

Matthew 14:22-30; Luke 22:31-32; Romans 4:17

Sunday 2/5/2023

I. Introduction to Peter's Character Study

This morning, we will continue our character study on Peter, part two. I have divided his life into three parts. Last week, we started our first character study in the book of John on the Apostle Peter. We want to look at him differently than he is portrayed in most cases in people's preaching and teaching, and the way people look at him.

As we study him, we want to look at four very important aspects of his life that deal with almost everything about his character and certainly his relationship with Christ.

1. His spiritual growth. We will get into some of this today, but next week we will really get into it.
2. Why did God put up with all that he did that made him so problematic? Issue after issue after issue. I understand what he pictures, but why did God put up with all the problem issues that he had? We have to answer that question. You have to see that in the Bible.
3. His loving, devoted, hard attitude toward the Lord, even though he really gets it out of balance sometimes and misplaces the real value of things.
4. After his denial, after everything that he went through, no matter what we do, no matter what we get into that is wrong, God always makes a way back. What you are going to see next week is one of the most incredible studies I have ever found in the Bible for me personally. I am going to show you the road back that Peter took to get back to the Lord.

When you study that next week, you will find that after the resurrection, when the Lord wants to bring all of His disciples together, here is what He says: "Go bring My disciples and Peter." Peter lost his discipleship with the Lord. Some of God's people today will lose that with the Lord, but there is always a way back. Next week, I want to show you that way, one of the most incredible things I have ever found in the Word of God.

II. Peter in the Context of the Twelve Apostles

Last week, we put Peter into an overall context. We had to do that just to see how this thing is going to flow. We looked at the twelve apostles and what a model they are for any pastor who is pastoring a church or for any leader in any church. It is the ability to see and understand what these twelve men represent as New Testament Christianity.

We have Judas, and we talked about how Judas is a picture of how in every church, not everybody who says they are saved is saved. We talked about the evidence of true repentance and true salvation.

The next thing we talked about after you got Judas out of the way was the eight men listed for us in Matthew 10. For the most part, they were good people, and what they represent in any church for the most part are good people, but they never moved past a point in their lives. We talked in

great length about that last week, and that certainly is not a criticism; it is just a fact of life that if you ever pastor a church or you deal with people on a higher plane and level, you will be able to see that.

Then you have the inner three. We know them to be Peter, James, and John. I showed you how these three guys have a greater awareness of what God is doing. God puts these three guys in places that He does not put the other eight. They see and experience greater things than the other eight could ever hope to experience, and there is a reason for that.

Basically, you are going to find that in any church today, wherever you go, you are going to have about four or five, maybe, spiritual levels of people that are saved. As a pastor, when you get that and understand it, it gives you a good balance of what you have to work with.

I gave you an incredible verse back in Proverbs 27:23, where it says and gives us the instructions:

Proverbs 27:23

*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
and look well to thy herds.*

For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

This clearly tells us that the job of us leaders of churches is to really put the emphasis on trying to help people get up into these spiritual levels. I told you last week, even though the twelve apostles break down into that format, you do not have to stay there. It is not like you are predestined to be stuck here. No, you have the ability to grow and to move through all of these things.

In ministry, you always have to know where your people are at, for the most part, as best you can, so you can better help them. As you work with people or just work in the aspect of ministry with churches, patterns develop. God does everything by patterns. People fall into patterns. Problems fall into patterns. Circumstances fall into patterns. So, it is absolutely vital to understand Proverbs 27:23, helping folks who have the desire to get to a higher spiritual level, working with them, seeing what they need.

We have talked many, many times over the years about the seven stages of spiritual growth that you find laid out throughout the Bible. It has always been a really good guide for me in dealing with people.

➤ The first three stages:

- Babies. Paul talks about babies, Peter talks about babies. Little children. John talks about that. Children.

These are the crucial areas of a young Christian's life after they get saved. The Bible tells us as babes, "desire the sincere milk of the word, so are newborn babes in the Lord." It starts with the

milk of the Word of God. You grow them up; they come to the place what I call the adoleted, the little children, and then children.

He tells us in John 15:16:

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

It is not enough just to win people to Christ. Most churches today in the neo-evangelical world put so much emphasis on salvation and getting people saved, but they really do not do anything with them after they get saved. There is no process. I am telling you that first three, the babies, the little children, and children, is absolutely crucial in a young Christian's life.

➤ The next two stages:

- Young men.Fathers.

I have told you before that this is where so many of you are at right now. This is where you grow through the baby stage, the little children, and then children. You know as well as I do in a physical family, when a young man or a young lady becomes a young man or a young lady, that is when they begin to take responsibility. He says fathers, when you become a father, you really take on responsibility for children. Here, it is a picture of God's men and women taking care of other Christians and helping them grow and the responsibility that comes with that. I see that in so many of you. Those are things that when I look at people, all my ministry, I try to help them get to the next level.

➤ The final two stages:

- Elders.Aged.

The elders, again, not necessarily dealing with somebody who is old in age, but having attained a higher level of ability with the Bible and ministry. These will be the older guys I know in this church that I rely on to help me when I have to make tough decisions or when I have circumstances that you work with. I have watched some of you guys basically adopt people, some of these kids, and just work with them and help them and do everything that you can for them.

Then Paul talks about the aged. That is people who have been saved for thirty, forty years. These last two, the Bible talks about, would fall into the mindset that they really help the pastor do what he has to do. They understand the ministry; they have been with it for many, many years. They are invaluable to any pastor to be able to help him get the job done of what he needs to do.

We put Peter into the concept of the twelve, like we did last week, and then see him part of the inner three. We see Peter who will represent for us that young Christian man or young lady who

is trying to figure it all out. It is easy to look at the dumb things that he does, as I said last week, because they do not always get it right.

III. God's Perspective on Peter's Teachability

When you look at Peter and you really do kind of an investigative study on him, and that is what we are going to do in all of our character studies—this is the first one, there are so many of them toward the end here—when you look closely at Peter, you see why God put up with all he got wrong. I want to begin to look at this today. I think it is vital.

