

The Problem With Peter

by William Carrol

The problem with Peter is not his impetuous nature, but his denial of Jesus and his fear in the storm, which stem from his misunderstanding of the cross and God's plan.

Duration: 53:48

Scripture: Matthew 16:13-16, Matthew 16:23-24, Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:14-29

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about driving and feeling overwhelmed by the speed and intensity of life. He relates this experience to the disciples' encounter with Jesus in the stormy sea. Peter, in his fear, begins to sink but cries out to the Lord for help. Jesus rescues him and asks why he was afraid. The speaker emphasizes the importance of trusting in Jesus and not being swayed by fear or the desire to retreat to our own ways.

Transcript

Well, praise the Lord. What a glorious day, and geez, a little warm, but glorious notwithstanding. Amen.

I had an opportunity to share at a memorial service earlier this afternoon. It was a blessing, and it was a joy, and we're just talking about God's faithfulness to the end, and I'll tell you what, I am rejoicing in my heart, because even though there was appropriate mourning, there was also a supernatural joy, a joy unspeakable and full of glory, that comes only as a result of knowing the faithfulness of God, His capacity to keep us to the end. Now, this afternoon, I want to speak to you on the topic, The Problem with Peter, and the actual title that I originally gave it, but I kind of like to keep my titles short, so that they'll fit on the CD, you know what I mean? But I was initially going to entitle it, The Problem with Peter and with Us.

Because if you remember, Peter was considered impetuous. He felt a thing, and he said a thing, and oftentimes, you know, you'll go to church, and you might hear a preacher give sort of an illustration using Peter and his impetuosity, you know, his quickness, and we laugh a little, and we should, you know what I mean? Because it's a happy thing to know that a person doesn't have to be absolutely perfect to follow that one who is altogether lovely, that one who is perfection itself. A regular person, a real person, a human being, can not only follow Christ, but be used by Him mightily.

So, it's a happy thing when we hear that Peter was in every manner, as James says about Elijah, he was a man just like us. And so, we hear about his issues and his difficulties, and we say amen. Thank God that

the men and women of God, the men and women in the Bible, were not kind of floating, you know, six inches off the ground.

They were real human beings, you know, and though they were heavenly minded, they were also earthly good. They had a reality in everyday life, and they made a real difference as a result. And so, we kind of laugh at Peter's issues, but we also remind ourselves that pretty much the same issues Peter had, the rest of the disciples had.

You know, the main issue we see in Peter that kind of defines a lot of what he had to struggle with, and had to go through, was his denial of the Lord. And there was a time when Jesus foretold Peter's denial. He said, you know, after a certain amount of time, you know, you will have denied me a certain amount of times.

And Peter said, no, I'm never going to deny you. And we remind ourselves of that, but then we also remind ourselves that he wasn't the only one who said that. All of the disciples, or all of the apostles, more specifically, said that.

And so, Peter's problem was also the problem of the rest of the apostles. And I would go further and say, his problem was not just a problem that he shared with those who lived with him at that time, but it's a problem that every single Christian shares. Peter's problem was not that he was impetuous.

It was not that he was, you know, quick at the lip, as it were. It wasn't that he just thought a thing and said it at the same exact time. No six-second delay, you know what I mean? It was just there, you know? That wasn't his problem.

I mean, although that was a part of his personality. But his problem was beyond that. He expressed it impetuously.

He expressed it quickly. He expressed it sometimes without thinking a lot, like on the Mount of Transfiguration, where he just spoke. And the Bible says, because he didn't know what to say, you know what I mean? Usually, when a person doesn't know what to say, they don't say anything, right? You know what I mean? But some of us, you know, not us here, I'm talking about the church across the street, every now and again, you know what I'm saying? You know, we don't have anything to say.

We say it anyway, right? You know, but anyway, Peter was like that. But it wasn't so much the way he said what he said. His problem was what he said.

And what he said came from something that he felt, an issue that he had with the Lord, an issue that you and I have with the Lord sometimes as well. If we were to enumerate just those times where Peter had a problem with Christ, where there was just a little bit of a struggle there, you know, and we were to consider every one of those times, I will point out to you, and I'll try to prove it to you today. I might not be able to point out every time, but I will mention one or two.

We will find that ultimately at the bottom line, at the base of all of Peter's concerns, all of his issues and so on and so forth, is the cross. That's Peter's problem, and that's your problem, and that's my problem. Always the cross.

When you consider the first time that Peter had an issue with the Lord, and we know when the Bible is written, it's written to give us some insight into the nature of God and to the nature of human persons and

to the nature of Christ, and so it brings these issues out and puts them in such an order that we can kind of follow a logical flow. We can kind of see the process in a person's life, and the Bible gives us a wonderful flow in the life of Peter, and one of the things that it mentions is when Jesus begins to say, you know, who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am? And people begin to say, well, some say you're Elijah, some Jeremiah, some you're one of the prophets or whatever, you know what I mean? Some, you know, you're John the Baptist reincarnated or whatever, you know, they don't know what to say. They just, again, you don't know what to say, you just say it, you know what I'm saying? Well, that's what they did, and Jesus said, but who do you say that I am? And Peter lifts up his voice and he says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

You are the Messiah. You are the hope of Israel. You are the promise of God.

