

Jesus looks at Peter

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[0 : 00] In Luke chapter 22 we read verses 61 and 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 crowed thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Peter's denial of Jesus is one of those well-worn passages of the New Testament so familiar to us all if we know our Bibles.

And there is almost no limit to what the incident can teach us about the frailty of human nature and the weakness of our own good intentions.

In many ways the temporary failure of such a towering apostle as Peter and his subsequent restoration gives us all a kind of hope if I can put it that way.

[0 : 58] You know not that we delight in anyone's fall. But the fact that somebody as powerful and as great amongst the apostles as Peter could fall and still be restored gives us all a measure of hope I think.

I have no doubt that such lessons were fully intended by the Holy Ghost. Given that the Holy Ghost inspired all four gospel writers to include this episode in their narrative.

Which as I'm sure you're aware is a very rare distinction in the New Testament. It is very very rare for something to be recorded in all four gospel narratives.

But this is Peter's denial and the cock crowing and Peter's response. But what I want us to focus on this morning is something which appears only in Luke's account.

And it is this. But let us remind ourselves of the context.

[2 : 20] We see first of all verses 31 and 32 if you've got your Bible open in front of you that Jesus already knows that Peter will be a special target of Satan's malice.

So that the devil hopes that if he can bring down Peter the undoubted leader of the apostles then all the other apostles will crumble. And indeed he must have thought that he had achieved his purpose when as Mark tells us chapter 14 and verse 50.

They all forsook him and fled. It's not a verse we can easily forget is it? They all forsook him and fled. But Jesus says in these verses 31 and 32 that he has prayed for Peter that his faith will not fail. Now we probably do not grasp the import of that prayer by Jesus. Satan can only ever act by permission. He is not equal to God.

That's something we need to get our heads around as well. We don't have two equal forces of good and evil or dark and light and God and the devil just slugging it out for mastery. They are not equal in any way, shape or form.

[3 : 34] Satan is not God's equal. He can only ever act by permission. He has nothing like the power of God. He is essentially on a leash.

Jesus prays for Peter. Okay, to whom does he pray? He prays to his Father in heaven. In other words, one person of the Trinity makes a request of another.

God the Son asks God the Father for a particular outcome. There are no circumstances in which a direct request of the Son can or would ever be denied by the Father.

Let me just say that again. There are no circumstances under which a direct request of the Son can or would ever be denied by the Father.

Because God cannot deny himself. If one person of the Trinity makes a request of the other person of the Trinity, if that were somehow to be denied, God would be denying himself.

[4 : 54] And we read 2 Timothy 2 verse 13. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself. Now we think in terms of there's nothing God can do.

Well, this is perhaps the only thing God can do. He cannot deny himself. That's why God cannot lie because he is truth itself. God cannot deny the request of part of himself.

One person of the Trinity requesting another person of the Trinity for a particular outcome. He cannot deny himself. He is always going to be true. He is always going to be faithful. He cannot ever cease to be God.

That is the only sense in which God is in any way limited or circumscribed. He cannot cease to be God. He cannot deny himself.

Therefore, when Jesus says to Peter, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. It is effectively the same as to say your faith will not fail. Because I have prayed for you.

[5 : 54] Just as in the creation, God speaks and it is done. You know, God said, let there be light. And there was light. God said, let the sea bring forth no fish and all manner of creatures.

Let the earth bring forth winged fowls and all these. And it was so. He spoke and it happened. In creation, God speaks and it is done. So in redemption, God the Son prays, intercedes and it becomes so.

Thus we find that in the course of the night, Peter's physical strength and mental concentration both failed as he fell asleep.

His common sense failed as he not only followed the mob back into the high priest's house, but he didn't have the sense to keep his mouth shut. So they all recognized his Galilean accent.

His guard went down and his patience failed as he allowed himself to be goaded into impatient, angry, Christ-denying responses.

[6 : 59] He didn't mean them.

Because Christ had prayed to that effect. Well, yes, he denied. But one's denial of a fact does not thereby negate the fact.

