

Jesus Looked Upon Peter

“Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked straight at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.” (Lk. 22:54-65)

Introduction

None of us like to fail the people we love. It is easy to relate with someone when things are going well and we feel “good” about ourselves. But this can be a shallow way of relating. The Lord wants us to know His heart so deeply that we can walk through failure, crisis and trial “face to face” with Him, never breaking gaze with His heart of love. We can be totally exposed before His eyes in all our sin and lack, and still know that His eyes behold us according to the eternal mercies of His cross. His love melts away our shame and opens our hearts to receive His counsel in times of trial and failure. During these times we can become drawn into a deeper and more mature relationship with the Lord that will ultimately end in the increase of His Life inside of us.

The last place that we want to look right after we have failed someone is directly into their eyes, and yet this is exactly what happened to Peter. It was not enough that Peter miserably failed in his promise to stand for the Lord even unto prison and death. But he also denied the Lord three times in a row. Then, when Peter realized what he had done, he looked up, straight into the eyes of Jesus, the very One he just betrayed. What Peter discovered in the eyes of Jesus not only pierced his soul but revealed greater love than Peter had ever seen.

More than just experiencing this failure, Peter also needed to be confronted with the Person of the Lamb, and look into His eyes. The situation needed to move from being seen as an individual's failure to a relationship with a Person. In the same way we can become so overwhelmed with failing God that we forget the Person we are in relationship with. We forget how He feels about us and what is in His heart and mind towards us. We must learn to behold and consider the Lamb in the midst of our trials, even when shame and regret are overwhelming us.

Peter's denial of Jesus is recorded in three of the four gospels, yet only in the gospel of

Luke does it mention Jesus looking into the eyes of Peter the very moment after his third denial. It is here, in this split second of time, that we are going to stop and meditate upon the heart of Jesus in the middle of such a dark and horrible time. Before we can fully “look” into this moment it will be necessary to share a few points in preparation.

Out Of Control or In God’s Hands?

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (Acts 2:23).

Exactly what “hour” did God allow Peter’s denial to occur? It was not during the time when Jesus was teaching His disciples or performing miracles. It did not happen when excited crowds were gathering to hear Jesus and be touched by Him. It was not on the day that Peter stepped out in faith to walk on water. Peter’s “undoing” happened the very hour the Lamb of God was being roasted before him. The disciples that followed Jesus faithfully had scattered in terror, the crowds that once gathered for blessings were crying out, “crucify Him”, and Christ Himself was being brutalized by wicked men. The “beautiful song” that Peter had been hearing for the three and a half years he followed Jesus was turning into a deafening noise that brought fear and confusion, even to those who were closest to the Lord. Yet, if Peter could remember back to those former days, he would recall that Jesus always stated that this dark hour **MUST** come, for this was where the Lord was headed all along (Luke 9:22). In other words, this dark day of trial was **NECESSARY** and a very important part of God’s plan. Things were not falling apart, they were being fulfilled. These events were not “out of control” but everything was in God’s hands and happening according to His eternal counsel (Acts 2:23). We mention these things only to show that dark days of trial, and even failure, are part of God’s way of bringing us into His Life!

Preparation for the Work of the Cross

“He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (Luke 9:20-22).

Very often, Jesus would stop and share about His upcoming death in the middle of all the miraculous happenings and excitement, causing the disciples to get confused and about why the Lord would bring up something so depressing. They may have wondered that if things were going so well and people were so excited, why did the Lord have to tell them about people crucifying him and his disciples forsaking him? They may have thought, “Let’s just enjoy the good times and hope somehow these dark hours never have to come”. In the Gospel of Luke, when Peter shared his most spiritual revelation concerning Jesus being the Christ, Jesus responded by sharing about His upcoming death and suffering.

It can be so easy to feel the same way these disciples did! We are excited to be born again and with Jesus, experiencing the wonder of His teachings and the peace of His Presence. We feel we are making real spiritual progress when God reveals things about Jesus to us.

