

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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A Miserable Failure

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Introduction

We all recognize the fact that we make mistakes. After all, we are human. However, when we speak of mistakes we usually mean rather minor mistakes—little things that usually have little effect. Big mistakes are another matter. We sometimes feel that you can't really recover from a really big mistake. But, if the truth be known, most of us have made some really big mistakes in our life and walk with the Lord. These big mistakes are failures to us and we don't like to talk about them. We don't even want anyone to know about them. Some of us are still struggling with overcoming the aftereffects of our failure while others simply want to forget about it and continue as if nothing has happened. We have somehow gotten the idea that if we are truly spiritual, if we are truly walking with the Lord, then failure is not an option. [*By the way, I absolutely detest the business and movie idiom, "failure is not an option". It is such a ridiculous statement.*] In this Present Truth Teaching Letter we will look at one of the Apostles of Jesus and his miserable failure as a disciple. Maybe it will give us hope if we understand that failure is **always** an option. It is how we recover from it that is important.

The Impetuous Peter

Peter was a fisherman and he and his brother were fishing when Jesus called them to follow Him. [*Matt. 4:18*] Peter continued with Jesus both seeing and participating in the miracles that Jesus performed. He walked on water to go to Jesus when He came walking on the water to the disciples boat. He received revelation from the Father about who Jesus is. [*Matt. 16:15-17*] Peter was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was with Him in the Garden when the soldiers came to take Jesus. He sought to defend Jesus by drawing a sword and cutting off a soldier's ear. [*John 18:10-12*]

Peter also had some issues. He didn't always know his own heart. Jesus even rebuked him once as if he were the devil. This occurred when Jesus was telling His disciples about the Father's purpose for Him in Jerusalem, which included the many things that He must suffer in order to complete the Father's plan.

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (Matthew 16:21 NASB)

Peter couldn't stand hearing this type of talk. He didn't want these things to happen to His Lord.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You." (Matthew 16:22 NASB)

Of course, what Peter was saying was contrary to what Jesus had just said and it was contrary to the plan and purpose of the Father. Jesus turned to Peter and rebuked him for putting man's interests ahead of God's interests.

But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (Matthew 16:23 NASB)

Just like Peter we tend to want to hear what pleases us instead of the things that are important to God's plans.

Later, when Jesus spoke of the disciples falling away from Him, Peter spoke what he believed to be true, again speaking from his own interests rather than God's.

But Peter said to Him, "*Even* though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter *said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too. (Matthew 26:33-35 NASB)

I think that Peter truly believed what he had spoken. There was no way that he could deny Jesus. However, we don't understand our own heart; it will deceive us.

"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NASB)

Peter's Miserable Failure

When Peter was put into the unexpected circumstances of Jesus' betrayal and beating, his heart deceived Him and he fulfilled Jesus' words. When the soldiers took Jesus, Peter followed them

Having arrested Him, they led Him *away* and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." But he denied *it*, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." A little later, another saw him and said, "You are *one* of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" After about an hour had passed, another man *began* to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:54-62 NASB)

Imagine how Peter felt at this point. He had just done what he said he would never do—deny the Lord Jesus. When Jesus looked at him, Peter remembered what the Lord had said he would do and he couldn't stand it. He left weeping. I am sure that Peter felt like a total failure at that point. He had denied the Lord, not once but three times. I am sure that Peter felt as if there were no way to recover from that huge mistake.

However, the Lord is in the redeeming business and He desired to redeem Peter. Notice that when the ladies had come to the tomb and found it empty, the angel told them that He was risen and that they were to go and tell the disciples **AND** Peter.

And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. "But go, tell His disciples and Peter. 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" (Mark 16:6-7 NASB)

Why was Peter singled out by name by the angel? Because, Peter needed to know that although he had denied the Lord, the Lord had not denied him.

Peter in his discouragement decided that he was going fishing. Remember, he was a fisherman before the Lord called him. Now, he was returning again to what he used to do before he followed the Lord.

Simon Peter *said to them, "I am going fishing." They *said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. (John 21:3 NASB)

Later, when the risen Lord came to the disciples while they were fishing, He told them to cast the net on the other side and they caught a net full of fish. On shore Jesus prepared a fire to cook the fish that the disciples brought ashore.

Then, we have Jesus asking Peter if he loved Him. While much could be said about this, I want to point out that Jesus asked the question of Peter three times. Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now, he affirmed his love three times. With this affirmation, the miserable failure that Peter thought he was became a shepherd to tend the Lord's sheep.

We need to remember the power of the Lord to restore. It doesn't matter how much of a miserable failure we think we are, it is what the Lord thinks that matters. If we continue to love the Lord and recognize His grace and compassion for us, He is able to make us capable of tending His sheep. It doesn't matter how big of a mistake we make (what could be bigger than denying the Lord?), He is able to restore us.

We all make mistakes. We sometimes make big mistakes and when we do we feel like we are miserable failures to the Lord. However, Jesus still calls us by our name. He doesn't forget us or write us off as failures. In our weakness He shows forth His strength. He makes a success of our failures if we repent and call upon His name. No mistake is too big; no failure is so devastating that it is unredeemable by the Lord. Remember—He still calls you by name.

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