



“And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – September 27, 2020

To Know Christ...

Are you ever thankful for the Lord’s patience as you seek to follow His lead? We can often identify with the Apostle Peter during his shared experiences with Jesus on earth. Peter is outspoken, puffed up, and defeated often in the gospel accounts. Who does that sound like? ... US! To have Jesus, the one who examines hearts, exclaim to you, “**Get Behind Me, Satan!**” (Matthew 16:23) because you have set your mind on man’s interests and not God’s interests. After having Jesus tell him a few verses earlier (v16-17) that Peter was “**Blessed**” because he recognized Jesus is “The Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Can you picture Jesus patting you on the back with praise, then quickly later to give you a truthful and accurate reprimand? Sounds like us sometimes. We say things that are spot on, only to later be unaffected by that same truth in our own lives and actions.

On another occasion Jesus tells Simon Peter, “**Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**” (Luke 22:31-32) Peter was full of himself; exclaiming that he would both go to prison and death with Jesus. Jesus was right; Peter was arrogant and self-deceived. (Sound like Us?) When you think of wheat going through a sieve, the sieve separates the “good fine-sized” flour from the impurities and “course-sized” flour. The impurities must be removed. The hard clumps must be ground into a finer texture to be useful. Does that sound like Us? We have useless impurities that simply must be removed, as well as some “clumps” that must be ground down to be useful. Have you ever wondered what Jesus prayed for on earth? Here’s one answer ... He prayed for Peter’s faith not to fail as Satan targeted Peter’s imperfections. (Interesting, huh?) Then for Peter’s faith to motivate him to strengthen his brothers after turning back to Jesus.

Peter goes on to deny even *knowing* Jesus three times in a matter of hours, and then the rooster crows. Jesus turned and looked (do not think glared; “looked” is the word) at Peter. No words were needed, no gestures, no demeaning looks. Peter remembered Jesus’ words that he

had rejected. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:61-62) It is that same sobbing bitter feeling we have, when we are caught in sin because we did not heed the words of Jesus. Sound like Us? Our arrogance has been appropriately squashed by the sobering reality. Our impurities are instantly realized. All we can wonder is ... will Jesus ever forgive me? Why *should* he forgive me?

Remember what Jesus' prayer was concerning Peter: "**that your faith may not fail.**" Jesus knew Peter's weaknesses. He tried to tell Peter, but he would not listen. (Jesus knew that as well.) Jesus often tries to tell us; we do not listen well either. Will your faith move you to seek devotion again to the Lord? Peter has another fishing story after His resurrection. Afterward Jesus asks Peter three times, "**Do you love Me?**" That is a tough question to honestly answer after we have just rebelled against His commands with our sin. Where is faith in the forgiving Jesus? Do you understand the Savior who wants to forgive sinners? **THAT IS WHAT HE CAME TO DO!** Don't let arrogance and pride keep us from appealing to the Savior who commands forgiveness from His disciples, for He leads us by example. Then Jesus gives a concluding command to Peter, "**You Follow Me!**" (John 21:22) In other words, stop looking at everybody else, "**You Follow Me!**" After every failure, after He grants forgiveness to the repentant and broken hearted, He commands the same of the forgiven ... "**You Follow Me!**" Are you ever thankful for the Lord's patience as you seek to follow His lead? Can you follow His patience with others too? Who does that sound like? ...HIM! May our faith not fail, that was the aim in Jesus' prayer.

- Carey Terry