Yet when someone shares about certain aspects of Christ's Cross, it can seem like a far away thing that is painfully sad and hard to even think about in a real and practical way. I know the doctrines of the Cross are all too familiar to most of us, but don't you long to move past doctrines and truly know the work of the Cross in your deepest inward parts? Even in the midst of "walking on water", seeing deep things in the Word, and being used of God in miraculous ways, there is still a great inward lack in many of us that cries out for more of Christ to be formed in us. We must ask ourselves this question, "However much God has used me and however far He has brought me on this journey, have I come yet to the time of the altar where the Cross is more than a doctrine, but the very place I die so Christ can live?" I believe every true follower of Jesus will come to this dark hour of denial that Peter experienced, and it is for this purpose that it would greatly help us to know the heart of Jesus during that time.

"Lord, I am Ready!"

"And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:33-34).

Based on the love in our hearts for Jesus, we probably feel ready to follow the Lord into prison and to death. When we hear the preaching of the Cross, our hearts burn within us and we can't imagine anything that would keep us from following in the path of the Lamb. Yet, until Christ is really and truly formed inside of anyone, self preservation will motivate in times of great trial, pressure and persecution. Only Jesus is the Lamb, and His nature in us is our hope for truly "passing through these flames!" God knows how much we love Him and desire to be with Him in the deepest ways possible. It is for this reason that our Father deals with us through these trials in a way that will bring us into a union with Christ that will remove our selfishness and replace it with the Lamb. The following little parable will give us a picture of how that works!

The Tale of Two Cups

The principle of what was happening between Jesus and Peter is very simple. We can use a practical example to help show us this. Let us imagine that we have two cups before us. The first cup is full of the finest wine ever known and the second cup is full of poison. The first cup is very desirous to pour its contents into other cups so that it can share its fine wine. The second cup is very attracted to the savor of such fine wine, and will do almost anything it can to protect and love the vessel that contains the wine. (At this point you have probably realized that a cup full of poison is going to have a hard time blessing the other cup! Yet, let's continue on to help further demonstrate this point.) Every time the cup of poison moves to protect or bless the cup of wine, it spills out poison and causes problems. This cup gets confused and depressed, and dedicates itself to try harder next time. The cycle goes on, and failure continues. Yet this second cup is strong and will not give up. It vows and promises to help the cup of wine no matter what. Finally the first cup full of wine tells the second cup that it will ultimately fail desperately. This first cup

knows what the second cup does not know. He understands the true purpose for both of the cups, and what must happen for that purpose to be fulfilled. The cup full of wine must be poured out in order to share its valuable contents with others, and the second cup must pour out its poison so that it can be filled with that blessed wine. The ultimate destiny of the first cup was to be poured out so that it might fill others. The ultimate destiny of the second cup was to be emptied of its poison so that it might be filled with the new wine. The first cup did not come to display “wine wonders” that touched people in powerful ways, but still left them filled with poison. And the ultimate destiny of the second cup was not to be the most committed poison filled cup on the planet, but was to be a vessel full of New Wine. I am sure you have realized that we are really talking about Jesus and Peter here!

The Need To Be Emptied

The hour came, in time and space, where both Jesus and Peter needed to begin to fulfill their true and ultimate destinies. Peter’s denial was simply the cup full of poison coming to the place of pouring out its contents. Peter could no longer function by his own commitment and dedication to the Lord. Peter needed to see that the things he thought were holy in himself were really poison, and would always fail under trial. Peter was in the process of being emptied of himself. This is part of the work of the Cross in our lives. We may have let go of the shameful sins from our past, but if we are still full of self-righteousness and personal attributes that we think are helpful to Jesus, then our cup is still full of self. To see the self nature of Adam for what it is would be like discovering that our good intentions are like poison. That may sound harsh, but the scriptures back it up. The tree that poisoned Adam and Eve and brought death to all mankind was called the tree of the knowledge of GOOD and evil. If our source is still our own goodness for God, then it is poison and we are full of death. That does not mean we do not love the Lord or that the Seed of Christ is not in us, it simply tells us that we need to be emptied of our self life so that His Life has some room to form and grow inside of us.