You are the one who is going to bring in the kingdom. Even Jesus said, and I am giving you the keys to the kingdom, and the gates of hell will not prevail. He said, you know, you are the great king in essence.

That's what he's saying. And then Jesus begins to define what Messiah is. He begins to define who this person is who will bring in the kingdom of God, who will inaugurate this new age of God's glory and God's majesty and God's power, and he begins to define himself by the cross.

He begins to talk about how he's going to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and how he's going to be killed and so on and so forth, and Peter has a problem with that. And he begins to, as it were, take Jesus by the lapels and shake him in essence and say, no, this is never going to happen to you. And Jesus stops him in his tracks and reproves him, rebukes him with the sharpest rebuke possible, a rebuke that would have knocked the wind out of his sails.

And right after saying to Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father. And right after saying to Peter, and I am giving you the keys to the kingdom and the gates of hell will not prevail. In other words, what he's saying is I'm setting you up along with the other apostles as authorities in the body of God, and you are going to somehow or another have some impact in this generation and so on and so forth.

Right after saying all that, he calls him Satan and rebukes him in no uncertain terms. Why? Because he said, Peter, your concern are the things of men. You don't see life the way God does, and as a result, you are getting in my way, getting in the way of my progress.

But what's Christ's progress? He said, you're a stumbling block to me. Christ's progress is that he is marching forward to the cross. That's where he's going.

This is what he's talking about when he talks to Peter. And he says, Peter, get out of my way. Get behind me, Satan, he says, because you're a stumbling block to me.

Peter, get out of my way. You see, because I'm going to the cross and nothing and no one is going to stop me. This is what Jesus had to say to Peter.

And in essence, what he was saying to Peter is, if you are going to follow me, we've got to get one thing straight. I'm going to the cross. If you are going to understand the definition of the Christ, then you must understand the necessity of the cross.

If you are going to proclaim me as the Christ and as the son of the living God, and if you are going to speak with divine revelation, as Jesus clearly acknowledged that Peter was doing. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father in heaven. If you are going to move in that kind of power, and if you are going to be an authority in my kingdom, that is to say, if you're going to have impact and influence in people's lives, and you're going to make a difference in this world, and you are going to be a pillar in God's church, then you cannot, you cannot avoid the cross.

Now, you understand the nature of the cross. The cross was that kind of a thing that said that you were not a person that could be respected or accepted by God or by men. They hung people, as it were, in midair, saying you are not good enough for heaven or for earth.

The cross didn't just mean men didn't like you, it meant God didn't like you. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. And so, when Peter heard this concept of the cross, it was like, no, this is something that cannot happen to you, because his understanding of the cross did not incorporate the fact of Jesus dying for sins, but not for his own, but for the sin of the world.

And Jesus taking upon himself the punishment or the wrath of God toward sinful human persons, not for himself, but for us. So, the Bible says that we walked by him, and we saw him there marred beyond recognition, and we began to wag our heads, and we began to esteem him as someone who was stricken of God, someone who was punished by God, but he was bruised for our iniquities. He was bruised for our transgressions.

By his stripes, we've been healed. Peter didn't understand that then, and so everything in him wanted to strive against it. Later on, we see Peter crossing the waters from point A to point B, and a storm begins to rise.

Now, you understand that Peter was a fisherman, and he was a hardy fisherman, hardy in hail, and he knew how to handle the waters, and he did that kind of thing all the time. But this was a different kind of storm. This storm was something beyond anything he had experienced.

This was a supernatural thing going on, and it seemed where they were that, in essence, God's displeasure was coming upon them. You would have had to be where they were. They went through another storm just like it, and the first thing they said to Jesus, this is the other storm where he's sleeping in the boat, the first thing they came to him and said was, don't you care about us? Don't you care we are about to perish? Now, they understood him as the representative of God.

They might not have understood at that stage of his life the fullness of who he was, but they understood enough to recognize that he represented God, and if he didn't care, then God didn't care. Don't you care that we are perishing? Now, they're in a different boat. Now, they're on a different situation, but it's the same kind of supernatural storm, and they think that they are going to die, and then all of a sudden, they see Jesus walking on the flood, walking on the storm, and as they see Jesus walking on the storm, they begin to become terrified, thinking that he's a ghost.

In other words, they are thinking that the heavens themselves are fighting against them. As the Bible says about Sisera, that the stars in their courses began to strive against him, and that's where they are. You heard that expression, deep calling unto deep, and you see that in one of the Psalms, and we like to think about it as a nice thing, where the Holy Spirit is speaking to our heart, but that's not what it means in the text.

In the text, it's talking about the deep, as it were, the deep that's under the heavens, and the deep that's over the heavens. You know what I mean? You read the book of Genesis, and it talks about God separating the waters from the waters, and when they say the deep, what they're talking about is the waters above the heavens. So, when they say deep, that is the ocean, or calling unto deep, that is the waters of the heavens, they're talking about a storm.

