

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jesus Prayed for Peter

Peter was a very impetuous young man, often acting first and thinking of the consequences later. In Luke 22, Jesus explained to Peter that his impetuous nature was about to get him into trouble. Satan had demanded permission to sift the disciples "as wheat" (v. 31). Despite Peter's strong affirmation that he would be able to withstand such an assault, Jesus noted that Peter would deny Him three times that very evening. But, first He addressed the assault by Satan, and said, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Jesus knew Peter was about to stumble, but still He said, "I have prayed for thee." Why?

It Would Make a Difference

First of all, I would suggest Jesus prayed for Peter because He knew it would make a difference (see James 5:16). Some claim that all of our actions are "predestinated" by God, that we have no choice or individual response of our own. If so, why did Jesus bother to pray for Peter? If all Peter's actions were predestinated, of what value was a prayer by Jesus for Peter? Jesus knew Peter was headed for trouble, but He prayed anyway, because He knew that prayer could help! He knew Peter had some hard choices ahead, but they were choices! Luke 7:30 and Matthew 23:37 remind us we can reject God's purpose for us (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus knew prayer worked. He had prayed, and God had answered His prayers on many occasions. Now He sought the throne of God in behalf of Peter. Sometimes that may be the only way we can help someone, but let us not underestimate the importance of this avenue of help. If Jesus knew prayer could help, shouldn't we seek it more often as a way of helping others?

Because He Cared

Secondly, Jesus prayed for Peter because He cared! So often we tend to think of God as uncaring, waiting for us to make a mistake so he can "zap us into hell." My friends, it "jest ain't so!" God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), but that all people be saved. Obviously, if we reject his will, we can — and will — be lost, but it will be in spite

of and not because of God. The Bible gives us a picture of a God who does care: He sent His Son as proof of that love (John 3:16). The Bible tells us He had "compassion" (Matthew 9:36), and on one occasion that He "wept" (John 11:35). Peter had already made mistakes, and being impetuous, more lay ahead. He was about to deny Jesus on three distinct opportunities. Yet Jesus did not write him off or cast him away. He prayed for him because He loved him. He loves us as well, and is on our side, serving as our advocate (a lawyer called on to defend us — 1 John 2:1). Is it any wonder the writer of Hebrews says that we are to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (4:15-16)? We must never lose sight of the fact Jesus wants us to succeed and wants what is best for us. He prayed for the strength we could find in unity (John 17:20-21) knowing how vital that unity would be in the trying times of Christianity (as well as in reaching out to teach others). When we truly care, we will want to pray for others, knowing it is one way we can help them!

It Would Comfort Him

He also let Peter know that He was praying for him — it would be a source of comfort and strength later on. If you knew Jesus really cared that much, wouldn't it help you in your time of grief and temptation? My friend, He does and He has let us know (cf. Luke 15:3-7, John 10:10-15). Jesus let Peter know so that later in his deep grief (Matthew 26:75), when he was telling himself how badly he had failed Jesus, and asking himself where he should go next, he would remember Jesus loved him still and had offered these words of comfort earlier. Peter could know Jesus still loved him, still cared, and still wanted him. Perhaps a small matter unless you were standing in Peter's shoes at that point in time! When we let others know we care and are praying for them, it is comforting. Paul sought such prayers in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2.

It Helped Challenge Peter

It also served as the challenge now set before Peter. "When thou turn again . . ." Jesus had expressed confidence, and Peter could be reminded of that. He now had a sense of direction, a purpose: To make Jesus proud of him again! And his first task: Strengthen thy brethren! You've been there and back, now help them (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:4) deal with the same problems you wrestled with. From there we see Peter's repentance and resolve grow, as he moves on to preach on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), stand up firmly for Jesus (Acts 4:19, 5:29), become a leader in the church (Galatians 2:9), and eventually serve as an elder (1 Peter 5:1).

