

A Disciple Stumbles

John 13:36-38

36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

38 Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times. NKJV

Close on the heels of Judas going out to betray Jesus, now Jesus tells them that they will all forsake Him. What a tragic scene, the Son of Man forsaken by those in whom He had invested 3 ½ years of ministry.

But not only with they forsake Him, Peter will deny Him before the morning light. Peter the one who was closest to Him, it would seem. Peter, the one of the inner three.

Now no one is more shocked to hear this than Peter who denies that it could be possible. And yet it will happen just as Jesus says in the account that we are so familiar with.

But John will record the rest of the story in John 21 where Jesus sort of reinstates Peter in his leadership position.

What does God want us to see in this passage this morning, for John wrote for more than history's sake I am sure.

- I. No one is above stumbling.
 - A. If Peter can fall than who is safe?
 1. Was there anyone one closer, more dedicated, more in tune with God through Jesus, His Son.
 - a. He had been the one to get the credit in Matt 16:17 "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
 - b. He had walked on water with the Lord.
 - c. He had seen the transfigured Christ.
 - d. He had a sword and would use it when the time came to defend Jesus.
 - B. We need to be aware that Satan desires to sift us as much and he did those first disciples.
 1. The sifting Jesus referred to was a natural process to produce the most valuable grain.

2. The useless chaff would be blown away in the wind and only the good grain would remain.
3. But Satan never means it for our good. His desire is to shake up our peaceful lives and bring doubts and fears to us.
4. It was not just Peter that was sifted that night, for each of the disciples made a conscious decision which way to run when Jesus was taken away.
5. At least Peter made the decision to go in the same direction as Jesus, toward Jerusalem, even though he followed from afar.

II. What were the elements that led to Peter's fall?

A. Self confidence.

1. Peter was not sure about the rest of the apostles, but he was certainly sure about himself, but then he seem always to be so.
2. He no doubt had taken seriously the remark that Thomas had made a few weeks before, when they had come from beyond the Jordan to raise Lazarus from the dead.
 - a. Thomas had said, Let us go that we may die with Him, when Jesus had announced that He was returning to Jerusalem.
 - b. We do not know where Peter had picked up the sword, for he was no soldier.
 - c. But he must have taken those words seriously for when Judas arrived with the guards, who did bear swords, Peter was the first to strike, but Jesus reprimanded Him.

III. Peter did not yet understand the plan of God.

A. Jesus had been telling them for about 18 months that He was going to Jerusalem to be betrayed and put to death, but that He would rise the third day.

1. It always amazes me that the religious leaders could remember more than the disciples.
2. For when Jesus was in the tomb they remembered exactly what Jesus had said and ordered a guard for the tomb.
3. But the disciples never got it. It did not fit in their preconceived plans and the just blocked it out.
4. There are so many Christians today that fall into the same problem and eventually sin, because they have God's will all planned out on the basis of what some prophet has prophesied when God has other plans entirely.
5. Peters fall was because he had shut himself up to his own interpretation of what God would and would not do or allow.

- IV. Peter had not yet submitted his plans to God's plans.
 - A. Even Jesus prayed, never the less not my will but thy will be done.
 - 1. Was that a prayer that lacked faith.
 - 2. Didn't Jesus know that all that he had to do was name it and claim it.
 - 3. How could God's will for Jesus be that He would die on a cross.
 - 4. Peter just could not see it at all.
 - 5. But it was because he was not looking for it.
 - B. All our plans, prayers, and desires must be subject to the will of God.
 - 1. If we press beyond the will of God as Peter did with the sword then we will be in trouble.
 - 2. Yes some, like Peter, fight against the will of God in order to have their will done.
- V. Peter followed afar off.
 - A. You see he was close enough to not feel guilty, but too far away to be influenced by Jesus.
 - B. So is the case of Christianity in America, luke-warm, like those in Laodicea.
 - C. They want their children baptized, and of course they want a Christian funeral, but they can handle everything in between.
- VI. Peter became too comfortable warming himself at the enemies fire.
 - A. Once you get away from Jesus, the world begins to have a pull on you.
- VII. Peter who showed extraordinary courage before the guards who came to arrest Jesus had come to shake in fear before a servant girl.
 - A. O consistency thou are a gem.
 - B. How so many who began so well ended so badly.

We must always be on our guard.

We must always be in submission to the Holy Spirit.

We must humbly embrace God's will.