They're talking about a storm where it feels like, I mean, here you are on a boat, and it feels like the waters are tossing you up into the heavens, and the heavens are tossing you back down to the waters, and they seem like the heavens are meeting, and you are sandwiched in between. That's where they were, and they see Jesus walking on that. Now, you notice at that stage, he doesn't stop that.

He just walks on that, and what we have to do is remind ourselves that there is going to come in our lives periodically storms that are reminiscent of the nature of Christianity, and that bear witness to the cross of Jesus Christ. Here Jesus is walking on top of this storm, and Peter says to him, let me come out and walk with you. It's like you and me sometimes saying, okay, all right, I acknowledge there's going to be struggles.

I acknowledge there's going to be difficulties. I acknowledge there's going to be a storm. Jesus, let me walk with you.

If I gotta go through this, if I gotta struggle through this, if it's going to be hard, if it's going to be difficult, fine, as long as you are with me, and so he walks out into the water, and I imagine he's probably thinking the way you and I think sometimes when we say, you know, Jesus, look, I'm just going to trust you. I'm going to put my hope in you. I'm going to believe in you.

I'm going to identify with your cross. I'm not going to shun your cross. If it's difficult times, hard times, I'll take up my cross daily and follow you, and we think sometimes in the back of our mind, I don't know how it works, but sometimes we think if I finally say yes to the Lord and obey the Lord, then maybe the storm will call, but in Peter's case, when he chose to seek God and when he chose to walk with God even in the storm, the storm just got worse, and as the storm started getting worse, Peter started to look around, and he basically said, you know, I'm thinking things should be calming down by now.

You know what I mean? Did I ever tell you the story about when I was in a car accident a while back? This is a long time ago. When I first learned how to drive, I was driving for about two weeks, you know what I mean? And, you know, I was driving all, you know, toughest stuff, you know, kind of kicking back, you know what I'm talking about? I mean, I was in one of those old Volvo wagons, you know what I'm talking about? Not necessarily cool for a single dude to be driving around in a, you know, third-hand Volvo wagon, but that was my ride, you know?

So I'm driving around, and I grew up in Brooklyn, right? You know what I mean? So growing up in Brooklyn, this is a long time ago, so, you know, but growing up in Brooklyn, when you walk down the street, you don't really move out of people's way, right? You know what I mean? You see somebody walking down the street, and you're walking down the street, and, you know, you see this person walking, they move a little bit, you move a little bit, you kind of catch their eyes, they kind of catch your eyes, and then you just hold your ground, right, you know?

Well, anyway, when I first learned how to drive, I started driving that way, you know what I'm talking about? So I see somebody pulling out the wrong way, I'm like, man, I ain't getting out your way, you know?

Well, anyway, you know, I got, I got about just a few yards from them, and then I changed my mind, I decided I'm gonna get out their way. Well, anyway, I didn't know how to drive then, I was just driving a couple of weeks, so I started getting closer and closer to the curb, and as I got closer and closer to the curb, I said, man, I better slam on my brakes, so I slammed down, but unfortunately, I slammed on the accelerator, but when I slammed on the accelerator, I started going faster and faster, and I'm like, you know, I should be stopping right about now, you know what I'm talking about?

And I mean, I'm all on the sidewalk, and I'm hitting the intersection, and I'm hitting the divider, and the whole nine, you know, the cops, after they saw what went on, I mean, they looked at the, they were looking at the skid marks, and so on and so forth, man, and they were shaking their heads, and they were like, oh man, you know, because I mean, I skid for about two or three blocks, you understand? Well, I mean, I'm moving toward oncoming traffic, and the whole night, it was like, it was like, it was like playing a video game, or something like that, but anyway, the point that I'm stressing, is at some point, I was expecting things to slow down, and it never did, it just got faster, and faster, and faster, and faster, until I finally cried out, Lord, help, and when I did, it felt, it felt like he just took my leg, like literally, physically took my leg, and took it off the accelerator, it was, I'm telling you, it was plastered onto that thing, because I thought it was the brakes, you know?

Well, he takes my leg, and he slaps it onto the brake, you know what I mean? And all of a sudden, everything is okay, I mean, I spun out, and everything, and my, I mean, my car turned, and I'm facing oncoming traffic, and anyway, I said all that to say this, you know, there, I'm sure, was a point where Peter thought that, okay, I'm seeking God, I'm serving God, I'm doing what God, and I wasn't, I was, I was like crazy, you know, but the point is, there were times when you, you decide, you know, I'm gonna, okay, Lord, I'm not gonna avoid your cross, I will come out there with you, I'll go through the storm with you, I'll go through the hardship with you, I'll go through the difficult times with you, as long as I'm with you, you know, just, you know, hold my hand, and we start singing all these nice songs about, you know, hold my hands, precious Lord, and so on and so forth, you know, Greg knows these songs, you're, you're, but yeah, and then, and then, when it doesn't calm down, and we look at it, it just seems to be going faster and faster, and we think, man, I thought I hit the brake when I said yes, Lord, you know, but we start to sink when we see it's not gonna stop, and sometimes we say, well, I tried to end on, but now let me, you know, just kind of go back to my own way, or let me do this whole thing, you know, let me, you know, grab on to that thing that makes me feel comfortable, or this thing, or whatever, because the cross becomes an offense, and we just want to take a step back or two, but Peter did, thank God, cry out to the Lord, and the Lord snatched his hand and pulled him up, then asked him the question, what, what are you afraid of?