Obviously Peter had many of these characteristics already, which was one reason Jesus selected him as an apostle in the first place. Yet they needed to be harnessed and put to

the proper use. But the trust, comfort, love, concern, and confidence expressed as Jesus told Peter He was praying for him must have also helped him rise to the challenge before him in the days that followed. Let us never underestimate the power of prayer, but use it more often as we strive to help one another. And from this example, may we always be reminded of how much our Lord does care what befalls us.

- Donald P. Ames, via Truth Magazine, 08/19/1999

"Caused" Her To Sin

Jesus said, "Every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress . . ." (Matthew 5:32). Here it is assumed that the put away woman will enter an unlawful sexual relation, and thus bear her own guilt for the outcome. But the man, who puts her in a position where such an outcome is likely, is also responsible. He caused her to commit adultery (KJV).

In Romans 2:24 Paul tells the Jews the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" ("because of you" - ASV). This did not excuse blasphemy on the part of the Gentiles but those who caused it were likewise held accountable, and God's name was discredited by both.

Such statements should make us ware of our responsibility for those about us; our obligation to see that we are not the cause of their sin. We are not alone in this world. When we "do our thing" it is often at the expense of someone else's morals. Our filthy talk, indecent dress, or "pot" trips cannot be laughed off with a flippant "Well, it's my soul." It may also be the soul of your little sister. Frequently parents, who have neglected their children, finally come to their senses and try to straighten up their lives. But they find they cannot undo the damage to their children. What a heart-breaking thought!

Society has law and a police force to protect it from irresponsible persons whose ungodliness is destructive to life and property. Sane, mature people know they must accept some responsibility for their neighbor; for unrestrained freedom quickly becomes the worst form of slavery — we become victims of our own folly. But until men learn to accept a moral responsibility as well — to be concerned for our neighbor's spiritual wellbeing — society will continue to suffer. A police state strong enough to protect us from a completely immoral citizenry, would be self-defeating slavery.

True Christianity doesn't force or impose its morals on others; but its adherents practice their morals toward others, and are examples of good and right rather than of darkness. We must not cause others to sin.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, June, 1981

Do You Have Peace and Courage?

Jesus said to His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

People who become Christians thinking that in so doing every negative of their lives will somehow be turned to positives are not thinking realistically. To His closest disciples Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation" (John 16:33). There is no escaping the harsh storms that come our way in life, just as our Lord did not escape the horrible afflictions that Satan threw at Him, leading to the cross! Peace and tranquility are often disturbed as the spiritual Adversary of man seeks to destroy souls (1 Peter 5:8). What are we to do? And is faith not the answer?

Of course, faith is the answer! The conversation between the Lord and His disciples in John 16 was intended to bring peace to them: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace." (v.33). This was not peace that comes through the world, but through faith in the world beyond and its Lord. He told them, "in Me you may have peace." The disciple puts his heart in the Lord; he lives in another world of constant communion with heaven, where peace reigns and the distressing ordeals of this life cannot destroy. How is this possible?

Once again, the answer is in faith! But the lesson we have learned from our own experience (if not from that of these disciples in John 16) is that shallow faith will falter. As the perfect example, the Master could say, "I have overcome the world." He overcame the worst pain and suffering that the realm of darkness could throw at Him (cf. John 12:31). But most of us are not at that point yet, and we need to continue to grow and mature, being patient with others along the way.

On this occasion, the Lord's disciples were shortly going to witness all that evil would hurl at their Lord and yet not defeating Him. The resurrection, three days later, was probably what cemented these precious, encouraging words into the memory of His disciples: "take courage." Truly, He had overcome the world! And because He did, we also have good reason to trust Him and "take courage."

1 John 5:4 - For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.

- Gary Smalley

- * "The universe is but one vast symbol of the Lord God!"
 - * "The difference between a prejudice and a conviction is that you can explain a conviction without getting mad!"
 - * "Little, vicious minds abound with anger and revenge, and are incapable of feeling the satisfaction and peace of forgiving their enemies!"
 - * "There is a difference in keeping your chin up and sticking it out!"
 - * "How sweet the words of truth breathed from the lips of love!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)