

# Peter Learns to Stand on Grace

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010

## Intro-

- In 1849 a twenty-year-old man wrote up the following resolutions: "I do promise, my God helping: "Firstly, that I will rise every morning sufficiently early (say twenty minutes before seven o'clock) to wash, dress, and have a few minutes, not less than five, in private prayer. "Secondly, that I will, as much as possible, avoid all that babbling and idle talk in which I have lately so sinfully indulged. "Thirdly, that I will endeavor in my conduct and deportment before the world and my fellow servants especially to conduct myself as a humble, meek and zealous follower of the bleeding Lamb, and, by serious conversation and warning, endeavor to lead them to think of their immortal souls. "Fourthly, that I will not read less than four chapters in God's word every day. "Fifthly, that I will strive to live closer to God, and to seek after holiness of heart, and leave providential events with God. "Sixthly, that I will read this over every day or at least twice a week. God help me, enable me to cultivate a spirit of self-denial and to yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world. Amen and Amen." He then added this postscript: "I feel my own weakness, and without God's help I shall not keep these resolution a day. The Lord have mercy on my guilty soul." His name? William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.
- Ever made New Years' resolution? Perhaps every year? How successful have they been? This morning we are going to read about someone who made a promise, not just to himself, but to Jesus. The sad thing is, this person was unable to keep the promise, in fact the promise was broken just a few hours later. We are going to learn how this person managed to get back up and fulfil the destiny God had planned for him, despite having messed up big time. We are going to see how we can do the same.

## Read Luke 22:31-34

### Peter was previously confident in his own ability- v33 "...I am ready to go with You, both to prison and death'

- Peter was the confident one out of the disciples. He was the one who seemed the most zealous, committed, on fire for Jesus. He was the one who got out of the boat and started to walk on water towards Jesus. He was the one who refused to let Jesus wash his feet, and then when Jesus explained it was necessary wanted his whole body washed.
- He secretly thought he was more committed than the others and let this slip as Matthew's account records about the passage we have just read: 'Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.'" (Matt 26:33).
- Pride is perhaps one of the key areas which hinder God from using us. The Bible says that 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall'. (Prov 16:18). The Bible also says that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6).
- God would greatly use Peter, but not as he was- something had to die in him, and it is the same for us.

On an internet site the question was asked 'Why does the army break you down emotionally?' Someone wisely answered- 'The break you down emotionally so you can be rebuilt and learn to work together as a team. Some people's attitude is "I not going to do this or that" and "I'm not going to let so and so yell in my face and tell me what to do." This type of attitude will get you killed in a war zone. This is why bootcamp breaks you down the way they do to rebuild you so you can work together as a team. There's no "I" in "Team."

It is similar with God- it is often our strengths which hinder our being used effectively for Him- we would take the glory to ourselves. We see this in the story of Gideon- they would have thought victory was down to the size of their army, leading to pride, but God wittled them down to 300 men so that victory had to be through God, and the glory went to God.

- A similar area to pride is self-reliance. This can particularly be a problem as we get older and more worldly wise- we get used to how to react in situations. The world is

not such a scary place and we rely on time-honoured methods and habits we have developed. But what about when our world comes crashing down?

Philip Hefner who came to Brynmawr shared how he was on duty as part of the Air Force One advanced team when 911 struck. He was able to share how for him and many others the thing that got them through was the foundation of their faith, not in themselves, but in God.

- When all around us comes crashing down we need a foundation to our lives which cannot be shaken. We live in such an uncertain world- many are fearful about world events and unsettled by Mayan prophecies about 2012. People insure everything 'just in case' but they fail to get eternal insurance and assurance. Let's start 2012 by placing our trust squarely in Jesus our Rock.
- When we rely on ourselves all the time then by implication we stop relying on God. We pray less, we wait on God less, listen less to Him and rush into things and get our fingers burnt. Let's repent for any attitudes we have expressed which have resembled Peter's attitude here and let's voluntarily surrender ourselves (especially our strengths) to God.