The Need To Be Poured Out

Jesus was born to die. He came to earth and waited for the time of the Altar, for He was the Lamb of God. Jesus did not want to be the only One full of New Wine, and just die to leave us with our memories of Him and His teachings. His whole purpose in coming to earth was to give us His Life. He wanted to share the Life that was in Him with all mankind. Part of what makes Jesus the Lamb is that His nature desires to always pour out so that others can be filled. This is His way because it is Who He is on the inside. If we understand these things about Jesus, then we can more clearly see why Jesus continually spoke about His death when He was with His disciples. Jesus knew that unless He poured out His soul unto death, shed His Blood and emptied His Vessel of all its Life, then nothing would remain. Right before Jesus died He said that if a seed does not fall into the ground and die, it will always be alone and barren (John 12:24). Jesus did not want to be alone; He wanted to share His Life with Peter and all of us. He wanted us to be with Him in oneness of Life. And so, with all His heart and every fiber of His being, Jesus poured

Himself out unto the complete emptying of death. He did it for love, so that He could fill us with Himself. He knew that until He poured Himself out we could never be filled.

Jesus knew that until we were emptied of our resources and our self righteousness, He could never fill us. With all the depths of death that the Lamb of God has poured Himself out for us, that is not the end of the story. God needs vessels that are prepared to be filled!!! Peter was not prepared to be filled until He had reached the end of himself. Peter was full of himself, and he had to see that there was NO GOOD THING in him, and that He needed to be filled with the Life that was pouring out of this loving Lamb that was looking at Him.

Three Strikes And You're Out!

In baseball you get three chances before you strike out. For some of us, it takes at least three to three thousand times to prove to ourselves that we are "out". God gave Peter three chances to prove that He would not deny Him. It was not in prison or death that these chances came, simply through some common people asking if he knew the Lord. Peter's trial came and he failed shamefully. It was a pitiful sight. Peter was cursing and acting like he did not even know Jesus. The poison was spilling over the brim of his cup. Each time the question was asked to him, Peter responded worse. Ouch! It is not fun to see what we are on the inside before Christ is formed in us.

Peter was on trial at the same time as Jesus, yet there was a difference. Peter was warming himself by the flame (Luke 22:55) and Jesus was being roasted in it. Peter was opening his mouth and cursing, while the Lamb opened not His mouth except to bless His accusers. Peter was seeking to save his life as the Lamb was being crucified. We need to see the difference between our life and the nature of the Lamb. No matter how dedicated we are, only the Lamb embraces the Cross and willingly lays down His life for others. When placed on trial, only Christ will go to the slaughter willingly, for we all are like sheep that will go our own way. It may break our hearts and cause us to weep bitterly when we truly see that we will ultimately fail the Lord until Christ fills us with His nature. We cannot let that be the end of our story. Two days after this dark day Jesus rose from the dead and Peter was one of the first ones at the Tomb, prepared to know Jesus in resurrection. Peter eventually was emptied of Himself and filled with the New Wine. Just like Peter, we cannot avoid the emptying process, but we must learn to be with Jesus in it.

Being With Jesus In The Hour Of Denial

In the beginning of this article we mentioned the account in Luke where Jesus' eyes looked upon Peter right after his third denial. The heart behind those eyes is the deepest purpose of this article. Please try to imagine how you would feel at that moment if you were Peter. How would you interpret Jesus' look? What would you think He was feeling about you? Would you truly understand what His eyes were communicating? Many of us would read condemnation and disappointment in His eyes. Others may think this was Jesus' way of saying, "I told you so! You are a failure and now you are abandoning me in my darkest hour. You have completely let me down in every way." Still others of us may

perceive that His eyes were saying, “You are part of the cause of all my pain. How could you hurt me, and kick me when I am down?” Any of those interpretations would cause someone who loves Jesus to weep bitterly and want to quit. Yet, can we be satisfied until we know what Jesus was really communicating that moment? Our response should be ordered after His heart and not our individual and carnal interpretations of the moment.

Consider that Jesus knew about Peter’s failure before it ever occurred. He was not wounded by that knowledge, for He knew before Peter was even born that all mankind would utterly fail until Christ was formed in them. On the contrary, Jesus was setting him up to be emptied so that Peter would be prepared to partake of New Life on resurrection morning! Jesus had the timing perfect! It was close to the Passover, and Peter was still full of Himself. The Lamb was about to pour out His Life and He wanted Peter ready to be filled!