I mean, really, that's basically what he said, what are you afraid of? You know, it's gonna get rough, it's gonna get tough, the storm, they're gonna come, but what are you afraid of? You can't die, you understand what I'm saying? You're Christian, you can't die, you see? I mean, we're gonna put off this old tent, but that's all right, we'll just get a nicer one, a better one, you know what I'm saying? You know what I mean? But the reality of it is you're Christian, you live forever, nothing's gonna kill you, there's nothing the devil can do now, you're beyond that, you know what I mean? And so the cross, it's a part of our life, it's who we are, and Peter basically had to come to grips with that reality.

Again, you remember on the Mount of Transfiguration, another time where he spoke without really having anything to say, and the Bible says very clearly he didn't know what to say. So when Jesus and Elijah and Moses started to talk, remember the Bible says they were talking about his cross, they were talking about how he was gonna die, and Peter came up with a good idea, and the idea was this, you know, it's already

the Feast of Tabernacles, it's the Feast of Booths, you know, everybody down there, you know, they're building up their tents, and they're building up their tabernacles, because that's what they did, you know, on the Feast of Booths, because they were commemorating the time when they were in the wilderness, right? So they just built some tents, and they lived in those tents during that time of celebration. So Peter said, why don't we just, you know, we're already up here, you know what I'm saying, you're already transfigured, you know, why don't we just build some tents up here? And basically the question is, you know, why don't we just, you know, start this, you know, mountaintop church, this mountaintop religion? You know, now Jesus knew that there was a young man down there who was being convulsed by the devil, being thrown into the water on some days, and into the fire on other days, and his father was breaking his heart over them, and even the disciples that were still left down couldn't do anything about that.

Jesus knew that all the reality was there, all the hardship and difficulty was there. They were in a very real glory, they were in a very real place, they were on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they were seeing Christ in His glory, and wow, you know, awesome, wonderful, but that's not where you and I build church. See, they wanted a mountaintop religion.

Peter said, you know, this is good, I know the suffering is there, the hardship is there, the pain is there, but if you go down there, they're gonna, they're gonna, they're gonna hang you on a tree. You remember whenever, you know, Lazarus of Bethany was dying, and Jesus said, I'm gonna go, and I'm gonna, I'm gonna wake him up. They said, no, no, if you go, they're gonna kill you.

Remember, because they said, well, you know, if you, you know, don't wake him up, if he's sleeping, he'll get better, you know. Jesus said, no, what I mean is he's dead, and they said, so what are we gonna do, we're gonna go and die with him? I mean, basically what they were saying is, we can't help him, but if we go into that area, we're gonna get killed, you see, and there are times when we know, we know, because Jesus helps us to know that there are needs, there are troubles, there are people suffering, people dying, children, you know, who have no hope, and who are going from extreme to extreme. We see that happen in our generation all the time, the enemy taking our young people, and one time throwing them into the water, and the next time throwing them into the fire, from one extreme to another extreme, and if we wanted to, we could have a nice little mountaintop church right up here, because here we see God glorified, and we sing our songs of praise to him, and he touches our hearts in unique ways, but Jesus and Moses and Elijah, and you know, Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets, they represent the Word of God, and that's one of the things the Word of the Lord wants to talk to us about, about the cross, and while Moses and Elijah were talking about the cross, Peter was talking about a mountaintop religion.

It's the same as us sometimes, you know, the Bible is talking from Genesis straight through Revelation about a cross, and we're saying, no, no, no, Lord, let's, can we just form our religion up here, you know, because that's what they were doing, you know, they're building the booths, which is a religious exercise, you know, we're just observing holy days, and you know, and rejoicing in God's glory, while the world is at the foot of this hill, and they're dying, and the cross reminds us that there is no such thing on this side of eternity as a mountaintop religion. The reality of it is, is yes, God brings us to places where we see his face, and we rejoice in his presence, we rejoice in his person, and so on and so forth, but that's not a religion, that's a relationship, that's who we are with him, that's who he is to us, but the reality of it is, the Bible doesn't use the word religion a lot, but when it does, and when it talks about true religion, it talks about reaching out to the impoverished, and helping the widow, and being there for the ones who are in need. The truth of the matter is, the cross is central to our identity, and to try to avoid it is to become

something other than what we are, but again, that's the problem that we have, it's common to all of us.

