowledge of God and his Savior, Jesus Christ.

[ 11 : 59 ] But Peter was not a man who was in a situation and totally ignorant of what was being suggested and in so far as was allowed, accomplished because Peter was a weak man in and of himself.

His name as Peter speaks to us of Petros, which is a rock and in many ways, Peter appears to be strong and stable.

But my friends, oh, there are times when instability is so evident in Peter's experience and look how he shook when he said, I know not the Lord.

God because Peter had known that the very strength of his religion was in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

But it is certainly a very salutary warning to us not to boast as Peter did initially, I will go with thee to prison and to death.

[ 13 : 18 ] when the Lord put that to the test, Peter was denying that he knew the Lord and had anything in a saving experience of the truth.

Well, now, these experiences, these experiences, and the Lord brings his people into varying degrees of experience, but these things are all constructive in the exercise of them and the results that ensue.

Peter learnt his weakness, Peter learnt his frailty, Peter learnt the negative side of even a living soul by reason of the readiness with which he fell into Satan's temptation in the suggestion that he was identified publicly with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And poor Peter, he denies the standing that was his great advantage, was his chief asset in that sense.

Well, now, the Lord was very merciful in warning Peter of what would ultimately transpire.

[ 15 : 05 ] We see a wonderful control over detail when we think of the Lord forewarning Peter that before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice.

His knowledge of the future in its detail that everything so to speak is in the service of the Lord to use how he please and what he shall accomplish in the lessons to be taught.

Here, Peter, in the confidence of his own strength, he says, whatever happens, I'll go with thee to prison and to death. In other words, what shall separate between thee and me?

And he was determined in his thoughts that there was nothing that could make that separation between the two. But when it comes into the test, when the Lord sees fit to bring circumstances together that are indisputable proofs of the inadequacy of such a disciple with all the experiences that he had of the call of God and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the miracles that he'd witnessed Christ accomplishing, there was so much as it were on the side of strength, but when it came to this great testing time, Peter three times denies his Lord.

The scripture goes so far as to say, with oaths and with curses. Nothing superficial, nothing superficial.

[ 17 : 12 ] It was a deep heart denial of his relationship with the one that basically meant most to him.

Oh, what need we have. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. My friends, do not neglect that aspect of Christian experience, because the Lord can bring circumstances to bear in your life that will prove to you personally a total inadequacy to stand alone, to stand alone, especially in the time of trial.

And Peter has to acknowledge that he faltered and he failed. let me just look again at the word.

The gospel of Luke, I think it is, the gospel of Luke reminds us that verse 61 of chapter 22, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

Peter, the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, fixed his eyes upon this man who for three different occasions he had publicly denied that he was anything to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 19 : 15 ] One would feel the awful nature of the conviction when that sin was brought home to his heart.

But the Lord didn't turn away from Peter. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

Oh, the agony of Peter's reaction to the fixing of the gaze of the Saviour upon him at that point of time.

The cock had crowed. He remembered what the Lord had warned him of and he saw himself as an absolute failure.

Peter. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

[ 20 : 33 ] Three distinct and separate occasions he committed the same denial of his Lord.

My friends, how some of us have to remember certain instances in our own experience when we are guilty of the same denial rather than own, as it were, in a public way, whose we are and whom we've served.

We have succumbed sometimes to silent a reaction but other times even by the things that we've spoken.

It's an evasion of the fact that we are as we spiritually profess to be. Well, the Lord turned and looked upon him.

Oh, that look of pity. That look of pity. I don't feel it was a look of judgment in that sense.

[ 21 : 49 ] It was the Lord realizing how incapable are his people to withstand in the hour of temptation except as strengthened and enabled by his grace when such fiery trial falls out as their experience.

Have you got any semblance of a reaction to this subject? If it was me, I would not have done what Peter did.

My friend, my friend, my friend, consider well what you're saying. a truthful reaction of the weakness of sinful flesh will bring you to the point where you haven't got a stone to throw at Peter.

It will bring you to the point where you have to realize sometimes in, as it were, the protection of the flesh you've denied in the spirit.

What a mercy the Lord couldn't have dealt with Peter otherwise than he did graciously.

[ 23 : 24 ] Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. What did the Lord use as an instrument in bringing that situation to a head?

The crowing of a cock crow. The Lord can bring all sorts of means into play to make us conscious of what we've done.

There can be a lot of witnesses as it were in a material sense that bear testimony to the fact that we haven't owned the Lord as we ought to have done and rather in our sinful weakness have succumbed to the temptation and brought guilt upon our consciences.

sinner. Well the cock crew arrow went into Peter's heart.

He remembered what the Lord had said. what a sharp use of the sword of divine truth when the Lord brings his word to bear upon some situation and perhaps we've never realized it in that light before and we're made to appreciate that it was a denial of who we are by profession and whom we hope will undertake our salvation even from every sin and to a never ending eternity.

[ 25 : 26 ] Now Peter acknowledged the situation. He remembered and he was under conviction.

What effect did it have? And he went out. And he went out. All the shame of that man's spirit when he realized that he'd fallen into the snare even after the Lord himself had forewarned him personally of what would be his experience.