God saw that he was teachable. That is one of the first things that I look for. If you have been in ministry for any length of time and you have worked with people, that aspect becomes clear fairly quickly when you start working with people. I have had people in my ministry, young men, that you could not teach anything to. They always thought they knew more about it than you do. They have never pastored a church. They have never done anything of any meaningfulness, but yet they always come to the place where you could not teach them anything. I get that, and that just comes with the territory. Again, that is not a criticism; it is just a fact of the ministry and as you deal with people.

But when God saw Peter, in spite of his failures, in spite of his mistakes, He saw somebody that was teachable. You give me somebody that is teachable, and I do not care what their problems are. If they are teachable and they have these things that Peter had that God saw in him, even though they make mistakes, they are honest, dumb, what I would call rookie mistakes. They are mistakes that a young man or a young lady will make just getting into Christianity, trying to figure it out, but not being able to figure it out. In time, because they are teachable, they do. What God saw in him, and God seeing that, knowing that He could build on what He saw in Peter. As a pastor or you as a leader, looking beyond the person's honest mistakes and helping them grow up through those mistakes and then developing their maturity.

Last week, I gave you five things that God saw in Peter that are very obvious when you look at this from an investigative standpoint, not just looking at the surface material, but digging a little deep in it. What God saw in Peter and what I look for in people that want to grow, these are the telltale signs. Today, I want to begin to lay those out in the life of Peter, giving you the examples in the Bible that show you these things.

Father, help us today. We love You. We thank You for all You do for us. Thank You for Your love and for Your mercy. Thank You, Lord, for the folks that are here, for the host of men and women that love You and love this Book and love this church and want to grow and want to be everything that they can be. Lord, I just thank You for the men and women here that You brought to this church that want to grow. They want to learn. I see the desires that they have, and I watch how You do in their lives exactly what You did in Peter's life. Help me today to convey that. Help them to go today and see that. Last week in part one, we looked at Peter and we put him into the context that we can better understand what he does represent. Today, I want to look at why, Lord, You put up with him, that we can better understand why You put up with us. Help us today, Father, to see this truth in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

IV. Five Key Character Qualities God Saw in Peter

The first thing I told you last week was the fact that God saw in Peter that Peter has courage. You are going to find a great example of this in the Bible. Turn back to Matthew 14:22-30. Here is the case where the Lord sends him into a boat, and then they are out there, and a great storm comes up. They see the Lord Jesus Christ walking on the water. The Bible tells us that it is in the fourth watch. Every story in the Bible, in the Gospels, is a picture of something. When He is walking on the water, a type of the deep, and it is the fourth watch which matches up to Mark 16, you are dealing with a picture of the second coming of Christ here. Besides that, He sees these guys in this boat, and He is walking on the water to them.

➤ 1.) Courage

Peter has courage. You have to give him that. When he comes up to this boat, he is the only one who has enough courage to step out of that boat and walk on the water too. The Lord comes up, and Peter says, "Hey, can I come out there with You?" And He says, "Sure, come on." He steps out of that boat and he starts walking on the water. That took courage. None of the rest of them did. James did not do it. John did not do it. The other eight did not do it. Judas is probably looking for a place to put a hole in the boat so it will sink. But none of the other ones did. He steps out of that boat because he has courage.

What a great example this is. He has courage to step out, but he does not have the faith to sustain that courage once he gets out of the boat. Because the wind becomes boisterous, the waves become high, and though he had the courage to step out, he did not have the faith to stay the course, and he started to sink. That is a picture of all of us at some time in our Christian life. You have the courage to do what God wants you to do, but you have not got the faith yet to be able to sustain you in what you want to do.

You have to see that in Peter. Why? Because that is where we all were at some point in time. It is where some of you are at right now. Once you look deep down into his life and you start to take these five things and investigate them, then you begin to see that he is a great picture. Courage without sustaining faith will always be a sign of a young Christian like Peter that will not be able to stay the course. I commend him. Nobody else did it. He says, "Lord," Peter is always the guy who wants to be the first thing with the Lord. I can appreciate that. I see a lot of myself in that when I was younger, but he always winds up making some boneheaded decisions. But I thank God for that because we can all learn from that. There is so much that you are going to learn today, not just about Peter, but about ourselves.

So, he has the courage to step out, but he does not have the faith to sustain him once he did step out. When you start to take a young man like Peter or a young lady, you develop both. Most of you have good courage today. You are not a wimp when it comes to your faith. I can appreciate that. I thank God for that. But you have to develop your faith along with your courage, and that is what Peter needed to do.

Matthew 14:22-30

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

➤ 2.) Loyalty

The second thing, and I said this last week, was his loyalty. In Luke 22:36, the Lord tells Peter that Satan is after him. Knowing that, Peter tells Him in Luke 22:33:

Luke 22:33

And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

That is a great statement, but Peter has no idea the gravity of that statement. If you have studied the book of Job, chapters 40 and 41, you know that the devil is somebody that you want to give a wide berth to. The Bible says, "Remember the battle and do no more." Peter does not understand the depth and the gravity of that kind of statement based on the fact that the devil is after him. But there is one thing that Peter has, and it is blind loyalty for Christ and what He is going to do. He is totally in.

Back in Matthew 16:13-16, Christ asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" They say, "Well, I do not know, Moses, Elijah, one of the prophets." He asked Peter, and Peter, not even thinking about it, says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That is courage. Nobody else got that.

Matthew 16:13-16

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

In John 13:9, we had the foot washing deal. Remember that we talked about it? Here again, Jesus wants to wash their feet. Peter says, "You are not washing my feet." Jesus says, "Look, Peter, if I do not wash your feet, then you have absolutely nothing to do with Me." Peter's response was, "Okay, do my feet, my head, and my whole body." He is loyal. He has loyalty even when he does not fully understand everything that is going on.

John 13:9

Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

I think the greatest character trait that a person can have will be the trait of loyalty. Loyalty will always reflect the value we have in something or someone. A pastor has to be loyal to the Word of God first, but then he has to be loyal to his people second.

