

# *Finishing Well*

Lesson #4 From Sifted To Transformed Jan. 27, 2021

The trials and adversities of life are never pleasant. They will squeeze you under pressure. Whatever is rooted inside your soul, will be released in those times.

Paul said he had learned the secret to be content in any and every situation. He learned the secrets of dependence, of grace, of hope and of His presence. Have you learned the secret? Just as metal is placed in a furnace and heated to a hot white state so the dross can be removed, God allows us to enter the furnace of affliction so that He might refine us, purify our lives, and mold us into His image.

## Jesus's Disciples While He Lived Among Them

1. They possessed the consciousness of their discipleship and their authority from Christ.
2. They were converted, forgiven, had fellowship with Christ, had the gift of teaching and worked miracles BEFORE Pentecost.

## Lessons from the Disciples' Actions Revealing the Place & Power of Self

There may be the enthusiastic and active practice of Christianity while humility is still lacking.

- They had a fervent attachment to Jesus.
- They had forsaken all to follow Him.
- The Father had revealed to them that He was the Christ of God.
- They believed in Him; they loved Him; they obeyed His commandments.
- When others fell away, they remained faithful to Him.
- They were ready to die with Him.

Truth: Deeper than ALL this devotion was the existence of an inner power of sin and selfishness. This power MUST be dealt with BEFORE they could be witnesses of the power of Jesus to save.

Example: Ministers, professors, evangelists, Christian workers, missionaries, teachers

They may have many gifts of the Spirit that are manifested in their lives.

They may be a channel of blessing to many people.

BUT, if their true person could be tested and their true character revealed, it can be evident that the "grace of humility" as an abiding characteristic in their life, is rarely seen.

Oswald Chambers: Many today are spending and being spent in work for Jesus Christ, but they do not walk with Him. Spend plenty of time WITH God. Let other things go, but don't neglect Him. We are not here to do work FOR God. We are here to be workers with Him, those through whom He can do His work.

Eliot: Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve. Nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself.

It is a virtue that ONLY COMES in power when the fullness of the Holy Spirit makes me a partaker of the fullness of Jesus Christ who lives in me.

F.B. Meyer: The only hope of a decreasing self is an increasing Christ.

John 3:30 He must increase but I must decrease.

Reality: There is an inner power of sin and selfishness that must be dealt with in me.

External teaching and personal effort are POWERLESS to conquer pride or create the meek and lowly heart in me.

- ❖ The disciples had been in the training school of Jesus for 3 years.
- ❖ The main lesson from Jesus: Matt. 11:28-29 - Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- ❖ Countless times, Jesus had conveyed to the disciples, the Pharisees and the multitudes: Humility is the only path to the glory of God.  
Matt. 6:9-13 Prayer of the humble: Empty me God, so You get all the glory in my life.
- ❖ He came as the Lamb of God in His divine humility.
- ❖ He unfolded to them the inmost secret of His life:  
Matt. 20:28 - "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."  
Luke 22:27 - "I am among you as one who serves."
- ❖ He had washed their feet and told them to follow His example.
- ❖ All was to little avail. What are they doing at the Last Supper?  
Still - contention as to who should be the greatest!

#### Truths Regarding External Teaching & Personal Effort

- ❖ These men who had Jesus with them but not yet in them lacked stability, discernment and power.
- ❖ They had TRIED to learn His lessons; they firmly resolved NOT TO GRIEVE Him again. All in vain!

No outward instruction, not even from Christ himself. No argument, however convincing.

No sense of the beauty of humility, however deep...

No personal resolve or effort, however sincere and earnest *CAN CAST OUT PRIDE!*

#### Peter: A Disciple Of Great Contrasts.

Enthusiastic, outgoing, gregarious, transparent, strong-willed, impulsive, and, at times, brash.

Peter desperately wanted to do well and to do right in Jesus' eyes, yet he failed continually in his own strength and ability.

Still, the Lord who chose him continued to mold him into exactly who He intended Peter to be.

John 13:36-38 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

<sup>38</sup> Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Luke 22:61-62 And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

- Peter was not in a fit state to follow Christ, because he had not been brought to an end of himself.
- Before Christ could fill Peter with the Holy Spirit, Peter had to weep bitterly and be humbled.
- This was a Huge Turning Point in Peter's life.

### Peter: A Picture Of A Devoted Disciple Of Christ

- Absolute Surrender

Matt. 19:27a Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee;

- Ready Obedience

Luke 5:4-5 - He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Peter the fishermen knew after all night there were no fish there. <sup>5</sup> But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; Nevertheless, At Your Word I will let down the net." [He submitted to the word of Jesus.]

- Man of Great Faith

When he saw Christ walking on the water, he said: Matt. 14:28 Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee." At the voice of Christ, he stepped out of the boat and walked on the water.

