

11-12-17 – Shaken by a Failure to Prepare

Luke 22:24-34

An assistant of Thomas A. Edison once tried to console the inventor over the failure to achieve in a series of experiments what he had set out to find: "It's too bad," he said, "to do all that work without results." "Oh," said Mr. Edison, "we have lots of results. We know 700 things that won't work."

(Swidoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations and Quotes, p. 194)

Failures are a reality of life. There is a host of reasons we fail at various things in life. Today I want to look at one reason for serious disappointment in our lives and Peter's life too as we'll see, the failure to prepare properly for what life throws in our path. Many events in our lives come upon us suddenly without warning or announcement. This is why we have to be prepared ahead of time.

I spent 17 years of my life involved with the Boy Scouts with my sons and then some. I believe in the Boy Scout program, and I saw the benefits for my sons and other boys and young men. Of course we all know the Boy Scout motto: **Be prepared!**

Preparation comes in various ways...

Davy Crockett's life motto: "Be sure you're right, then go ahead."

Going ahead isn't too hard for me, but being sure I'm right first is the hard part.

Proverbs 6:6-8 – tells us about the ant who works hard to prepare for winter.

An athlete – prepares hard by sacrifice and self-discipline mentally, physically and emotionally for the big event.

Preparation pertains to living by faith as well. We try and we feel confident that we can handle things in our own strength, but without proper spiritual preparation we cannot succeed in the things of God. We try, but we fail. Only if we are properly prepared for the challenges of life will be we be able to face them in the grace of our Heavenly Father.

The night before the cross, Jesus twice warned Peter of coming danger, but Peter ignored His warnings.

This resulted in a major failure for Peter that would impact his life forever going forward.

Jesus' Caution and Concern

Luke 22:24-30 - Within minutes they were bickering over who of them would end up the greatest. But Jesus intervened: “Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It’s not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant. “Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin. Now I confer on you the royal authority my Father conferred on me so you can eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and be strengthened as you take up responsibilities among the congregations of God’s people. MSG

After Jesus explained that the leaders of His Kingdom must be servants of all, he then addresses Peter once again...

“Simon, stay on your toes. Satan has tried his best to separate all of you from me, like chaff from wheat. Simon, I’ve prayed for you in particular that you not give in or give out. When you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and give them a fresh start.” MSG

In this warning, Jesus gave Peter both an assurance and a means of facing those hard times to come...

Assurance: Jesus Himself would protect Peter in the testing that would follow, so that even though his heart and courage would fail, his faith would endure.

The means: for facing those times of struggle was found in the example of Christ Himself. He had already begun His own preparation through prayer and had prayed for Simon’s protection.

Jesus gave Peter and his disciples another warning the night He prayed at Gethsemane. While He was preparing Himself for the horrors of the crucifixion, He warned His followers to...

Pray that you do not give in to temptation. (v. 40 - MSG)

If Jesus needed time to pray to face the difficulties that would be coming in his life, didn’t His disciples need to do the same thing? Don’t we also need to do the same thing? It was so important that Jesus gave them a second warning about this when He returned and found them sleeping instead of praying...

He said, “What business do you have sleeping? Get up. Pray so you won’t give in to temptation.” (v. 46 – MSG)

What is your concept of prayer? Do you pray only when you need something? Do you pray only when disaster strikes your life or family and in desperation call out to God? Do you pray when everything is going well, and you reach out to God in thanksgiving for His blessings? Do you recognize that God is blessing you every day you are alive?

Your life can change in the moments of a bad diagnosis, or in the bad news of some tragic incident in your family. Life is transient. We don't know what will come down on us without warning. It could be a temptation that we just submit to and then regret. It could be circumstances beyond our control. We may never know ahead of time what is coming.

Peter's Courageous Stand and Fall

Paul admonished us well in 1 Cor. 10:12 when he said, ***“Therefore let him to thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”***

MSG – Don't be so naïve and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence.

We cannot face the trials of life (spiritually) in our own strength, determination, or will. Peter couldn't, and either can we. Don't kid yourself. We must rely on God, and how can we do that? Through prayer and solid study in His Word.

Can you relate to this? Jesus warned Peter that he was about to be tested by Satan. But Peter responded in his typical fashion...

Lk. 22:33 – Peter said, “Master, I'm ready for anything with you. I'd go to jail for you. I'd die for you.” (MSG)

We too, go out in our own strength and then get hammered by the enemy. Well – we left ourselves open for it. Why are you surprised? I do the same thing.