I grew up in Christianity long before the neo-evangelical crowd came on the scene. Back then, they were just what we called rinky-dink Bible churches. They really did not have much power or puff about anything. The Baptist churches hauled the mail back in the 60s and 70s, began to lose that in the 80s, and now completely have turned it over to the neo-evangelical crowd, and the Baptist churches are all changing from Baptist so they can be like the neo-evangelicals.

I grew up in a time when the fellowships were the big deal. For us, it was this fellowship down in Springfield called Baptist Bible Fellowship, but they were all over the country. They had so many fellowships, which were a group of churches, maybe one hundred, two hundred, that had a fellowship together that they had an organizational structure. They elected a president, vice president, and it was a political thing. Back then, all pastors that were part of those systems cared nothing about their people. They did not teach them the Bible. They expected them to come to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and do all the things that they wanted them to do. There was nobody training anybody for anything. No discipleship one, no discipleship two, no discipleship nothing. When you came forward and got saved, somebody slapped you on the back and put you in the bus ministry the next day or some other ministry. When the people burned out and the people gave up and quit coming to church, they blamed it on the people. That was the church that I grew up in, all of them.

It was a case where we used to laugh about it, Mel and I and Jim and some of the guys. We called it musical churches. In a musical chair syndrome with little kids, you put eight chairs out and you have twelve kids. They walk around in a circle while the music plays. When the music stops, you grab a seat. Obviously, with only eight seats, you are going to lose people pretty quickly. That is what these churches were. They went around and pretended they were doing this, only waiting to get a better church because the fellowship was the stepping stone. You politically got aligned with this big preacher or this big preacher or this person over here. You looked at the churches

that were out there that you wanted to be part of, and maybe you took a small church to start with, but that was just a stepping stone. You stayed there two, three, four, five years until another opportunity opened up. It is like when the music stopped, you grabbed the next church. That went on all through Christianity. Nobody cared about the people. Nobody cared about teaching them the Bible. All they cared about was getting up the ladder of success to get a better church.

Churches to them were a stepping stone. Churches are never a stepping stone. Churches are a set of building blocks. You take the church and you build people. You do not take the church so you can get a better church and a better deal down the line. That is what they did. I worked with guys; I knew guys. They were side by side in the ministry, and their whole goal was to just, "I am just passing through." When they got a better opportunity to move up, they moved up. They went as far as they could go, and it was all connected politically in the fellowship. It was not about how much Bible you knew. It was not about how you worked with people. It was about who you knew that would get you into the political system of the fellowship. That is the way it worked. It still works that way today in some degrees.

I watched that, and I watched how the guys that I have known, they never saw church where, when they took it, that is where they were going to invest the rest of their lives. They never took a group of people and invested in them that they could never leave. They would see what God was doing, and they would stay there. They recognized that when you went and God gave you a church, that is it. Unless God providentially changes something, and He can do that, but in most cases, He does not. It is a lifelong commitment. For you, unfortunately, it is a lifelong sentence. But you do not go to get a better deal. You go because that is where God sent you. You buy the field, like Proverbs says, and then you do the plowing work. You do the sowing. You do the work, and you build something for God.

We see this in the Methodist framework, in the Lutheran framework, in all that crowd. The churches do not decide who their pastor is. The big organization will send them a pastor on a rotation basis. He does not make any decisions. He just gets up on Sunday morning or whatever he does and he preaches. The deacons and everybody runs the whole church. He is there for three or four years, and then they rotate him out. This is why these churches never grow. This is why they all stay so small, and nobody ever gets saved. You cannot build anything in four years. You cannot build anything in five years. I am not sure you can build anything in ten years. You can just lay the foundation, and at some point, it begins to build itself.

> 3.) Passion

The third thing that we talked about was his passion. At the end here, where he denies the Lord, and we are going to see more of this next week, Peter is totally frustrated. It is not about courage; we know he has courage. It was not about loyalty; he is tremendously loyal. This is part of his problem. He is frustrated. He is in a situation where he can do nothing about the situation, and that is very frustrating for him. As a young Christian, you are going to find yourself in situations that you cannot really control anymore, and your frustration level is going to get to you. That is Peter. Peter wanted to act. He wanted to do something. He has courage. He is loyal to the Lord, but now he finds himself in a situation where he cannot do a thing.

Someday you are going to find yourself in a situation where you may have the courage and you may have the loyalty, but you are in a situation where you have to wait on God to see what He is going to do. Peter could not do that. That is why, I know we talked about the sword, and it turned out to be a great picture, and God knew what He was doing, but that is why he pulled the sword out. He says, "I have got to do something." There are times when we want to do something, we cannot do anything. When emotions run high, there is a tendency to forget the Bible principles that you need to follow to not make a bad choice. I am going to say that again. When emotions run high, there is a tendency to forget the biblical principles that you need to follow so you do not make a bad choice. Passion is good as long as it is held within the boundaries of biblical principles.

I saw a great example of this last Sunday night in the football game. Years ago, one of the first messages I heard Dr. Ruckman preach was a message, and he preached and drew out on the thing as he preached. He preached a message on the game of life, and he was going on and painting it, and he was drawing it out, and he was drawing a baseball stadium, and he was putting people in the stands, and then he drew the guy at bat, which is us, the Christian, and then he put the devil on the pitching mound. He said, "I want to preach tonight about the game of life." He said, "You folks, you watch your sports, you watch all the different sports things that you watch." He says, "There is nothing wrong with that, but you know, that is all a picture of the real game of life that you all are in."

"Did you ever notice in baseball, football, whatever, you have an opponent, you have opposition against you?" Then he says, "And you know what, you have absolute rules you have to follow, like the Word of God. And then you have a referee, whether you like it or not, enforces the rules." He says, "It does not matter if you think the ref is right or wrong. In the world of sports, in the game, he is the final authority. And you know what? In the game of life of Christianity, the Book is the final authority. It does not matter what I think about it, it does not matter if I like it."

