

THE STORY OF PETER And THE STORY OF RUTH

Aunt Hattie's Bible Stories

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by

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CHAPTER SIX

PETER IS A FALSE FRIEND

THE TIME drew near for Jesus to be crucified. He and His disciples had spent the days, just before the Feast of the Passover, in Jerusalem, returning to Bethany each evening.

The hatred of the scribes and Pharisees increased with each day. They sought various means to kill Jesus. Judas had made arrangements to betray Him into their hands at the first opportunity.

The Bible says, "**Then came the day of unleavened bread and the Passover must be killed!**"

Jesus and His disciples needed a place where they could be together to hold this feast. He sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to secure a room and to make ready for the last supper the disciples would eat with Him before His death.

When evening came, Jesus and His chosen ones met together in the place prepared for them by Peter and John.

At the supper table Judas was given the place of honor on one side of the Lord and John on the other. Jesus, knowing what the next few hours would mean to Him and to those whom He loved, was greatly troubled and said, "**Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me.**"

The disciples looked at one another wondering. What could He mean!

Here we find Peter again making a way to find out. He whispered to John to ask, and Jesus whispered back. "**The one to whom I shall give the sop when I have dipped it.**"

Then He gave it to Judas.

After Judas had received it he left the table and went away to finish his plans to betray Jesus to the waiting Jews.

After he was gone Jesus told the disciples that the time for the Son of Man to be glorified was very near. He tenderly called them His children. How well He knew that in understanding they were indeed little children!

When they had finished the supper, Jesus, desiring to teach His disciples a lesson in humble service, tied a towel around His waist, put some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel.

But Peter objected saying, "Lord, do You think I'd let You wash my feet?"

Jesus answered that none of them understood at that time what it meant, but by-and-by they would know all about it.

Peter still refused to have Jesus do so humble a service for him, and Jesus said, "Peter, if you do not let Me wash your feet, you can have no share with Me."

At that Peter became greatly alarmed and said, "Lord, not my feet, but my hands and my head."

It was as though he said, "O Lord, I'd rather die than not be with You. If staying with You depends upon my being clean, then wash me."

Wasn't that just like Peter? But Jesus said: "Anyone who has just taken a bath has no need of washing anything but his feet, but he is clean all over. And you are now clean, though not all of you are." That is, "You are clean, but as you walk each day your feet are soiled with the dust of the highways and byways. You are My disciples, but you need a fresh cleansing every day from the sin of the world."

As they left the upper room to go out to the Mount of Olives, it is hard to believe but these men disputed among themselves as to which one was the greatest. What utterly selfish matters to have upon their minds when Jesus' hour of suffering was at hand!

I rather think that Peter, being the oldest of the group, was one of those who contended, for Jesus said to him:

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked permission to sift all of you as wheat: but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

In simpler words, Jesus said, "Peter, Peter, Satan is trying his very best to win you over to himself against Me, but I have prayed for you that you will not lose your faith. You will fail, but after your failure, when you have come back to fellowship with Me you must help the other disciples."

What a warning to Peter! He should have stopped to consider what Jesus meant. But instead of being humble and thoughtful, Peter became boastful and important. He said, **“Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death.”**

Dr. Alva McClain, one of our true Bible teachers, gives this boastfulness of Peter as the first of seven steps downward in the denial of his Lord. I’ll give the others also.

But first let us learn Jesus’ answer to Peter’s self-confidence. He said, **“I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before you will three times deny that you know Me.”**

Did you ever hear a big-voiced cock crow early in the morning? How loud and rasping and coarse his voice sounds! I wonder if Peter’s boasting reminded Jesus of that.

Peter, the big-hearted, loving disciple forgot to be humble. He did not know himself or he would have seen how really ignorant and weak he was. Peter should have said: “Oh Lord, I know that I am weak, but give me courage in the time of testing. Make me strong with Your power.”

Let us learn from Peter never, no not for one moment, to trust in ourselves. If we do we will surely fail and fall as Peter did.