- Man of Spiritual Insight

Christ asked the disciples: "Whom say ye that I am?"

- Matt. 16:15-17 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. <sup>17</sup> 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.

Consider: Most would say: He was an "advanced Christian." Yet there was much lacking in Peter.

### Yet Peter Lived The Life Of Self

- Peter Sought His Own Honor.

In Matt. 18:1-5 and Mark 9:33-37, the disciples [Peter included] are questioning who is the greatest among them.

- Peter left his boats and nets, but not his old self, nature.

Matt. 16:21 *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

Matt. 16:22-23 When Jesus spoke of His sufferings, Peter dared to say, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." Christ said: "Get thee behind me Satan: for thou knowest not the things that be of God, but those that are of men."

- Peter in his self-will; trusting his own wisdom and forbidding Christ to go and die.

Matt. 16:24 Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

- Prerequisite for following Jesus Christ. Self must be utterly denied.
- Denying self is the root of true discipleship.
- Note: Matt. 16:24 Jesus said to Peter: Deny himself. Matt. 26:34 - Thou shalt Deny Me.
- There is no other choice. We must deny self or deny Christ.
- Self in the power of sin OR Christ in the power of God. One will rule you.

Luke 22:31-34 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has desired [*to demand, to ask for oneself*] for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. <sup>33</sup> And he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison and to death." <sup>34</sup> And He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before thou shalt deny three times that you know Me."

Most of us would not be able to fathom the great conflict that rages in the spirit realm. Satan's desire to sift the saints is from ancient times when he desired to sift Job. Satan, with every weapon from hell, is determined to destroy Christ's disciples like Peter.

### I. A DETERMINED FOE "*Satan Is Determined To Destroy Your Life!*"

A. Request to "sift" or have "all" the disciples to test the reality of their faith.

- Agricultural term: refers to the savage process of separating the husk of the wheat from the grain. The wheat was crushed under foot; then it was agitated or thrown into the air. The chaff, or husk, was blown away by the wind. Good grain was left behind.
- Sifted: To be shaken and separated like grain by sudden trials in life.
- It is to be shocked through the agitation of events and situations that jolt our very foundations. Sifting is an all-out onslaught meant to overthrow our faith.

Satan wanted to tear the heart of God by proving that there was no reality to the faith of the disciples. Satan believed that he could crush and sift them so that nothing would be left but a defeated heart.

B. The moment we enter into a life of obedience and dependence on Christ, determined never to go back — we set off every alarm in hell. Why? We have become a threat to the kingdom of darkness. He has painted a target on the back of every believer whose heart is fixed firmly on following Christ. Afflictions, floods and trials will come as fiery tests of faith.

Satan always goes after the tree with the most potential to bear fruit. He wants to prove that we are phonies; show God and the world that there is nothing to our professions of faith.

I Pet. 5:8: He wants to ruin your testimony, destroy your home, wreck your influence, take away everything of value in your life and leave you with nothing but a devastated shell of what you had! He will use whatever tactic he deems necessary to get you to fall.

Gen. 3:1-6 He will never stop until you fall, or you die!

Peter's self-confident response: Mark 14:29; Luke 22:33

- *And he said unto him, Lord, I Am Ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*
- I am sure Peter meant it, but he had not come to the end of himself.
- When Peter denied Christ, he denied 3 times that he had any connection with Him.
- Although Peter had a firm intention to stand with Jesus in the hour of trial, he found himself totally without power to do it.

## II. A DEFINITE FOOLISHNESS "*Never Say Never!*"

Luke 22:33 Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

A. Peter, in typical Peter style, boasts of his love and devotion to the Lord. He vows to go to prison or even to death to prove his allegiance to Jesus. Peter forgot an important principle of life, "Never Say Never!"

- I Cor. 10:12 "*I would never do that!*" Be careful!

Consider: Only when you are in his sifter can you know exactly what you will do! It is a dangerous thing to rely upon yourself and your ability to withstand temptation and testing.

B. *You are weakest in the area of your greatest strength!* That may sound like a contradiction or a paradox, but it is true nonetheless! When you come to think you have an area of your life absolutely conquered and that sin cannot possibly occur there, you will tend to let your guard down. When that happens you can be sure that the enemy will target you for sifting!

[Prov. 28:26; Prov. 16:18; Jer. 17:9]

Truth: God desires to drive out the spiritual pride in our hearts.

- What are we to do with this FLESH that is under the Power of Sin?

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Rom. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Rom. 7:25-8:1 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

## III. A DILIGENT FRIEND "*The Saints Have A Powerful Ally In Their Corner!*"

Luke 21:32a But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not...

Consider: Jesus did not lecture Peter. I have prayed for you. Jesus set the example for us.

Pray for others to come through the "sifting" with their faith intact.

Times of testing and failure will come in your life, but in the midst of them, take courage in the fact that you have Someone pleading your case, taking your part, praying for you in Heaven.