He said, "You guys who like to fish," he said, "Do you know why Jesus said, 'I am going to make you fishers of men?' Because every time you go fishing, it is a picture of your soul winning. Because when you go out to soul win, you always get the different kind of lure to get people. When you go fishing, if you are fishing for crappie, bass, whatever, catfish, whatever the fish may be, you will always use different lures to get different fish. When you go soul winning, you are going to deal with a businessman, a bum, you are going to deal with a college professor, you are going to deal with a student, you are going to deal with a child; you have to use different techniques, lures. That is why Jesus said, 'I will make you fishers of men.'"

I watched the game last week, and I could care nothing about this. I know many who are glad that Jesus is going to Super Bowl; I am just glad with what we are having to eat. It does not go any farther than that. That is all I care about. I already got it planned out. I know they do not always do these sandwiches the way I like them, so I get two or three of them and mix it the way I want them, and I will be good to go. Fortunately, somebody out there will love their pastor enough to bring an apple pie. God bless you. You will get rewards in heaven for that. I want you to know that.

I was watching that thing, kind of off and on. I fell asleep. It was kind of hard to fall asleep with her screaming upstairs and stomping on the floor, and the dogs are behind the couch with their tail between their legs. They think they did something wrong, and she is telling them, "Tackle that guy! Get, wrap your arms around his legs!" I am down there. Might as well turn the game on because there is no sleep or rest today.

When I watch television anymore, I always have a notepad by my side because there are so many things that you are going to see that really illustrate our Christian life and the things that we are up against in life. I used to just watch it, and then I would say, "Well, that is good." Not anymore. I sit right there with my notepad on a clipboard, and I write everything down that I see that I need to know for me, or I can use someplace else.

I watched that at the end of the game. The score is tied. Mahomes runs, but the ball gets out of bounds wherever it got out. If it would have been right there, they probably would have lost the game. They were not going to make a field goal from that distance. Maybe he would. I doubt it. They are going to go into overtime, and you do not want to go into overtime with Cincinnati. Right then, Cincinnati had a good chance they could have won the game. But what happened? A guy made an emotional decision, and he is a professional. He really is. He is a good ball player. But Mahomes was clearly out of bounds, and a guy shoved him.

I heard guys all week long at the gym and those places, "Well, he did not shove him that hard. He did not do it." Hey, when the final authority says, "You shoved him," you shoved him. Those are the same kind of guys who like to pick and choose out of the Bible. I do not care whether he shoved him, maybe he was out of bounds or not. Guys say, "Well, the refs did that because they helped the Chiefs." It was all, hey, let me tell you something. Maybe they did, maybe they did not. But I will tell you this, you know how I know that he probably was shoved out of bounds? Because the coach of the other team never said a word about it. You did not see him. It is the difference between a trained eye and a blind eye. The other coach, he did not go up and say, "Oh, you know what he did?" He went, "Hey, how about the player that did it?" You know what they always do? They do this to the ref, like, "What?" He is bawling his eyes out on the sidelines.

I do not care. That was an emotional game. My point is this: they probably would have won that game, probably. But it was one bad emotional decision that cost them the game. It only takes one bad emotional decision in your life, my life, and you lose the game of life. When you look at football and you look at all those sports things, you have the opposition, you have the absolute rules, you have the refs, you have the penalties if you do not play the game right. When you put that into your life and my life as a game of life, I will tell you something else you have: there is a time limit on the game. For you and me in a real game of life, you better get some points on the board before the clock runs out. For you and for me in a game of life, looking at football as a picture of that thing, I will tell you this: do not get to be fifty, sixty, seventy years old and the score is forty to nothing against you. All it takes is one bad emotional decision. Passion to win the game will cost you sometimes the game because making most of the decisions outside the principles of the Word of God will get you every time.

➤ 4.) Zeal

The fourth thing we talked about was his zeal. In Christianity, certainly zeal is important, but zeal is what gets most young Christians in trouble. You young guys and young gals, you come and talk to me all the time, and we talk about things that you are doing in your life and God is doing with you. But in Christianity, and I tell you this all the time, timing is everything. Doing the right thing the right way and at the right time. The Bible calls zeal in its biblical definition in Romans 10:2, "a zeal but not according to knowledge."

Romans 10:2

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

That is a good word in that definitive verse on zeal, the word knowledge. In your life and my life, the zeal that we have for the Lord, which is good, which you need, but it has to be contained within three areas of the word knowledge. Starting with that, Bible knowledge comes from Proverbs 2:1-4, seven areas that will give you knowledge. We have talked about that before.

Proverbs 2:1-4

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart unto understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Zeal has to be contained with three areas of knowledge that you and I have as a Christian.

5. The knowledge of what God is doing in any given situation. You have to grow to the place in your life where you see that, that you understand what God is doing, even when you do not see everything that you need to see. God operates in patterns, as I told you. When I see God operating in a pattern, then I just look for that pattern. I may not have to understand all that is happening, but God shows me what He is doing.
6. Knowledge of the person or the situation that you are dealing with. That goes back to Proverbs 27:23, "knowing the state of your flocks." Not only do I have knowledge of what God is trying to do here, because I can see His pattern, I know the person that is in the middle of this, so I can better try to help him.
7. Knowledge of how to use what you already know to get something done the right way or the way it needs to be done. This comes with spiritual growth. Peter did not have this, but I will show you how he is going to get to it.

➤ 5.) Honesty

The fifth thing is the fact that he is honest. There is no pretense to Peter. He is a man with courage, he is a man with passion, he is a man with zeal. When it comes to his relationship with God, he is as honest as they come. There is no deceit, there is no guile, there is no deception. When you see Peter, what you see is what you get. He does not try to hide anything. His dumb mistakes are honest ones. The ones that new Christians will make, and that is older Christians

too, but he is trying to navigate through all of this, just like God's people are trying to navigate through their new Christian life. When you see that, you can deal with that.

It is like you parents who have kids. You use their mistakes as a teaching tool while they are young. You do not whip them every time they do something. In fact, there is criteria for whipping. Many Christians today, families, women, they do not follow corporal punishment. There are a few of them like that. In fact, that is why we have them more downstairs in the church. They will give their kids timeouts. I am okay with a timeout. When I was in school, the teacher, if you kept talking, she would put a circle on this thing, and you would put your nose in it. You would stay there for the whole class. If you do that today, you go to jail for sixty years.