Another time, Jesus is talking about going to the cross, and Peter says, well, I'll tell you what, you know, I tried it before in the on the waters, let me try it one more time, if if you go to the cross, I'm going to the cross with you, and Jesus said, no Peter, you're not, you're not ready yet, you're not there yet, the cross is still an abomination to you, he said, you are going to have to go through a conversion process, he said, basically what he was saying was, he wouldn't say that you got to get saved all over again, he said, there's something in you that's got to change, sometimes conversion just means that there's an element of you that changes, when we're talking about those people who are already saved, sometimes we still have to be changed, we still have to grow, we still have

to develop, well he says to Peter, you know, you're going to deny me three times, and Peter said, no, I'm not going to deny you, I call that Peter's pre-denial denial, you know, because later on he denies him, but at first, you know, the Lord says, you know, you're going to deny me three times, Peter says, I deny that, I will never deny you, you know, so I'm thinking, wait a minute, are you hearing the words as they come out, you know what I'm talking about, but that's the way it is with us sometimes, the Lord says to us sometimes, you know, something's going to happen in your life that's going to remind you of how scandalous this cross is, something is going to remind you, you know, sometimes we, you know, we, like I said, we kind of, you know, we put our nice little crosses on our neck,

or we have them on the edifices of our churches, or on the steeples, and so on, and so forth, and they always look pretty, it's rare that you see an ugly cross, do you know what I mean, but if you had seen the cross of Christ, it would have been an ugly cross, that's what the Bible says in the book of Isaiah, it said there was no beauty in him that we should desire him, said it was marred beyond recognition, there was nothing pretty about it, and I want to suggest to you, there is nothing pretty about the cross, there is nothing desirable about the cross, nobody wants to suffer, nobody wants to have the deepest issues of their heart uprooted, but that's what it means to be a Christian, it's something that God wants to do in us, and then there's something that he wants to do through us,

and oftentimes that means dying to the self-centered and the self-defined life, so Peter says, you know, I can handle that, you know how sometimes we hear Jesus say, you know, now we're going to tackle thing A in your life, or thing B in your life, and we're like, you know, give me two or three days to fast and pray, and then we're just going to handle this thing, you know, I mean, I do that sometimes, you know, God will come into my life, and he'll say, you know, there's a thing in you that's just deep-rooted, and I have got to get with that, and I say, okay, I'll tell you what, Lord, meet me in about three days, I'm going to be fasting and praying, you know what I'm saying, we'll get together, you know, in such and such amount of time, and we'll just deal with this right quick, you know

what I'm talking about, you know, we'll hit this thing before Sunday, right, you know, but it doesn't work that way sometimes, because as soon as he starts operating, it's like, no, God, God, no, thank you very much, I haven't eaten in three days, I can't handle this, and so on, and so, you know what I'm talking about, it gets that way, is it me, you know, you know, sometimes, I mean, the reality of it is, when God tells us, no, you will deny me two or three times before we get this thing squared away, first thing is, no, I deny that, Lord, I will never deny you, I deny everything that you're accusing me of, and what Peter is basically being told is, that's what I need to get out of you, that thing that constantly corrects me, and tells me how much you can do this, and how you can do this

in your own strength, and how you can go with me to the cross in your own power, and all this, and all that, he said, that's what I need to work on, and so, likewise, with us, sometimes, the biggest cross that you and I have to bear is the fact that we can't bear our own cross in our own strength, sometimes, the hardest thing for us to have to deal with in this life is the fact that we can't deal with this life in our own strength, and we just don't want to, see, the thing about religion is, religion has got to be able to make some claim or another, religion has got to have some claim to fame, I didn't eat this, or I did eat that, I didn't do this, or I did do that, or whatever the case might be, the Bible talks in the book of Philippians about a certain group of people, and he says, you

know, he said, for instance, he said, that God is their belly, he said, their glory, and their shame, he said, their mind, earthly things, and so on, and so forth, and, and if you read that book, you'll find that Paul is talking, on one level, to the people who were very legalistic, and on the other person, the people who were licentious, that is to say, people who pretty much give themselves a license to do anything they want, so on the one extreme, people who don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other thing, and then over here, people who have absolutely no restraint, both of them calling themselves Christians, and he, he called them both enemies of the cross, and he said, for instance, they, they glory in their shame, and the one part right here, you can apply to these people

over here, who pretty much glory in things that they should be ashamed of, but you bring it over here to these people over here, and they glory in the fact that they're always ashamed of something, you know what I mean, there's always something that they are ashamed of, you know, or he says that God is their belly, well, these people over here, because they pretty much are constantly looking to fulfill their appetite, you know, so that's their God over here, their God is the fact that they fast three times a week, and so on, and so forth, and they do this, and they do that, and they do the other thing, over here, these people mind earthly things, because they are concerned always with the things of the world, and they're always attracted by it, and so on, and so forth, over here, the only

thing they talk about is how bad the world is, and how bad this person is, and how bad their neighbor is, and how bad their co-worker is, and so on, and so forth, but they're not ever looking upward, and in both cases, you find Jesus calling them enemies of the cross, because the cross doesn't allow for legalism, or for license, the cross preaches liberty, the cross preaches freedom, so that you're not bound over here, and you're not bound over there, so Jesus basically says clearly to Peter, you can't do this in your own strength, which means he has nothing to boast about, he has nothing to boast on, he has no power to lift himself up, but at the same time, when you give up your power to lift yourself up, you also give up your power to crush yourself, when you give up your power to