When Jesus and the disciples reached the Garden of Gethsemane He told Peter, James and John to go in with Him while the others remained near the entrance.

Walking a short distance Jesus asked the three disciples to wait there and watch and pray while He went farther to pray.

And there, alone, Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven. The cross was only a few hours ahead and our sins were resting heavily upon Him. In agony of spirit He prayed. As a human being He longed for someone to be near Him, someone who cared.

After a while He arose and went back to Peter, James and John. He found them fast asleep! Asleep on that night of nights? Asleep when their Lord was in the agonies of death?

“Peter,” Jesus said, “could you not watch with Me one hour?” That was Peter’s second step downward. He was sleeping when he should have been watching.

Three times Jesus came back and found them asleep. The last time He said, **“Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”**

A little later, wakening them out of their sleep, Jesus said to them, **“Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”**

“At that very moment, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, and with a crowd of men with swords and clubs from the high priests, scribes, and elders.”

Then Judas, by prearranged signal, drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. As soon as Judas had done that, the crowd laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

By this time Peter was greatly excited and asked Jesus if they should smite with their swords.

This was Peter's third mistake. Jesus had been telling His disciples for months past that He must die upon the cross, but Peter failed to see the will of God in all of this.

Then Peter made his fourth error. He lost control of his temper and decided to do a little fighting in his own way with an earthly weapon. He drew his sword and in flashing it around he struck a servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. What a useless thing to do! What a foolish thing to do! Jesus told Peter to put up his sword, and then He touched the wounded servant and restored him, although this man was one who was against Him.

We must not forget the awfulness of that night. Peter and the other disciples had seen the clubs and swords of the Roman soldiers. They had looked into the faces of those who hated Jesus. Every follower of Jesus was in danger of losing his life, and Peter who had boasted of his willingness to die for his Lord was filled with terror.

The Bible says that the disciples all forsook the Lord Jesus and fled (Matthew 26:56). Although all did forsake Him, a little later Peter and John came back to see where they were taking Him.

John was acquainted with the high priest and was admitted to the room of Caiaphas. Peter went as far as the outer court following Jesus, as the Bible says, "**afar off.**" This was Peter's fifth step downward.

What is the matter, Peter? Just a few hours ago you said that you would follow your Lord to prison and to death. Here you are standing in the outer court warming your hands in company with the enemies of Jesus Christ. What a sifting!

Then as Peter sat down among them, he committed another error, the sixth step away from Christ. A maid came and said, "**This man,**" pointing to Peter, "**was also with him.**" You see it is not safe for a Christian to sit among enemies of Christ.

And Peter answered, "**I do not know him.**" Soon another came and said, "**You are one of them.**" And Peter said, "**I am not.**"

In about an hour another said, "**Of a truth this fellow was with Him; for he is a Galilean.**"

Then Peter cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus. This was the seventh and last step downward, and just at that moment the cock crowed. Also at that time the door of the judgment hall was opened and they led Jesus forth and "**the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,**" Luke tells us.

Peter remembered that Jesus had said that before the cock would crow he would deny Him three times.

What a look from Jesus that must have been!

The loving, sorrowful face of his Lord melted Peter's heart and he went out and wept bitterly, Mark reports. How bitterly only those of God's children know who have fallen into sin, lost fellowship, followed Jesus afar off and denied they ever knew Him. We have God's Word to melt us.

Jesus had prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Did it? No, never, but his courage failed, his strength failed, and he lost out for a time. Can any prayer of Jesus' ever fail?

Peter had reached the bottom of the ladder, and with humble and contrite heart he looked to Jesus and saw compassion, mercy, and forgiveness.

The difference between Judas and Peter was that Judas had never been converted, but Peter was a saved man. Days before these scenes, Peter would have been shocked if anyone had suggested he would curse and deny his Lord and Saviour. Not one of us can say what we would do under great stress and strain, unless upheld by the Mighty Power of God.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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