As Jesus was looking into the eyes of Peter He may have thought, “I am going through this dark hour of pouring out for you, and you are going through that dark hour of emptying for me. Let’s be together in the process and I will see you in three days. Jesus went through the death and burial, Peter went through the emptying of self, and they met together in resurrection oneness. The eyes of the Lord were looking into the person that He was going to fill in resurrection. The eyes of Peter were looking into the face of the only Life that could withstand trial and go into death and prison victoriously. They needed each other. Jesus needed empty vessels to pour His resurrection Life into, and Peter needed the Life that would be dedicated and committed unto death. The hope to fulfill their destinies was in each other. They were linked, even at that dark hour. They needed the other to make it through the hour of darkness so they could be together in Life. It is the same with us today. We love the Lord, and we are committed to Him. We want to give our lives for Christ and one another, but we find ourselves failing in small daily trials. We can either become ashamed of ourselves, feeling that we have failed God, and we can quit, or we can make a heart covenant with the Lamb. We can look the Lamb in the eyes and say, “I want to be the place where your life dwells. I am willing to be exposed, convicted, and undone in order to truly get rid of all my self righteousness so that your Life can find rest and expression in me.” This is love. It is an action that is in tune with the purposes of God’s heart and will keep us on the path until we, like Peter, know the Lord in true Resurrection oneness and become filled with the New Wine of His Life!

Killed By The Contrast

I believe there is an aspect working within this moment of time between Jesus and Peter that is deep reaching and vitally important. The law of contrast was being enacted in Peter as he saw the difference between his own reactions and those of the Lamb of God. This contrast was possibly the “final bullet” that “slew” Peter and brought him to the end of trusting in his own dedication and righteousness. At this point we must try to understand from within the heart of Peter how such a contrast would feel to us if we were in his position. For that reason I will ask you to consider that you are looking into the eyes of that Lamb, knowing and proving that you are so different than He is in your

nature. You are feeling with the deepest conviction you've ever known, that all the love you see in Jesus is not in your power or nature to perform. The Lamb's selfless and sacrificial love is staring you in the face, being demonstrated before your very eyes, and you have no hope to ever be that way in yourself. He is everything you love, admire and want to be, but you know that you are so contrary in your being to all He is. Before, you felt so strong and sure about your abilities to stand for Him under trial, and now you feel weak and unsure. You are losing your hope, for all your confidence has been in yourself. In your mind, this is the worst thing that could ever happen.

Peter was like a "strong lion" looking into the eyes of the spotless Lamb, pierced and wounded for him, and the contrast killed him. The strong one is slain, not with condemnation, but with his own complete inability and barrenness to bring forth that kind of love. With bitter tears, the weary warrior lays down his sword and waits for God to fill his emptied corpse with another life. Although this one feels like a total failure, he is on the path of fulfilling God's destiny, a destiny that can only be reached through Lamb life filling emptied vessels. This undone man who is weeping bitterly in weakness is not a fraud, but a son of God in the making.

When such a broken heart looks into the face of Jesus, their only hope will be to see the love that is in His eyes. To perceive His love may begin to reassure their fearful heart that God knows something they do not know. They may begin to believe that the reason the Lamb took the time to set His eyes on Peter while in so much torture speaks of the purpose for which He is enduring the pain. Such a one may begin to trust that the Lamb knows where all this will end, and that although there is no hope in us, there is hope in the Lord.

Jesus is our only hope now. God's commitment to raise us up in Him in newness of Life replaces confidence in our own flesh's ability to serve God. As the Lamb pours out His Life He is making the way for us to share in that beautiful nature. In resurrection we will no longer be on-lookers but partakers of the Divine Nature. And so we must wait in weakness and emptiness, drained of all our own resources. The only strength such a one will have left is to believe that God will quicken us with His Life. Our faith is no longer in ourselves but "our trust is in God who raises the dead" (II Corinthians 1:9).