There were also times in my school when the principal used to paddle. How many remember those days? A few of you. We always knew when it was coming. Somebody would do something wrong, and it was the level of getting a paddle. My principal, he had a paddle that was about that thick, but then somebody got the idea that if you drilled holes in the paddle, it gave you a little supersonic burst of energy. We knew what was happening. Did you hear all the intercom? "Well, Jimmy John, come down to the office." We knew what Jimmy John had done, and it was not make good sandwiches. In the old schools, sounds carried. Not in the new schools, but in the old schools, the office, you would hear everybody would just be dead quiet. It is like being in prison, and you know a guy is going to the electric chair, and you are sitting there waiting for the lights to go dim. You listen there, and all of a sudden, it sounded like a .22 rifle went off in that place. One, two, three, sometimes four or five. You cannot do that today.

I was in a math class one time, and this guy was a teacher. He was an ex-Marine. Hank Miller. Tough guy in the Marines. He walked out of the room one time. When the teacher gets out of the room, it is fun time. We had this girl who was a tough cookie, and she was not going to be the football queen of the deal. She is always instigating stuff. So she stands up. She is about halfway back. She stands up. Everybody is going crazy. She takes a ruler and she throws a penny up in the air, and she whacks that penny, and it hits the blackboard and cracked the blackboard. Just as she did that, Hank comes in. He grabbed her by the hair, ripped her out of that seat, dragged her out of the office, out of the classroom, all the way down to the office by her hair, her kicking and screaming. Try that today. The kid will probably shoot you before you get a chance to do that.

But I am telling you, you take a child when they are two and three and four, and you use their mistakes to correct them instead of just always beating them up or verbally abusing them or just ignoring it. If you deal with it when they are two, three, or four biblically, you will not have to when they are fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. Peter is honest.

God saw these qualities in his life. When you have a man or a woman who have these five character qualities as a pastor or you are a leader or you are working with somebody and you see this, no matter what they do that is off base, you know you do not ever focus on the negative things. There are times when you have to talk to them about it. I get that. But you do not just, you use it as a teaching tool, but you do not focus there. Rather, you build on the five key character qualities that you see.

I have a sign in my office that somebody gave me that says a John Wayne saying, and it says, "You cannot fix stupid." I understand that. That sign is right. I cannot fix stupid, but God can. God can take every stupid thing that we do and turn it around if we are teachable and we have these areas in our life that He sees. He will bypass the stupid things. We will have to learn through them, but it will never stop us. You need to understand that God had a plan for Peter, but Peter has some growing up to do before that can happen.

V. An Investigative Study of Peter's Discipleship

Let us look a little deeper now, and let us take our trained eye and let us look at a little investigative thing here and see what we can come up with. There is a series on television that I just cannot get enough of. It is called Great Air Disasters. It ran ten seasons, and there are probably nine episodes on each season, maybe ten. It is about plane crashes that happened on a megaton scale where five, six, seven hundred people were killed in it. They start out the story by telling you the basics, showing you the plane, how it crashed, and then how investigators got to come up with the way it crashed. They have to make a report. They have it. You have family that wants answers. The government wants answers. Everybody wants answers.

When I sat there and watched that, I got my notebook. I thought to myself, "This is unbelievable." This investigative way that they put this plane wreck together is unbelievable. It is the same way in ministry; you deal with disasters in families, disasters in marriages, disasters in people's lives. It was unbelievable. Sometimes there were plane crashes where there was nothing left. There was one plane crash that had three hundred people on it. They could not find anything of them. They vaporized. The plane was cinders. It was ashes. Those guys look at that and then they simply say, "We have got to reconstruct to find out how this happened." I am watching that and I am saying, "Oh man, there are many disasters that I have to deal with that there is nothing but fragments left. It is all incinerated."

I watch these guys. Do you know what they do? Same thing I do. Same thing some of you do. They take all of the pieces and they put them in a warehouse on a grid. I am thinking to myself, "I get that." They want to identify the pieces that are left. They began to put them out there. They want to see where they fell from the proximity of the plane crash that was there. They want to see if they can find the wing tip here and a wing tip there and a nose tip or something from the tail. They can tell that the whole plane went in at one time and did not break up in the air. It is incredible what they do. I am writing so fast, getting this thing down, looking at this thing.

Then he says, "Okay, the plane came in at this angle or that angle or whatever it came down. That means that there was something mechanically wrong with one of three things. So let us find these three things and investigate them." So they start looking for the pieces that they cannot find. The guy says, "Hey, look at this. The flaps were down on this particular when they should have been up." "Oh, really? Mark that." They go through piece by piece by piece, identifying each piece of the tragedy. I am saying to myself, "That is exactly what I do." We will sit down with a husband and wife or a family or somebody, and we will lay the pieces out on a grid. We will look at each piece to see how it happened and then how we are going to come to a conclusion.

Then I am sitting there, and the guy says, "Well, we can get all of the pieces that we want, and we can get all the pieces together. But we have got to have the black box because the black box will have the recording of what they were saying as the plane crashed. The whole flight will be on that. It will give us all of the inside internal gauges that were in there. We are going to find that. No matter what we find until we get the black box, we are guessing mostly until we find out through the black box what is really happening or what is really going on." I am sitting there like this. When he is dealing with a tragedy and a plane crash, he needs a black box. When I am dealing with a tragedy in people's lives, I need the Black Book. It is incredible stuff.

Let us do an investigative study of Peter, can we? Let us get all the pieces, lay them out on a grid. Let us look at things in this crash of him and his relationship with the Lord that the average investigator would never see. Go deep. Let us use what I have learned from Great Air Disasters. By the way, I am never flying again, but that is beside the point.

