

"You're Not One of His Disciples, are You?"

Matthew 26; John 18

As Christians we often give the apostle Peter a hard time. He gets ridiculed because he got afraid when Jesus told him to walk on water. Or we shake our head when he succumbed to Jewish peer pressure in Galatians 2 and ignored Gentile believers when he shouldn't have.

But the one he gets the most flack for is when he denied knowing Jesus the night of Jesus' arrest. Not once, not twice but 3 times. I imagine it took Peter a long time after that to not wince every morning when he heard a rooster crow.

Yet Peter was the only one who actually got to walk on water. And Peter did hang around with John at Jesus' arrest while all the others disappeared. And Peter was the first apostle to defend the gospel going to the Gentiles.

So how would we have done if we were Peter and we were asked, that night, 'You're not one of His disciples are you?' How are we doing today when Christians or God or Jesus or the gospel or the Bible or creation or male/female only identities are questioned and we weigh in with our biblical perspective and people immediately identify us as a follower of Jesus? 'You're not actually one of those people, are you? You don't actually believe that do you?' It does happen to us, as it did Peter. So, let's learn from Peter's mistakes as well as the grace of the Lord on how to handle those accusatory questions about our relationship with Jesus Christ.

At the last Passover, Jesus told the 12 that one of them would betray Him. They were all shocked of course. Once Judas leaves Jesus also adds in Matt. 26:31-35,

³¹ Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." ³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." ³³ Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." ³⁴ "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." ³⁵ But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

While Peter gets the attention, we must remember they all said they wouldn't deny Jesus, yet they all did. While none of us would think we ever would deny Jesus, we do need to understand . . .

Each One of us is Capable of Denying Jesus **(26:31-35)**

If the people who knew Him best could desert Him, we shouldn't think we are better than they. We are all capable of denying Jesus just because we have a sin nature. We must understand that and should never claim as Peter did 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.' What if you were John or Andrew or Matthew and Peter says that of you, how would you feel? Not to happy with Peter. 'Who does he think he is?' But Peter was acting in pride when he said that as if he were stronger and more committed than the others. And the Bible says,

Pride always precedes a fall (26:33, 35)

The apostle Paul warns us in 1 Cor. 10 about pride. He was talking about how some of the Israelites who saw the miraculous power of God at the exodus still chose to follow idols and committed sexual immorality and some of them died because of these things. Paul then wrote in v.11,

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come." So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Paul believed the return of Jesus was not far away ('the culmination of the ages'). Since they had seen more of God's promises come true than the Israelites in the exodus, they should not feel they are stronger or more equipped to sin less than their predecessors. Same holds true for us. Since we have been around 2000 years more than Paul and Peter and have seen even more of God's promises come true and have access to so much more information than they, should not see ourselves as better or more spiritual than they or anyone else. All of us are capable of denying Jesus (or at least being silent about identifying with Jesus) when Jesus is not popular around here.

The irony of course is Jesus told Peter he would deny Him and that he would deny Jesus 3 times before the sun even rose in the morning. Shouldn't his having the actual words of Jesus prevented him from sinning against the Lord? Don't we have the very words of Jesus in our hands? Does knowing what the Word says prevent us from sinning against the Lord? It should obviously, however, experience shows us,

Knowing the truth is not the same as believing it (26:34)

When we read the Word of God and we even memorize verses that say 'Do everything without complaining' or 'get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger' or 'love one another as I have loved you' we won't obey those verse if we don't believe they are true and beneficial. Obedience is the proof we believe God not memorization or knowledge.

"Thy Word have I hid in my heart so that I might not sin against Thee." (Ps. 119:11)

Have you ever noticed the verse says 'might not sin' and not 'will not sin'? Hiding the Word in our heart [actually knowing what it says] doesn't guarantee that we'll obey it. If you go back two verses here in Ps. 119 we read,

*⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.*

By living according to God's Word, not hiding it in his heart. Has to go from heart to head and hand. Listen to v.10 in between these 2 verses:

¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

It's a prayer that as we seek God with all our heart, hiding His Word in our heart that we might live pure lives. He memorizes it. He internalizes it. He knows what he needs to do with the Word, but he still prays that he would obey the Word.

This is a good reminder for us that just being a consistent disciple of Jesus, having our daily devotions, praying regularly, sharing the gospel, serving the Lord faithfully is still no guarantee that I might not stand up for Jesus tomorrow.

The reason why we do fail the Lord on occasion is we're trying to live for God in our own strength. In Luke's gospel Jesus added something here that the other 3 did not. He said to Peter,

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

The revised NIV has correctly pointed out the first 'you' is plural (not just for Peter). The temptation to deny Jesus was a spiritual attack. So too our temptations to deny Jesus are spiritual attacks. So, lets . . .

Be aware of these spiritual attacks (Luke 22:31-32)

Just because we don't see the enemy doesn't mean he isn't there. He's not omnipresent like God but he does get around and we must ready for these spiritual attacks and identify them as such beforehand so we are spiritually equipped to stand firm for the Lord. That's all we're asked to do; stand firm. Don't budge. Don't hesitate. Don't retaliate. Stand firm in the strength of the Lord.

How does the enemy tempt us to deny Jesus? Let's go to the actual account in John 18:15-18,

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." ¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

John and Peter gain access into the outside courtyard of the High Priest's house. John doesn't appear to be with Peter so he's alone. We learn from Peter that the temptation to deny Jesus will often come . . .

When we Feel Threatened **(John 18:15-18)**

In what ways?