The scripture is full of instruction to us with reference to the maintenance of our profession.

salvation. But it doesn't give us the slightest inclination that the flesh is sufficient to gain the day.

victory. What is the secret of the victory that is given to the people of God as they come into these seasons of conflict and succumb as it were to the power of temptation.

[ 27 : 04 ] what is the secret of the conquest as from time to time the Lord may appear in and through his word and put strength into who would otherwise be a total failure.

My friends, I'm going to quote a hymn, Thy whole dependence on me fix nor entertainer thought Thy worthless schemes with mine to mix but venture to be naught.

Looking, trusting, fleeing to the Lord for help when confronted with these seasons of temptation.

no help in self I find though oft have sought it well the native treasure of my mind is sin and death and hell.

To Christ for help I fly the friend of sinners lost. It's his strength made perfect in weakness that gives the ability of the church to stand on the side of victory.

[ 28 : 43 ] And the apostle Paul says very clearly, thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor what debtors we are. Oh, what debtors we are for help hitherto. to. Nevertheless, conscious, bitterly conscious that we failed.

We've got experiences along life's way that still have that bearing upon our thoughts as we reflect how miserably we served the Lord in that time of testing and proving through which he sovereignly saw fit to bring us.

Well, now, he went out and wept bitterly. Oh, what a wonderful reaction to a soul.

No semblance of excuse, no semblance of self-justification, no semblance of anything to boast of in and of himself.

[ 30 : 10 ] He was full of shame, shame and confusion of faith belongeth unto us. And my friends, I believe Peter was hand in hand with the apostle Paul at that particular point.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? He went out and wept.

why did he weep? He was conscious that the only one that was able to save him was the one that he had so miserably in a threefold way denied to know him.

he was and my friends, he must have felt terribly wretched because such sins as Peter's denial, such sins as our personal denials have been can only be remedied through the sufferings of the Saviour.

We may by making our excuses, I know him not and so on, we put up a shield for self preservation from the criticisms and subsequent condemnations that may follow our identity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 31 : 52 ] but my friends, those sins of denial must be atoned for. They must be atoned for.

And oh what bitterness the Apostle Peter experienced in his own soul when he realised his involvement in the sufferings of Christ to put matters right between his soul and God.

Have you ever looked upon your situation and realised that nothing short of the suffering Saviour with all those sufferings multiplied as it were in such a short space of time when he was apprehended until at length he died upon the cross and all those sufferings the misjudgment the misrepresentations the soldiers spitting at him and others smiting him with the palms with the palms with that reed there was Pilate himself of whom we've been speaking this morning mocking him and at length pronouncing the sentence of death by crucifixion upon him my my friends our sins are the reason of his sufferings they shall look upon him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him oh have you ever really wept in the spirit of your heart and maybe in a physical sense too under a sense of the awful consequences upon the saviour which rest absolutely upon his suffering humanity he was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him there's no sin of a child of

God ever committed but what a price had to be paid and the part of that price is invariably associated with the suffering pathway of Jesus in the garden to the cross read read the history of the sufferings of the saviour of this approaching season of the year as recorded by Matthew Mark Luke and John and realised that every one of those sufferings was necessary to the redemption and deliverance of the church from the penalty of their own transgressions under the holy law of God what hard hearts we have don't we what hard hearts we can read of the sufferings of the saviour we can read how

Pilate scourged him we can read how the morning's accusations multiplied that Pilate unjustly condemned him to be crucified and so on we can read all those things and read them without any application all this was done for you and unless it was done for you there by the only one sufficient to do it the Lord Jesus Christ then the consequence of your sins rests upon your shoulders to give account and to suffer the penalty yourself the only thing that stands between my soul and a lost eternity is the suffering saviour his name shall be called

[ 36 : 54 ] Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins when we get a view of the value of the sufferings of Christ toward us oh my friends how bitter is the thought of sinning how bitter is the thought of sinning and yet we so often sin without any thought of the essential consequence of pardon for that sin being paid by Jesus Christ for us he was wounded for our transgression and by his stripes were healed Peter went out and wept bitterly oh he he experienced such a cutting

I was going to say crucifying but a bitter experience in his own hearts that he just didn't know what to do with himself for the wretchedness and ruin of the whole affair in him proving insufficient to stand in the evil day and having not done all to stand and he went out went out and wept bitterly it was love toward Peter that brought that as the conclusion of this experience oh he loved the Lord that he would be willing to pay such a price for his salvation from all his sins not just this particular experience but all his sins because if the

Lord has paid the penalty of our sins he's paid the total sum of our salvation peace by his cross as Jesus made the church's everlasting head I hope you're able to follow my thoughts I feel the necessity of continual conviction we can get so hardened we can get so gathered up by the things of the world as to realize this awful solemnity of breaking the law of God and incurring the justice pleasure of the most high there's only one peacemaker between God and men the man

Christ Jesus and how does he make peace by suffering in our stead by dying as a malefactor shedding that precious blood the only thing that can take away all our sins well may the Lord add his blessing and giving us to know not just once in our life but again and again what a mercy to end a day and realize a little that yes sin is mixed with all we do we need the blood applied daily to walk at peace with God is it too much to ask that we should seek that blessing and seek to walk as Enoch did and Enoch walked with

God Amen