I could say to you, well, here we are today, sitting or standing in Shobos. And we're not in Scalpy, I could say. And now, the fact that I say it doesn't make it so. The fact that I may deny that we are here in Scalpy, as opposed to in Shobos or Barba's or Barra or whatever it might be, does not make it so.

I can deny a fact until I am blue in the face. And it will not alter the truth of that fact. Now, just because Peter is denying something to be the case, it doesn't mean that it is so.

It is precisely because Peter still believed in Jesus, still loved him as his own soul, that his own denial of soul devastated him.

[8 : 25] Peter went out and wept bitterly. He wept bitterly because he still believed. Whatever else had failed him that night, his faith had not failed.

Everything else may have failed, but his faith had not failed because Christ had prayed. And the devil is restrained by the power of God the Father because God the Son has asked for it.

God speaks and it is so. Christ asks and it is done. Now, this fact has huge implications for the spiritual safety and well-being of all believers because it means that all those for whom Christ intercedes are similarly guaranteed that their faith, the instrument of their salvation, will not fail. In other words, if Christ is praying for you, you cannot help but be saved at the last. As long as Christ is alive, and having died once to sin, he now lives eternally, so for all eternity, Christ is alive. As long as Christ is alive, he continues to intercede for his people. Hebrews 7 verse 25. It is the great purpose, or one of the great purposes of his everlasting life and glory, to intercede, while his people are here on earth, to intercede for them, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

[10 : 11] What clear evidence could we ever have, or ever meet, that our salvation is not of us, but all of Christ? Can you imagine if we were busily trying to impress God with our pathetic little good deeds, or our religious devotions, or our outward forms, as if this was going to impress God, when we literally haven't got a prayer at the throne of grace, unless Christ is making that prayer for us?

It is none of us, it is all of him. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Jesus, the Lord, turned and looked upon Peter.

In the midst of all our denials and our failures, Christ never fails to take the time and make the effort to focus upon us, and to convey to us that he sees right through us.

He knows us literally inside out, and that still he loves us and continues with the costly and precious work of our salvation.

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. What does this tell us? It tells us, first of all, you know, it's kind of stating the obvious, but it does tell us, first of all, that Jesus was not facing Peter at the time.

[11 : 43] He was almost certainly facing his accusers, who, as we know from the Gospel accounts, were interrogating him and basically roughing him up. We have no idea of distance, how far away Jesus was from Peter, nothing to suggest that in the ordinary way of things, Jesus had heard Peter, they admitted at the door, or any of the previous conversations or denials of Peter.

But when the cockcrowed, Jesus turned and looked upon Peter. He didn't just happen to be looking in the same direction, because he wasn't.

He had turned his eye. He didn't just catch his eye and look, oh, so there's Peter. Oh, he was looking away in the opposite direction. He turned around and looked at Peter.

And in that world, the high priests and scribes were of no concern. His accusers were irrelevant. Their charges mattered nothing.

What mattered to Jesus in that moment was Peter. And he turns around to look upon him. What does that look say?

[12 : 54] So many things, no doubt. But I would suggest they might be summed up in two words. I know.

I know what you are feeling, Peter. I know that you are here. I know that you're here because you love me and you risked your life in coming here.

I know your love and your loyalty, Peter. I know the strength of your weakness. I know that you are devastated by your own failure.

Your thoughtless words. Your accidental cowardice. Your unintentional betrayal. It is all there. It is all there. It is all in there. It is all in you.

And it is all seen as he looks upon you. Upon Peter. Yes. It is all seen as he looks upon you.

[13 : 57] And me. Do you not see that Christ knows you? Sees through you. And inside of you.

Into your very soul. For Peter had denied the Lord be times. But how many times have you? How many times have I?

That look from the eyes of Christ strips bare our very soul. And we have nowhere to hide.

The book of Revelation describes the risen Christ as having eyes which were as a flame of fire.

They see light through you.

Consuming all your defenses. Such is the countenance of the Lamb of God. It is not for nothing that we read in Revelation 6 from verse 14.