boast, you also give up your power to condemn yourself, when you give up your power to lift yourself up above your neighbor, you also give up your power to thinking that everybody else is gifted but you, and everybody else has a blessing but you, and everybody else is loved by the Lord but you, if you choose to hold on to boasting, then you also put yourself in a position where you can just as easily be condemned, in fact, I've found that the people who boast the loudest are the people who have the most inferior inferiority complex, and they're basically just overcompensating on the other side, you show me an arrogant person, and I will show you a person who feels like they are nothing, and they are just trying to make up for that, trying to convince other people that there's something,

so that maybe that person might in turn convince them that they might well be something, well, Peter had to recognize that he wasn't able to do anything in his own strength, again, Jesus comes and he washes

the feet of the disciples, and again, Peter lifts up his mouth, and he says, you know, in essence, you know, no, this is beneath you, now, of course, the foot washing at that particular time was just an indication of what he was about to do, how he was going to cleanse them, he made that very clear, Peter said, no, this is beneath you, again, we say that same thing to the Lord about the cross, the cross is beneath you, now, we don't say it as far as it pertains to our theology, because we know that the cross is in Christ, and we can rattle off all our theology, but when we start seeing

the Jesus who washes feet, including the feet of Judas and so on, we think, no, Lord, that's beneath you, because, see, if he's my Lord, and this is something that he does, and I'm beneath him, then that means that's something that I have to do, so if I say it's beneath him, what am I saying, in essence, is I'm saying it's also beneath me, because if that's a part of who he is, then it's got to be a part of who I am, that means I got to wash people's feet, that means I got to be there for people, that means I got to take up a towel while everybody else is taking up a purple robe and finery, that means I have got to bow down, if you will, to the needs of people around about me, but, see, that's the cross, and Peter had a problem with that, and I don't know about you, but sometimes I have a

problem with that, too, you know, sometimes I don't mind washing Peter's feet, or I don't mind washing John's feet, but when it comes down to Judas, I'm not going to wash Judas's feet, you know what I'm talking about, you know, I told you that story about my mom, we would have these block parties, you know, and I always had my arch nemesis, Rodney, who lived right next door, you know what I mean, and we fought all the time over girls, or over toys, or whatever, we were just kids, you know, we fought and fought and fought, well, every time we would have a block party, and there would be like this, you know, this massive, you know, thingy, I don't know, I don't even know if they do block parties anymore, but, you know, and every family would cook, and they put the food out, and so on and so

forth, and Rodney would always come to my yard and eat my food, you know what I'm saying, I mean, my mom would be making franks, and this, that, the other, and Rodney come over, and not just once or twice, I mean, the dude be coming over all afternoon, you know, and I'm thinking, mom, why are you feeding my enemy, you know, my goodness, all he's gonna do is get enough energy to beat me up, you know, my goodness, you know what I'm talking about, if we, if we could just let him starve for a little while, you know, but anyway, the point of the matter is, you know, I, I mean, I enjoy watching the saints feed, as it were, you know, just being there for people, and so on and so forth, but, but not Judas, you know what I'm saying, every now and again, maybe it's me, but every now and again,

there's somebody you know ain't right, you know what I'm talking about, and God will ask you to go and serve that person, God will ask you to be there for that person, he'll ask you to bow down to that person's need, you know, and again, that's where we have a problem, that's Peter's problem, that's your problem, that's my problem, there's this cross that always looms in front of us, you remember another time, Peter, you know, Jesus is about to be taken into custody, and Peter draws his sword, and cuts off Malchus's ear, why, because they're about to take Jesus to the cross, that means the cross is a part of the life of that entire group, now, was Peter afraid to die, is that why he denied Jesus three times, and so on, of course not, Peter wasn't afraid to die, why would you take out a

sword, and strike out against the temple guard, you see, you understand what's going on there, the temple guard are all professional soldiers, their only responsibility was to protect the temple, and to meet out justice, and so on, and so forth, under Roman rule, of course, but that was like taking out a peace shooter, you know what I mean, and striking out against a SWAT team, I mean, that's what it would have looked

like, I mean, this guy just taking out his little sword, I'll get you, you know what I'm saying, I mean, but the reality of it was, this wasn't a guy who was afraid to die, he wasn't afraid to go down in a blaze of glory, death wasn't his problem, the cross was, he didn't mind dying, he just didn't want to die that way, it's the same thing with us, we say, okay, Lord, okay,