First, let me say this, and you need to get this down and remember this and use this. Paul and Peter will be the two key men in the New Testament. I am going to give you that right now. You are going to see this as we develop it, but that is where we need to start. Peter and Paul will be the two key men in the New Testament that God is going to use. God's plan for them is very clear. Once you get past Peter's maturity issues, you will see that Peter in time will be God's man to the nation of Israel.

I have to say this. It took Peter three and a half years to get God ready, get him ready for doing what he was going to do. I am going to show you how that happened next week. But do not ever think about this: it took Paul twelve or thirteen years to get ready. You come into the book of Acts, Bible Institute. We saw that gap of twelve years where, "Where is he at?" You see, God prepares His people differently. Where He had a hands-on with Peter, He could do it differently. But when He is back to heaven and He has to deal with Paul, God took both of them, and they had to go through a process of learning because Peter and Paul are going to be key guys in the Bible in the New Testament. Paul will be to the Gentiles. Peter will be to the nation of Israel. You have to get that in your brain right now before we go any farther.

Look at this. As an investigator, this should catch somebody's eye. Look at Luke 22:31-32. We are going to put the evidence together here now in this crash of Peter's discipleship.

Luke 22:31-32

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Let me ask you a question. You realize that Peter is the only one of the twelve that the devil goes after? He did not go after John. He did not go after James. He did not go after the other eight in any way, shape, or form. Why is, see, that is a piece of the air disaster here. That should catch an investigator's eye. "Hmm. Why is Peter the only apostle that the devil went after?" Why is that?

The answer to that is because God had a plan for Peter, and Peter's plan by God is connected with the nation of Israel.

The devil hates the nation of Israel, and he will do whatever he can do to stop Israel from getting back the land that once was his. Once he sees that Peter is going to be the one who handles that, he comes after Peter. Everybody who preached on Peter never saw that. They never saw the importance of Peter. They never saw God seeing what He has seen in him, but the devil thought.

Let me just say this. You young guys and gals that are just getting into it all, and you have courage, you have all those things that Peter had, and you are maybe in discipleship one, maybe you are in discipleship two. Be careful. I will tell you right now, God has a plan for you, and just like Peter, the devil wants to shut it down in your life.

In spite of his immaturity, notice what God did with him that He did not do with the other eight. You have got to see this. We are laying this out on the grid now. We are going to get into the black box here in a little bit. We are going to widen our investigation. You need to see this because it is exactly what God will do with you. Notice, in spite of his stupidity, in spite of the dumb things that he did, in spite of all the things that he could not get, the Lord kept putting him into situations that really allowed him to see the power of God. Peter is nowhere on the same plane as John. He is not on the same plane as James spiritually. But God has a plan for him that is going to connect with the nation of Israel.

So, you know what He does? He keeps putting Peter in the most advanced spiritual areas like the Mount of Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Mount of Olives, all those things that He did. Why? Because He wanted Peter to have an understanding of the power of God that God could use to grow Peter through. He did not do that with the other eight, but He did it with Peter.

The New Testament principle for this is Philippians 4:13:

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

In all your new Bibles, they take away that one word, and by doing that, they destroy the greatest biblical doctrine on Christ, deterring you that you could ever have. In all the new Bibles, it says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," giving you the indication that God is just going to come down and strengthen you. Every new Bible on the market, including the New King James Bible, will take out the "which" and put in the "who." So, when you read it in one of the devil's Bibles, it says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." In your King James Bible, the God-honored text of the Textus Receptus says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Do you know how God strengthens you? He does not come down and strengthen you. He strengthens you by the "which," by the things you do for Him. We got the idea that you get saved and just put in your dues, and some night while you are sleeping, God rolls back the roof, and the angel dust comes down, and you will wake up spiritually. No, no, no, no, no. He says, "I can do

all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The "which" is the things that strengthen you. God strengthens you by the things you do. So, you know what He kept doing with Peter? Putting things in his life. Putting things in his life that he could see the power of God and the magic that God, not the other, he did not see. Because He has a plan for Peter. So, He keeps putting things in Peter's life so Peter can, in fact, when he wrote First and Second Peter, we will get into that today maybe, when he wrote First and Second Peter, years later, you know what he said? He recalls back when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he heard the voice.

If you are ever going to get to the place where God uses you, you have got to do something for Him. Because it is not just God coming down like a lot of people want to believe. It is not the Lord just coming down and dumping spiritual wisdom on you like a lot of people would like for it to happen. He says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The things you do for God is what God takes and strengthens you. That is why He kept putting Peter in these situations. He wanted to strengthen him. He knew he was not ready. He knew he was not a John. He knew he was not a James, but He saw in him, and He needed him for His people, the nation of Israel. So, He just keeps putting him into situations that are conducive to his growth. That is what God does with you. What this church does with you gives you opportunities to do the "which." Gives you opportunity because you are not just going to get saved and sit in church and then just say, "Hey, I am going to be spiritual." No, he said the verse, the verse, the verse. "I can do all things," can you? "I can do all things," anything God wants you to do. "I can do all things through Christ which." Not Christ. The things strengthen you. Like the only time I played poker and lost two hundred dollars when I was in the army, and the guy, I did not know what I was doing, and the guy said, "I called the guy," and he says, "laid his cards down," and I laid mine down. I had nothing. He laid his down and had two pairs of jacks or two pairs of whatever, and his famous words were, "Read 'em and weep." Philippians 4:19, read it and weep. The things you do.

The next thing I see, Matthew 16:14-18.

Matthew 16:14-18

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

➤ Men and Women Whose Names God Changed:

- In Genesis 17, God changed Abram's name to Abraham. He changed Sarai to Sarah. In Genesis 32, He changed Jacob to Israel. In Acts 13:9, He changed Paul's name.

For you and for me, let me talk to you about the day God changes your name, if He ever does. I know the Bible says, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." But we do not always understand that the day we get saved, do we? I did not. But through a process of growth, the "which," that you can do all things through Christ. When you figure it out and you make your final absolute choice, like Peter did, spiritually speaking, God changes your name. It is significant of now a life where you totally understand. You are totally committed, you are totally bought into it, you are totally in it, and now you are never going back.