[14 : 57] The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together. And every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men and every bondman and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, You see, Satan is rightly described as the accuser.

The accuser of the Lord's people which accused them before our God day and night as Revelation tells us. Chapter 12 verse 10. But I personally believe that by the time it comes to the last judgment, Satan will have no place in it at all.

Well, he'll be judged himself, of course, and thrown into the lake of fire. But as far as people upon earth are concerned, as we stand before God, he won't have any place in that particular court scenario.

He isn't needed. Yes, he's very active on earth. But by the time of the last judgment, we won't need anybody extra to accuse us before God.

Because on that day, simply to have those eyes turned upon us, which see all and know all, and understand all, will be accusation enough.

[16 : 50] As the record of our life is played out before the court of heaven, everything known, nothing hid, every secret word, every shameful thought, all the good deeds, all the fine aspirations, all the miserable failures, and all the while Jesus looks upon us with those all-seeing eyes.

And we know that there are no explanations, no cover-ups of any use, no special accusations from Satan.

He's not needed. Just the truthful, accurate, unadulterated record of our lives will be of itself utterly dying.

And we know it. Or if we don't know it, it's because we haven't thought about it. But the minute you begin to think about it, it all becomes so clear.

And then, we will know it. Jesus turns and looks upon us, and he knows the truth of what we are.

[18 : 08] There are none who can stand in the face of such searing and incorruptible, naked truth. And of ourselves, we are all undone.

For the Lord looks upon men and sees them as they truly are. And it was ever thus since the fall. Psalm 14, verses 2 and 3, Way back in Genesis, chapter 6, verse 12, God looked upon the earth and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

such a look that sees it all, knows it all. Such a look, however, would have no material benefit if Peter did not himself at the same time look to Jesus and see that Jesus looked upon Peter. Indeed, that he had turned from all other business and distractions specifically to look upon him. He doesn't care about the chief priests.

He doesn't care about the scribes or the accusations or the mob beating him or whatever. He doesn't care about any of those things. It's just as with Peter. He turns to look at Peter.

[19 : 46] He intends that Peter should see him, look at him. The Lord means these eyes to connect.

he means Peter to see that he, Jesus, looks upon Peter and knows everything. Indeed, is this not how the risen Christ begins each address to the seven churches of Revelation?

I know your works and your labors and this and that. I know this. I know everything. I know. That's how he begins every single one of them.

all the seven churches in the earth. I know Christ has prophesied this failure by Peter. He has known that Peter would follow him to the high priest's house.

He has predicted the denials. He has known in advance about the bitter tears. He has prayed for Peter that his faith failed not and now looks upon him that he in looking forlornly to the Christ he has now denied.

[20 : 52] might yet find there sufficient for all the healing of his soul and all the cleansing of his sin.

Isaiah 45 verse 22 we read look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else.

Of course there are tears bitter tears of remorse but hopefully sanctified tears of repentance as well for Peter and if the Lord will for us Peter's tears are blessed because they are in time and the Lord who has prayed for Peter has not finished with him.

Do you think it is coincidence in Mark chapter 16 the last chapter of Mark we are told at verse 7 Jesus says to the women go and tell his disciples and Peter and in Luke 24 at verse 34 what they all said the Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon we read of how already that night in the garden Christ's blood had begun to be shed in the sweat blood and tears of Gethsemane but we now know that sacrifice to be complete upon the cross at Calvary Christ looked upon Peter in the very moment of his final denial in the very act of his sin and still he loved him still he prayed for him we are taught to be looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith and he now turns and looks upon us and sees through us and knows us and invites us still to follow him whilst yet there is opportunity the look of Christ broke

Peter's heart but it also broke his pride and ultimately broke the bonds in which Satan had held his conscience that look was to the saving of his soul and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord how he had said of them before the cockcrowled outshot the nine he thrice and Peter went out and wept bitterly still he turns from all his other business he turns to look upon you and me and me will you not look to him three denials was enough for Peter when and how many will be enough for you he sure he he says huh it would

[24 : 14] I-