A Riddle

"And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle"
(Judges 14:14).

"and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion"
(Judges 14:8-9).

A riddle is something that is not easily understood. When it comes to understanding how Christ's strength is matured in us, it may seem like a riddle because we are made weaker

and not stronger (II Corinthians 12:9). Sampson was strong in himself but found sweetness in something that was weak unto death. The riddle Sampson shared in Judges chapter fourteen is the very “mystery” of the process of Christ being formed in us, and it basically describes what happened to Peter. The basis of this “riddle” is that Sampson found the carcass of a lion that was filled with honey and a swarm of bees. He took the honey out from the lion’s carcass and ate it and brought it home for his family to eat. This experience was the answer to his riddle that said, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness”.

In his younger years, before the resurrection of Christ, Peter was like a young lion; strong and zealous for the Lord. Sometimes Peter’s zeal devoured people, like when he drew his sword and cut off Malchus’ ear (John 18:10). Peter had a lot of “roar” for the Lord, but not much sweetness! Yet if you look in Peter’s epistles from later in his life you will find a man full of compassion and tender care for God’s flock, willing to lay down his life for them. What made this lion so sweet? Let’s think about Sampson’s riddle. Sampson did not eat honey out of a living lion. If Sampson tried to do that he would have been devoured. It was the corpse of the lion that brought Sampson something that nourished him and his family. So it was with Peter. We just discussed the process wherein Peter was emptied of his own life. He went from a roaring lion to an emptied corpse. When Christ rose from the dead He filled Peter with the sweetness of His Life, and other people were able to partake of Christ through him. Peter figured out this riddle, but not in his brain. In the depths of his being, burned into his remembrance, Peter walked through and found his answer to this riddle, and so must we. If we want Christ to be formed in us, we must allow this riddle to work in our experience also. This will cause us to be vessels of Christ’s sweetness rather than our own strength and self righteousness.

What Is A Wineskin?

There is one last interesting point to observe before we conclude this time of sharing. In the Jewish culture around the time that Christ was crucified, the people would put their wine in wineskins. These wineskins were the bodies of goats that had been killed and disemboweled. Before these goats could hold the wine they had to be “emptied” of what was inside of them to make room for the wine. I found it interesting that the containers were not made from unblemished lambs, but rather that goats were used. I think in some ways this can help us to see the difference between the wine-holder and the wine. We were pre-destined in the heart of God to contain the Life of His Son (Colossians 1:27). Sometimes, because we love God so much, we try to please Him by offering up our own “wine” instead of the New Wine which is Christ in us. When we see how miserably our life fails God, we realize that we are more like a goat than the Lamb. At that point we may want to quit God and feel useless. But remember, the containers used for wine in Israel were made from goats that were emptied of their own “fullness”. Without Jesus formed in us, we will all manifest that selfish “goat” nature of the old creation.

Our goal is not to make a goat try to act like the Lamb, (try to make the old nature act like Jesus). Our desire is to be filled with Christ and allow Him to be the Lamb through us. His Life within will carry us where our life will never go. In other words, we will

avoid the Cross, but Christ in us will embrace it. This is what happened to Peter. Jesus told him it would be that way in these words found at the end of the gospel of John, *“When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (John 21:18).*

Conclusion

I pray these words have strengthened your heart and given you hope. After Peter went through this trial, Satan tried to sift him, but Jesus prayed for His faith (Luke 22:31). Anyone who wants Jesus to be formed in them will go through these trials. To see how deeply we need Christ in the middle of these trials can be depressing and overwhelming. Discouragement can lead to passivity rather than emptying. Satan does not want Jesus to form and increase within the Church and will strongly attack Christians who want Christ formed in them. With all these pitfalls and opposition, it is so needful to pray for each other. We know that our strength will fail until Christ becomes our strength, so we can pray that our faith will not fail. This faith will see into the eyes and heart of God that He is making a son and using all these things to bring us into a deeper and fuller knowing of Christ as our Life. We can believe in that these trials will end in resurrection oneness, the former days being forgotten as the newness of Life in Christ overtakes us! May God comfort you with His heart.***