Abraham had the most problematic life you could ever see any man want. But when God changed his name, that is when He gave him the blessing of the promised seed, and his life was different. Jacob was a schemer up to that point in Genesis 32, when God had to deal with him, but when He dealt with him, his life was never the same, because God changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Then he had the twelve boys who had the twelve tribes, and here we are today. God now in Matthew 16:18 changes his name for what is about to happen in his life that God is going to use him in time.

Let us look at it. Matthew 16:19. He changes his name based on the fact that he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." God sees into him. He is putting him in all the right places so he can grow by the "which."

Matthew 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

From this point on, we now see and understand, even though Peter probably does not understand it, and we will look at that as we get a little closer today and maybe next week. But now he is going to be God's man to the nation of Israel; he is going to have the keys.

Just as a side note, this is the passage that you will find that the Roman Catholic Church will use to prove that Peter was the first pope. He says there, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The Catholic Church interprets that Peter is the rock, and not the church that God is going to build His church on Peter. That is not what you got there, context. He says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock." What is the rock? It is the rock that Peter just confessed was Christ, was the Son of God. That is the rock. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." It was not Peter. Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect."

1 Corinthians 3:11

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 32:4

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

But you see, the Catholic Church sees the importance of Peter. They see God is going to use him in some connection with the kingdom of heaven, even though they do not have a clue how it really works. But the Roman Catholic Church teaches that they have taken over the place of Israel, and now the kingdom of heaven has went to them, so they need to make Peter the first pope to pull it off legitimately. See how it works? It is not hard. The keys to the kingdom of heaven, biblically, Peter will use these the rest of his life as God's apostle to the Jews once you get to that point where he really gets to where God can use him.

God has a plan for Peter, and God has a plan for you, and spiritual growth is the only way you are going to get there. In Acts 1:1-7, here is another one. Boy, that was a disaster investigator. Wow. Never saw that before. Look at that piece. Here it comes. Peter will use these keys to give Israel their last chance before the tribulation to get the kingdom of heaven. You remember in Acts 1:6, the apostles asked, "Will thou restore the kingdom at this time to Israel?"

Acts 1:6

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou restore again the kingdom to Israel at this time?

He does not answer them. He did not give him a direct answer because Peter now in Acts 1 through Acts 6 is going to be preaching five messages. Five. Because he has got the keys. In these five messages in Acts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6:

➤ Peter's Five Messages to Israel:

- Acts 1:15 to Acts 2:12 Acts 2:14 to Acts 3:11 Acts 3:12 up to Acts 4:18 Acts 4:19 up to Acts 5:28 Acts 5:29 up to Acts 5:42

These five messages that Peter preached, he preaches them not to the Gentiles, not to the church, not to... he preaches them to the nation of Israel that they have killed the Messiah, and they are going to have to get it back by dealing with what they have done.

You cannot miss this one. We are going to put this on the grid. Let us check the airlines. Let us check the retracting of the landing gear. Let us check. Whoa. Never saw that before. Peter preached his five messages. But there is a sixth message found in Acts 7. Stephen preaches the last message to Israel. The last message that Israel ever hears until the tribulation. You know what happens? At the end of his message, they kill Stephen.

There are some great lessons in the death of Stephen. I could take a couple hours and lay that one out. There are some great lessons for you and me, but let us get this first. I am an investigator. I am looking at the grid. I found me the black box, and I have heard the cockpit conversations, and I have seen the hydraulic fluid. I have seen the ailerons and what position they were in. I saw the landing gear, what position it was in. Then all of a sudden, I found this. Why did God not have Peter preach the last message to the Jews? I think that is a viable question, and the fact that he preached the first five. Why did God pull him out of the lineup and send Stephen in? Why did He substitute Stephen in place of Peter?

You know what the answer is? It is real brutal, but you want the answer? Because He knew the preacher was going to get killed, and He needs Peter to finish the message because he has got the keys. So He sent Stephen in so Peter would not get killed. Somebody is probably sitting out there saying, "Wow, that is just terrible." I thought you would think that. I guarantee you, put it in a true biblical point, Stephen thought he got the best deal. Sometimes God will sacrifice somebody to get what He needs done to be done. You say, "Well, I just, I think that is the whole thing about Stephen." Oh yeah, you know what? You are okay if He sacrificed His Son for you. You know why you have a tough time with that? Because you never in a thousand years let God sacrifice you for anything. In the military, they call this a rearguard action. Somebody stays behind to get sacrificed so what can get done can get done. We look at that, and people say, "Well, I just cannot believe God would do that." Well, He did it for you with His Son. You are okay with that, are you not? My, my, my. Trained eye or blind eye? You get to choose.

God had a plan for Peter, much like He has a plan for Paul. That is why even Paul came close to being killed many, many times. Even one time, they debate whether he really died or not, but God had a plan for him too. God has patience and long suffering and compassion on Peter. Why? Because He saw in him what He needed to accomplish the ministry to the nation of Israel.

We see that Peter makes his way down to Jerusalem in time. This is long now after Acts 1 through 7, and he begins to work with the Jews. We see later on, we studied this in Institute, we see that when Paul comes down to start to do the Gentile churches in Acts 11 to Acts 20. We see in Acts 15 that Paul goes down to Jerusalem. What does he go down to Jerusalem for? He wants to meet with Peter. Paul never had met Peter. Paul was not one of the twelve, but he knows that Peter is doing a work in Jerusalem with the Jews, and Paul was doing a work with the Gentiles. So, you know what he does? Read it in Acts 15, read in Galatians 2. Paul goes down to Jerusalem. They have a meeting down there, and Paul explains to Peter what he is doing with the Gentiles. Peter explains to Paul what he is doing with the Jews. The Bible says they are in agreement now. All the apostles understand, and off they go. Peter uses those keys all through his life to the nation of Israel.

I get it and I understand at this particular point in time the kingdom is not coming. So Peter's primary job is to tell them about Christ dying, which is what they talk about in Galatians 2, and then let them know that their Messiah is coming back, and he has got the keys.