Robert M. McCheyne If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me.

"Satan desires you, but I desire you all the more."

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. [See also Rom. 8:34; I John 2:1]

Heb. 13:5 He will never leave us or forsake us, regardless of the task or trial.

- Jesus did not pray that Peter would escape this intense shaking.
- He prayed that his faith would not fail in the process.

God allowed the enemy to shake everything in Peter that needed to be shaken.

- Purge him of spiritual pride.
- Purge him of a tendency that 3 years of teaching from the Lord Himself had not touched. Miracles, signs and wonders had not touched it. Not even Christ's warning.

Five purposes for sifting or shaking:

1. To bring the object closer to its foundation
2. To remove what is dead
3. To harvest what is ripe
4. To awaken it
5. To unify or mix together so it can no longer be separated

"As a result of this tremendous shaking, all of Simon Peter's self-confidence would be gone. All that would remain was God's sure foundation. He would be awakened to his true condition, the dead would be removed and the ripe fruit harvested, bringing him closer to his true foundation. He would no longer function independently but would be interdependent upon the Lord." [John Bevere, "The Bait of Satan"]

### Peter's Repentance

Peter denied his Lord 3 times and then the Lord looked at him

That look of Jesus broke Peter's heart.

The terrible sin he had committed

The terrible failure that had come

The depth into which he had fallen suddenly opened up before him

"Peter went out and wept bitterly."

As a result of this tremendous shaking, all of Peter's self-confidence would be gone.

Consider: Can you imagine what his repentance must have been? During the following hours of that night and the next day, Peter saw Christ crucified and buried.

"My Lord is gone; my hope is gone; and I denied my Lord."

This was the turning point and a change in Peter.

On Resurrection Sunday, Firstfruits, the risen Christ was seen by Peter.

During the 40 days before His Ascension, Christ was seen by Peter several times.

At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asked Peter, 3 times, "Do you love me?"

Peter replied: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

#### IV. A DISTINGUISHED FUTURE *"No Failure Should Ever Be Considered Final!"*

Luke 22: 32b and when thou art converted, ...when you have repented or come back to Me. Jesus makes it clear that Peter will fall, but his fall will not be the final statement of his life. He was going to be restored and used of the Lord in a great way.

Point to Ponder: All Christ's teaching to His disciples, and all their vain efforts, were the necessary preparation for Him to enter them in divine power.

##### Peter Transformed

I Pet. 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

- The very spirit of Christ breathing and speaking within Peter.

I Pet. 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

- Peter found joy and pleasure in having self denied, crucified and given up to death.

When Peter is called before the Council, he boldly proclaims:

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

I Pet. 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

I Pet. 5:5 Be subject one to another and be clothed with humility.

Peter's former self-exaltation has been transformed.

#### V. Divine Plan To Overcome

A. How are we to overcome this onslaught? Jesus set the example.

When he was confronted with the devil's schemes, he overcame them with God's Word:

Matt. 4:4 *"It is written."* Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

B. Christ ended it with these hopeful words:

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." [*Luke 22:32*]

Where will believers in the last days find strength in the troubled times we're facing?

It will come from "converted" saints who have been sifted and have come through with a tested faith. These will say with authority, "I do not trust in myself. I don't rely on my own strength. Jesus has everything we need to see us through."

I want to be able to look any weeping, broken brother or sister in the eye and say with hope and confidence: "When this sifting is over, when you come back, and your faith is stronger, God is going to use you. He has a purpose in this. He has overseen this all along."

1. You may be a very earnest, godly, devoted believer in whom the power of the flesh is still very strong.

Before Peter denied Christ, he had cast out devils and healed the sick. Yet, the flesh had power in him.

- Because there is so much of our "self-life" in us, the power of God cannot work in us as mightily as He desires to work.
- The power of our "self-life" can hinder God from performing a mighty work in us.

Jesus Christ commands us: Deny self.

- Every failing in Peter's life and in ours is a result of not obeying this command.

Murray: This is the testimony of many who have been Christians for years. God taught them to find out about themselves. They became utterly ashamed and broken before God. Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow and pain and agony that came to them, until at last they found there was deliverance. They, like Peter, go out and weep bitterly.

2. It is the work of our Lord Jesus to disclose the power of self.

How did Peter - the carnal, self-willed Peter become the man of Pentecost and the writer of epistles?

- Jesus Christ placed him in charge, watched over him, taught him and blessed him.
- The warnings of Jesus had been part of the training.
- That look of love: In His suffering, Christ did not forget Peter, but turned and looked upon him. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Are you willing to be broken and humbled?

There is no one but Jesus Christ who can rid you of the self-life and the power of your flesh. The Christ who led Peter to Pentecost is waiting to take charge of every heart who is willing to surrender to Him.