I will lay down my life, all right, Lord, I will die, but let me choose how I'm going to die, you know what I'm saying, and if you're like me, it's more like, you know, let me choose when I'm going to die, you know what I'm talking about, you know, I know you're trying to deal with this thing in my life, or you're trying to deal with that thing in my life, let's say, can I fit you in my calendar, you know, June 2013, you know what I'm talking about, we'll deal with this, but that's the way we are sometimes, you know, God will say, this thing has got to go, and we're like, okay, Lord, all right, all right, all right, just, you know, just wait till after my birthday, you know what I'm saying, or, you know, I'm talking about, let's just wait till after the weekend, you know, we'll deal with

that on Monday, that kind of a thing, but the reality of it is, we don't have the right to tell God when we are going to die, you know, another time I'll talk about a second or two, but I can bring it up now, actually, is at the end, where Jesus is already resurrected, and he says to Peter, you know, when you're a young person, you pretty much did whatever you want, you know what I'm saying, just like you, right, you know, I mean, you pretty much do whatever, you're young folk, you never do whatever you want, I'm only kidding, no, I know, I know, I'm preaching to the choir, literally, but you understand my point of view, I just wanted to do that, that's all, I didn't, I actually didn't have anything else to say, I just wanted to preach to the choir, I always wanted to do that, you know,

because you hear that all the time, right, but you understand my point, I mean, he says, you know, when you were young, you did whatever you want, but now somebody else is going to take you by your hands, and they're going to lead you places you don't want to go, Jesus says it's not enough for us, remember, one time Paul says, you know, if I give my body to be burned, and so on and so forth, you know, it means nothing if I don't have love, and in a very real sense, what Paul is saying is, love is the kind of death that God is asking all of us to die, love is what hung Jesus on the cross, see, I can give my body to be burned and still choose not to love, but you try to love in this world, you try to love for real in this world, you ever want to know what your cross is, your cross is to

love people, now the Bible says that the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit who's been given us, the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we can't do this on our own, that's what Peter had to learn, that's basically what Peter's lesson had to be, God is calling you to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, and it is impossible to do on your own, you and I can't do it, Peter began to call curses upon himself, he said, now this is the same one who took an oath and said, I will never betray you, I will never deny you rather, and now what is he doing when he's denying the Lord, when he's denying the Lord, he's again crying out oaths, and the Bible said that he was cursing, you know, as it were, it doesn't mean that he was

speaking profanities, it means that he was calling curses upon himself, he said, if I know this man, then let this happen to me, if I'm lying to you, let that happen to me, and so on and so forth, notice now, he takes an oath, a promise, saying, I will not deny you, and here, he is denying him with a promise, isn't that strange, that's what making promises to God does, one minute we're promising God, we are going to do this right, we're going to do that right, we're going to do the other thing right, the next minute, that same capacity to make God a whole bunch of promises, now begins to call down curses upon ourselves by

saying, you know, if I'm doing this, let God do that, and if I'm doing that, let God do that, in essence, what he is doing is proving the futility of making promises to

God, because I found, this is just maybe my testimony, maybe this is something that I've experienced personally, but I have found at those times when I make promises to God, from now on, it's going to be like this, from now on, it's going to be like that, from now on, you give me a few minutes, you know what I mean, and or a few days or a few months or whatever, and before you know it, I found that I couldn't keep those promises, and I am, in essence, condemning myself in the presence of God, somehow believing that God was as surprised by my failure as I was, and that God ought to treat me the way I would if I were God, but God loves us.

And God won't hear our promises on this side, and he won't hear our promises on that side, thank God. God is not interested in your promises, he's not interested in mine, because your promises over here will eventually wind up over here, and the same time you were saying, God, I promise you, I'm never going to deny you, now you're denying God by calling his condemnation upon yourself.

When you, as a Christian person, decide that God has got to treat you the way you would treat yourself if you were God, and whenever you feel bad about yourself, that must mean God feels bad about you too. Whenever you feel like you've got to judge yourself, that must mean God has got to judge you too, and whenever you feel like you've got to condemn yourself, that must mean God has got to condemn you too. Basically, what that finally comes down to is, I'm feeling great about myself because I made these promises to God, now I'm feeling bad about myself because I broke these promises to God, and if I'm feeling great about myself, that must mean God feels great about me too.

You know how some days you wake up and you feel like everything is perfect, you know, you lived a really good day, and so on and so forth, and that must mean God loves you a whole lot. You know what I mean? And then you have a really bad day, and that must mean God don't like you so much. You know what I'm talking about? It's not so much that God doesn't, and God doesn't, it's that you don't, and you don't.

You know what I'm saying? But God is like, get back with me when you are tired of making me a whole bunch of promises, because you and I can't love the way he loves. Remember at one point, because we always talk about the holiness of God, and we always think the holiness of God means that God is going to somehow or another judge sin, and he's going to do this, and he's going to do that. Yes, God is somebody who judges sin for you, and for me, he's already judged our sin on Calvary's tree, and for anybody who would choose to believe.

That doesn't mean that he doesn't chasten us sometimes as a daddy. He is our dad, and he has the right to do that, but he doesn't judge you anymore. He judged Christ for you.

You understand? He reserves the right as a father to chasten us, to bring us to places of repentance. Yes, he reserves that right as a daddy, as a daddy, but not as a judge. He doesn't judge us.

He judged Christ for us, and anybody who would believe in his name. So, we find ourselves, I just, I'm going to close. I'm just going right to the point.

Here's the bottom line. Every promise that needs to be made has been made, because the Bible says all of the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Praise the Lord. So, what God is asking us to do is simply appropriate those promises by faith. Believe those promises by faith.