Jesus told Peter he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. Peter didn't believe this. Peter thought Jesus didn't realize his level of commitment (don't we all).

Peter showed his commitment to Jesus that night in the upper room (in denial).

Peter showed his commitment to Jesus that night in the garden when Jesus was arrested. Peter pulled his sword and cut off the ear of Malcus in his zeal (John 18:10-11). Jesus healed that man and restored his ear. Peter blew it and knew it.

Peter thought Jesus needed him, but he actually needed Jesus. Isn't it the same for us? When we think we can handle things in our own strength, doesn't Jesus show us how much we need Him? Peter was self-reliant with his sword and strength. Peter was unprepared for this situation. How did this happen to Peter? Perhaps the same way it happens to us.

At least two things contribute to our lack of preparation:

- **We underestimate the nature of the situations of life that can overwhelm us in a moment of disaster and our own capacity to betray our Lord in moments of pressure.**
- **We overestimate our own ability, savvy, and strength, so that we feel no need for the provision of God's resources we so desperately require.**

(Simon Peter – A Rock Moved by God, p. 47)

This resulted in circumstances and personal failure that would shake Peter even more than what he had already experienced.

I don't want to give Peter a bad rap here. He was there. He was zealous and drew his sword in spite of possibly being sent to prison or face death because of this act. He was there to protect Jesus no matter what. While all the other disciples fled, Peter stayed behind and followed the procession to the trial and watched all that went on with Jesus. We forget these heroic deeds. But he was acting in his own strength and was not praying for God's protection, and will.

Have you ever denied the Lord? I have – in a sense. I was on a business trip in the state of Washington. I was going back and forth for months sent from BNL to PNNL. I developed relationships with a couple of programmers there as we worked together. They knew I was a Christian and attended church if my stay extended over a weekend. One time I went with one guy and his wife to local friends to play cards and hang out together on a Saturday night. I wasn't prepared nor had I prayed about the evening – why would I? Many stories were being told by the five of us. Then the host started to tell an army story. He stopped in the beginning of his story and asked me, "Your're not one of those 'born-agains,' are you?" Without missing a beat I said, "Me? No! Don't worry about me, tell your story?" At that moment my heart sank. I don't even know what went on the rest of the evening. I just wanted to crawl under a rock and hide. It may not have been a super serious denial, but in my mind it was catastrophic. When I got back to my room, I cried and begged God's forgiveness and said I would never deny Him again.

When I was a kid, my mom used to tell us that her father never raised his hand or his voice to his kids. If they did something wrong, he would just turn and look at them, and they would know and break down crying. That's exactly how I felt in my denial. I didn't see the Lord, but I knew the story well enough...

We also know the story well enough. Peter actually denied knowing the Lord three times in the courtyard – the last time with cursing and anger – ***“Man, I don't know what you're talking about.”*** (MSG)

Luke 22:60-62 – At that very moment, the last word hardly off his lips, a rooster crowed. Just then, the Master turned and looked at Peter. Peter remember what the Master had said to him... He went out and cried and cried. (MSG)

“It was a tragic scene and so unnecessary. If only Peter had prayed. If only he had prepared. If only he had paid attention to the warnings of the Master.” (p. 48)

Peter's collapse is the same that faces all of us when we decide that we are rich, strong, and have need of nothing. Self-sufficiency sets us up – and then tears us down. We need to fully understand:

Paul's words – “I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells. (Rom. 7:18)

Jeremiah's words – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)

Jesus' words – “Without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Keep in mind the words of Paul ...

1 Cor. 10:13 – No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it. (MSG)

“Peter failed to prepare by making use of his spiritual resources, choosing rather to depend upon himself. As a result, he experienced the collapse of a lifetime. The seismic shift that shook Peter to his core was a failure that, inhuman terms, didn't have to happen – had Peter trusted in the warnings of Christ more and his own resources less.” (p. 49)

Peter struggled with failure throughout his walk Jesus. Yet after Jesus was raised from the dead, he sought out Peter and restored his dear friend to a lifetime of profitable service. Soon after, Peter would address a huge crowd on Pentecost and 3000 people came to faith in Christ. He did so much, being led by the Holy Spirit rather than himself then he ever imagined.

Yet, he still had tendencies that he could relate to others. Peter, however, would move beyond his failings and would live out his life in service for the living Christ. Years later Peter would write this: **1 Pet. 5:8-9 – *Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up, you're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. (MSG)***

This sounds like a totally different Peter to me. He learned well the lessons of his past failures. These verses look back on the old Peter and give advice for use to live by. So...

Be Prepared! It will save you from spiritual disaster.