## **Read Luke 22:54-62**

### **Peter became a broken man- v62- 'So Peter went out and wept bitterly'**

- Imagine how Peter must have come crashing down here. Maybe you know someone who has previously been a 'good person' and has messed up or been a strong believer and has fallen into sin. Maybe each of us can relate to situations in our own lives where we have felt so confident in ourselves or in our walk with God and then we have really messed things up. Perhaps we have experience of this in 2011.
- The amazing thing to realise is that Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him before he did, and His response was not condemnation, or giving up on Peter, but instead He had prayed for Peter- see v 32. God is not surprised when we sin- He is not caught unawares, and like He did for Peter, He prays for us. God's love for us is not dependant on our behaviour.
- V61- 'The Lord looked at Peter'- Jesus watched him as he sinned- I suppose Peter would have done anything to have gotten away from those piercing eyes. Like Peter, and Adam before him, our natural reaction is to want to hide from God when we have sinned. We want to keep away from godly people, or from Church or anything which reminds us of God. The truth is, however, that Jesus also sees us when we sin. In fact He has seen every sin we have ever committed. Peter had to learn to come back to Jesus in the filth of his sin in order to be washed. We need to learn that too.
- Think of how 'on-fire' for God Peter felt at this point in his life. He had gone from hero to zero. Perhaps we have been zealous for God like Peter, but also, like Peter, lost that zeal. It was under a great test that Peter messed up, and perhaps this last year has been a great test for us and we are only too aware of the times we have messed up, and as a result we have lost our zeal. The answer for us is the same as for Peter- return to Jesus.
- In Mark's gospel account it says that when Peter denied Christ he began to curse and swear. Peter must have thought he had committed the unforgiveable sin. Be real with God as to where you are at. The whole reason Jesus suffered and went to the cross was to bear our sin for us. No matter what the sin is, and no matter how bad it is, let's confess our sins to Him in the full assurance that He is able to wash us clean.

**Grace- v32 'when you have returned strengthen your brothers' (and also John 21:15-19)**

- Peter must have thought that he had thrown away his destiny when he denied Christ. When Christ was risen from the dead he was overjoyed, but at the back of his mind he must have been thinking 'is there grace for me?' He must have been very sheepish when Jesus called him aside in Galilee for a personal 'chat'. In **John 21:15-19** we hear what went on. In restoring Peter Jesus has to take him back to his sin by 3 times asking if Peter loves Him (just as Peter denied Him 3 times). We like to brush our sin under the carpet and run ahead, but God has a habit of bringing us back the the time we messed up so that it can be sorted properly. Maybe there are things that God is propmting us to put right- people to apologise to, love to be expressed.
- The wonderful thing is that each time Peter replies of his fondness of Christ (as a friend, he is now not even bold enough to express sacrificial love after having failed) Christ gives him a way of expressing his love- 'feed my sheep'. When we willingly use the gifts God has given us to truly serve His Church it shows in practical ways our love for Christ.
- Peter's destiny was to feed the Church. In fact Jesus changed his name to 'rock'. Peter had a revelation of Jesus as the Christ and then Jesus said on this rock He would build His Church. The 'rock' may have referred either to the revelation Peter had, or perhaps to some quality within Peter himself. I would suggest that the quality Peter had to learn and in fact would go on to teach the Church is that salvation is not by any quality within us, but purely by the grace of God! What qualifies us for Heaven? Grace, grace, grace!
- Luke 22:32-'When you have returned strengthen your brothers'. This was not just written for Peter or even for Peter and the disciples- it was written also for us! It is God's will that in 2012 we all should be strengthened by grace- and not just any grace, but the grace of God for each of us.
- Peter went on to become known as a 'pillar in the church', he was the first to preach the gospel at Pentecost and see 3,000 saved in one day. He went on write 2 epistles. A very early witness, Papias, says that John Mark was Peter's interpreter and his gospel (the gospel of Mark) is from Peter's preaching and recollections. Tradition has it that Peter went to Rome with the gospel and was crucified upside down- he did infact glorify God in his death, just as Jesus prophesied (in John's gospel) he would. He had learnt that to truly love Jesus first we must understand the riches of His grace to us.
- What amazing things has Jesus in store for us this year? Let's be like Peter, and step into our destiny not by trusting in ourselves, but by trusting in the riches of God's grace for us.

### **Summary**

- **Humility**
- **Confession**
- **Grace**

**Songs:** *Lord I come to You. Who is there like You?*