Now, here's the deal. Here's the bottom line. Your cross and my cross is the same.

Your problem and my problem is the same. We're called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Basically, what that means is we love the cross of Christ.

We love that cross so much that we are going to tell people about it, even if it kills us. I can't do that on my own. I would deny the cross and Christ every single day if I tried to do it in my own strength.

I can't. You can't. So, we got the same problem.

We also have the same solution. Same solution. Christ in us, the hope of glory, the Holy Spirit who indwells us, the love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit.

Every single one of us can simply receive the promises of God in Christ, and all of a sudden what would have been a no becomes a yea and an amen. All of a sudden, what would have been I can't go any farther, Lord, becomes Lord, if you take me even into the waters, no matter how boisterous they get, as long as you hold me, as long as you keep me, as long as you strengthen me, then I'll stand, not in my own strength, but in the strength of God. Now, there's someone in this room who's saying, Brother Will, I just feel like I'm in that kind of a situation.

You might say, like Peter, you know, I've been fishing before. I've been in hard waters before. I've been in difficult times before, but nothing ever like this.

You might say, like, you know, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it just feels like, for some reason, the fires are heated seven times hotter than ordinary. You might say, I understand some struggle. I understand some hardship, but I've never felt anything like this.

Might be economic difficulties. Might be medical difficulties. Might have some trouble in your marriage, some trouble in your family, your children.

Might have some moral difficulties. You're saying, it's just hard. You might just say, it's just hard for me to pray right now.

You might say, it's been a while since I just read my Bible, you know, read a book straight through. It's been forever since I've just sat with God in the holy place. I'm in a hard time, a hard place, and you might say, I'm tired of trying to promise my way through this.

I want to love God the way I'm supposed to, and I want to love people the way I'm supposed to. The cross is hard. It's difficult.

I can't bear this alone, but I want to pray and I want to pray with my brothers and my sisters, you're probably saying, and I want to stand side by side with my friends and with my neighbors, my brothers and my sisters, stand shoulder to shoulder with God's people, and I'm going to say, God, I'm tired of making you promises. I want to receive the promises of God. I want to receive every yea and every amen in this book.

I want to honor you. I want to love you. I want to bless you.

If God is speaking to you and you're saying, it's a little bit difficult right now, and I feel like I got to bear a cross that's just too heavy for me. I want to encourage you. Your cross is supposed to be too heavy for you, but it's not too heavy for God, not too heavy for him, and if you want to pray and just say, God, help me, because I want to see this thing through, and I'm going to ask you to come and pray here in the front of this auditorium.

I want you to be able to know that you're not alone, and I want you to know that you can stand side by side with men and women of God and receive strength, because we got a whole lot of work ahead of us. We are going to make a difference in this generation. Let's stand together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If God is speaking to you, and you want to pray, come on up to the front. We'll stand together in the name of the Holy Savior. Amen.

Amen. There was a time in the days of old, a man had to search out his wife once or twice, a few times, because he would kind of forget the essence of covenant relation, and the Bible says, you know, the Lord is the Holy One, and we would think that he would say, and because he's the Holy One, then he's going to do this thing to her and that thing to her. He said, no, I'm not going to treat you the way you treat each other.

He said, that's what makes me holy. He said, I'm not going to treat you the way you think you should be treated or the way you would treat yourself. Sometimes we forget the essence of what it means to be in covenant relation, that thing that says we can't do this in our own strength and we don't need to, that thing that says we don't make a bunch of promises to God, we receive his promises in Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we forget the essence of covenant relation, but God doesn't cudgel us over the head because of it. He brings us home and reminds us of who we are, and he speaks a word of comfort and a word of peace. He's our Father.

He has the right. He reserves the right to lovingly chasten us, but you have already been judged in Jesus Christ on Calvary. He's not going to hurt you.

He's not mad at you. He loves you, and he's asking you now, let him love you. Let him love through you.

You will fulfill your call in this generation. You will make a difference. You will glorify God, not because of anything that you've done, but because of the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ is love, period. You will love. You will love God.

You will love your neighbor. You will glorify God in this generation. Father, in Jesus' name, we thank you so much.

We thank you that we're never, ever left our own devices. We don't have to make you a bunch of promises, Lord. We know that if we make oaths on this side, we'll soon be making oaths on that side.

We know that if we lift ourselves up, we will soon be condemning ourselves. We know that if we boast one day, we will be ashamed the next. We don't want to go from extreme to extreme.

We don't want to go from the fires to the waters. We just want to worship you. Your word tells us that every hill will be brought low, and every valley will be filled.

Lord, we just want to worship you. We don't want to go from extreme to extreme. We want to love you.

We're not looking to go from legalism to license and back again. We just want to walk in godly liberty. We ask you to help us.

Would you help us to bear our cross? We can't do that unless we love your cross. We thank you for the privilege of suffering shame for your name according to this generation's perspective, but of rejoicing in the glory of God according to the perspective of the Lord. Lord, we love you so much.

We ask that you be glorified in our lives and through our lives. In Jesus' holy name, we pray. Amen.

Amen. Praise the Lord. God be with you.

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