When we're outnumbered (18:15-18)

Peter and John have gained access into the High Priest's courtyard, the very one who was responsible for Jesus' arrest. Standing around with Peter are the very ones who were involved in the arrest of Jesus! Servants, officials, guards. There aren't a whole lot of friendly faces around. He's way outnumbered! And so are we almost all the time. You might be the only or one of very few believers at your work, in your team, in your classroom and sometimes even within your family. The conversation turns towards making fun of God, Jesus or His people or towards something that Scripture strongly opposes. We have an opportunity to stand up for the truth but we're the only voice. What do we do?

How else are we threatened?

When we're afraid (18:26-27)

Peter is undoubtedly afraid as are all the others. But Peter has more reason than the others. Look at John 18:26-27,

²⁵ Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?"

It was Peter who took a sword to Malchus' ear, a servant of the High Priest. Where is he? The courtyard of the High priest with his other servants. Besides, what Peter did would have certainly warranted a severe beating as punishment. Thank-fully Jesus put Malchus' ear back on! But still, Peter attacked one of their friends! Yeah, I would say there was some fear here. And the 3 denials came directly. . .

When he was accused (Matt. 26:73-74)

'You're not one of His disciples, are you?' 'This fellow was with Jesus!' And then the third accusation 'Surely you are one of them for your accent gives you away.' Peter denied associating with Jesus when he was directly accused. Implied behind all those accusations is 'He should be arrested too'. Peter didn't want to suffer and so he denies Jesus. No Christian wants to suffer. Sometimes we keep silent when we should speak up. That's a form of denying Jesus.

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. (James 4:17)

There are many ways we deny associating ourselves with Jesus if we were honest because we don't want to be ridiculed or embarrassed. So how can we do a better job of identifying ourselves with Jesus? What truths from God's Word can we hide in our heart so we won't sin against the Lord and stand one with Him knowing it may cause suffering of some kind? Here's 4 things that will help us:

Jesus Prays for us Not to Deny Him and Welcomes us Back when We Repent (Luke 22:32)

If we go back to that passage in Luke where Jesus warns Peter that he will deny Him, we also hear grace and forgiveness:

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

We read in Heb. 7:25 that Jesus lives to intercede for us. When we studied John 17 back in January to Listen to how Jesus prays for us, we noted that Jesus prays for our spiritual protection. He said "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

This is an important reminder for us when we are tempted to be silent about Jesus and our faith when we shouldn't be. Jesus is praying for our spiritual protection even as we speak. Perhaps if you face these kinds of temptations regularly because of your work, school or family environment,

take courage from the fact that Jesus is praying for us to abide in Him. And even when we fail Him He is ready to receive us back when we ask forgiveness. He did that for Peter. He even told him he would turn back. In John 21, the resurrected Jesus appears on the shores of Galilee where after breakfast He asks Peter three times if he loved him. Peter painfully confesses his love for Jesus and Jesus is willing to reinstate Peter as the leader of the 11. If you read 1 Peter notice how often Peter tells us to remain faithful to Jesus even though we will suffer for it. Jesus is with us praying for us.

We can also stand firm for Jesus knowing that . . .

Jesus Promises to Give Us Spiritual Empowerment **(Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-17)**

In Luke 12 Jesus warned His disciples against the religious leaders and not to be afraid to defend Him publicly. He didn't hide suffering from them but He did tell them in 12:11,

¹¹"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say,¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

Then later on as he was talking about the end times when persecution will increase He again reassured them in ch. 21

¹²"But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.¹³ And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.¹⁷ Everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹Stand firm, and you will win life.

"Make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves" means we have to think ahead. We have to be proactively praying that we will trust the Spirit's leading should we need to defend the Lord today.

Another promise that we can cling to when ridiculed for our faith is in Matt. 5 where . . .

Jesus Promises to Bless Us **(Matt. 5:11-12)**

At the end of the beatitudes Jesus proclaimed,

¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

'Blessed' means happiness. Seems ironic that we can rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for Jesus but if you have suffered ridicule and insult for Jesus you know what He means. While painful at the moment the Spirit also brings to our hearts a contentment within knowing that we defended our Lord.

Obedience of any type always brings joy. And, somehow Jesus tallies up a future reward for us in eternity. He doesn't elaborate on that, He just says it will happen and we have to trust Him.

And one more crucial reminder when we are ridiculed or shamed because of Jesus,

It's Not About Us **(John 15:18-25)**

Just hours prior to His arrest and Peter's denials Jesus forewarned them and said,

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

That last line is a quote from Ps. 69 which is a Messianic psalm. In it is a prayer that God's people not be ashamed of His Son because of how He was mistreated by men. If we never mention Jesus people will leave us alone. But as soon as we start talking about Jesus people won't like us. So, ultimately its Jesus they have a problem with, we're just representing Him in His absence.

But He will not be absent forever. He's coming back and He'll be looking to reward us who stand firm for Him. If you're struggling with this because of your co-workers/employers, classmates/teachers, family or friends remind yourself of these truths. Get God's Word in your heart that you might not sin against Him. Jesus is praying for our spiritual protection. He promises to give us Spirit guided words to say when challenged. He's promised to be with us and reward us for persecution and remember it's Jesus they hate not us.

If you blew it this past week, ask Jesus' forgiveness. He's ready to welcome you back. Answer His question again, 'Do you still love me?' And if we answer yes then let's be ready to given an answer for our hope and to unashamedly proclaim, 'Yes, I am one of His disciples'.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net