Finally, around 60 AD, Peter will write two books. He writes these books after Paul's books in your Bible are laid out, written to the church. These were the books that after the church age that Paul writes to the churches will lead us back into the tribulation period, ending at the book of Revelation if you know the order of your books in your Bible. We have Hebrews, we have James, that is James, he is one of the inner three. Then we have First and Second Peter. I am going to take those two books next week, and I am going to show you Peter's process of maturity through just two verses.

He writes First Peter. The theme of First Peter is suffering. In particular, he writes about Christ being our suffering lamb. The nation of Israel needed that.

➤ The breakdown of First Peter:

- Chapters 1 and 2: It says to the Jews that holiness and suffering go together, and you cannot have holiness without suffering. Chapters 3 and 4: He tells the nation of Israel (and I directly, this is to the Jew, indirectly can be to you and me, I get it, but he is writing to the Jew) how to live for God while suffering. Chapter 5: He tells them how to endure through the suffering.

All getting that Jew ready for the tribulation period. When you look at that, just what he preached in his five sermons in Acts 1 through 6, but now it is aimed at the tribulation.

Then he wrote Second Peter. Two things have to happen in the book of Acts. We have laid this out in Institute.

➤ Two things that must happen in Acts:

- The Gentiles have to understand what God is now doing with the nation of Israel after Acts 7. The piece of the investigative study of that wreckage will be found in Romans 9 and Romans 11. The Jews need to understand about the Gentile church. That is why he writes First and Second Peter.

In Second Peter, you have some key things here. The context of Second Peter will be to the nation of Israel, the second coming of Christ.

➤ Key things in Second Peter:

- Second Peter 1:18-19: You have the day star arising in their heart, second coming. Second Peter 2:15: You have the way of Balaam. That is in the Old Testament. When you get into the book of Revelation, you will find that is all tribulation, and you have the way of Balaam, the error of Balaam, and the doctrine of Balaam. Chapter 3: You find a day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ, the promises of the new heavens and the new earth to Israel. Verse 8: That great verse that says, "one day where the Lord is a thousand years and a thousand years is one day." It is all key to the second coming.

This is what Peter is using the keys to Israel for. This was the plan that God had for Peter that started the day God called him. God saw in him his immaturity. But God saw those five areas that God could build on in spite of his failures. God kept putting him into situations that allowed him to see God's power in a greater way. Through the "which," God got Peter to the place that he could do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. He held him accountable to his mistakes. We will get into that next week. God building in his life through the things that he did because God knew in time he would be all God needed him to be to the nation of Israel.

When God sees in you what He sees in Peter, in spite of our failures, God will work with us through it. When a pastor or you work with people, you see their potential. You too work to develop them, bringing them along, walking through the tough times with them, protecting them from the devil that wants to sift them as wheat. In most cases, you just take what they already know and help develop it.

A great example of this very principle is found back in the Old Testament in the life of Abraham. Paul makes a reference to Abraham in his writings in the book of Romans, and in Romans 4. He

makes a reference that gives us insight into why God called Abraham in spite of all the issues that he had, and I have told you many, many times Abraham had some issues before God changed his name. God sees the same five things in his life that He saw in Peter's life. Then once Abraham gets to a point, God changes his name too.

Here it is, this is you, this can be you. I want it to be you. I pray that it is you, but you have to make the choice. He said in Romans 4:17, talking about Abraham:

Romans 4:17

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Abraham did not get the promised seed until he was ninety-nine years old. What a great illustration that is for you and for me. The whole world saw in Abraham and Sarah an old couple that needed to be in John Knox village. God saw the nation of Israel. People look at you, and they see your problems, they see your this, you see your that. When I look at you, I see the potential that you can have for God, where the whole world just looks at you and thinks you are an idiot and you are a jerk and you are not worth the time. I see what God sees because God calls those things that be not right now as though they were. Thank God for that. Thank God He did not look at me and say, "Put him in the dumpster." That is what He does the best. He sees in us what we cannot see in ourselves. As you grow, you will see it in yourself, and then God will teach you to see it in others. Because everybody in this room, God looks at you not in your negativity of problems. He looks at your potential of being everything that He wants you to be because He has got a plan for you, just like He had for Peter and Paul. But it is up to us to decide what level we are going to get to. It is up to us to decide where we are really going to go and what we are really going to do.

God, and this is the character trait of God that we all need to develop in our lives. He looks at somebody, and I know that there are problems, situations where it is impossible. I get that. Paul said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Sometimes it is not. But that is such a small minority of things. Certainly not anybody here today. God sees you the way He wants you to be. You need to grow so you can see the same things in yourself. That is what the church does. There it is. God seeing in us what nobody else sees. God seeing in Peter. God seeing in Abraham. God looking at Abraham, ninety-nine years old. I can imagine, I think Sarah was eighty-seven or eighty-six. Could you imagine when he found out she is with child? They went down to Babies "R" Us to buy some stuff, how the people must have looked at them crazy. They said, "Oh, Abraham and Sarah. You are buying some stuff for some friends of yours for a baby shower." And he said, "No, Sarah. She is with child." "And where you really?" You see, the whole world saw something impossible. God never sees the impossible. God sees what you can be. But it is up to you.

God sees what nobody else sees, and then He builds on what He sees that is good in us, that in time He can make us a vessel fit for the master's use. The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 2:20-21:

2 Timothy 2:20-21

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

In a great house, there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. That house is the household of God. I laid out in John 2 for you. In a great house, there is a vessel of honor and a vessel of dishonor. You get to choose which vessel you are. But you will never blame God because it did not turn out the way that it should have turned out. You know why? Because everybody in this room, as everybody in Christianity, has the same opportunity because God sees them with all the things that He wants to develop in their life.

Next week, Section 3: The Way Back. How Peter finally got back to the Lord. One of the most incredible, heart-wrenching things that I ever saw in the Bible because I saw me. It is unbelievable what God did to bring him back. Why? Because God saw in him what He wanted him to do. That is why God wants to bring some of you back. It is the "which." Not the one flying on the broom in Halloween. The "which." The things you do.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.