

The Life of Peter 3

Matthew 26:31-35

Immediately after the last supper, they sing a hymn and go to the Mount of Olives. There, Jesus gives the disciples a disturbing prediction. Let's read the passage.

He quotes Zechariah 13:7 and tells the disciples that they are the sheep in that prophecy. There's also an instruction, that afterwards, they meet up in Galilee.

One of the disciples perks up. Let's examine his response. Can you see two negatives and a positive in it?

Positive - Peter's affirmation that Jesus is his world, a reaffirmation of Matthew 19:27. Note, Peter was then talking on behalf of all the disciples and, wanting to know, what's in it for them. Now the emphasis is shifting towards his love for Jesus.

Negative 1. Peter then separates himself from his colleagues. Maybe they would, but me; never. Do you think he was being a bit arrogant here? That said, within hours, he'd be single handedly launching into a physical battle against an armed mob of several dozen, if not, over a hundred.

Negative 2. Peter contradicts Jesus and His prophecy.

V34. Jesus gives Peter another prediction. Look at Luke's account in Luke 22:31-32.

V35. Peter vehemently denies the prediction, and so do all His colleagues.

Put yourself in Peter's shoes for a moment. Say a husband said to his wife over breakfast;

'I've had this premonition, that by this time next week, you'll write our car off.' She may well reply;

'There's absolutely no way, I'm the most careful driver I know.' But sometimes extreme situations and circumstances can escalate and change very quickly.

Peter was quite genuine in his protestations, Jesus was the absolute centre of his world, but that world would soon come crashing down.

Jesus's arrest -

Luke 22:47-62.

V47 There was a huge armed mob came to arrest Jesus. In Matthew 26:50-54, Jesus dismisses Peter's vain 'last stand'. That 'one of them' was Peter, named by John. John 18:10, Peter cut off Malchus's ear. So, going back to Peter's declaration of loyalty and solidarity with Jesus, he was absolutely genuine, Matthew 26:35. This was not just an empty promise. Only hours later, here he is wanting to single handedly, take on a 'multitude, armed with clubs and swords.' Had Jesus stood back and allowed that, Peter may have taken out a couple of the mob, but ultimately he'd have been killed.

That's not Jesus's plan. He wants to surrender but His concern is for His disciples' safety. John 18:8-9.

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled, all but one, v 54. What do you think was going through Peter's mind at this point? Think back to a moment in your past, when you're in a really happy place, but then all of a sudden, everything comes crashing around your ears. Ever had a redundancy notice out of the blue? A relationship goes from hot to cold in an instant, or a dear loved one is given a terminal illness diagnosis. Your mind just goes into overdrive, regrets, if only, what if. Does that ring true with you?

Let's read Luke 22:54-58. I hear preachers talking about, this is Peter's moment of weakness. I think this is Peter being human, he's challenged, just as his world has collapsed around his ears. Take an honest look in the mirror, would you have done differently?

When all the dust has died down -

John 21:1-23. Post resurrection, Peter decides he's going to go fishing and 6 of his pals want to go with him. What does that tell you about the atmosphere, the mood, their state of mind?

Jesus is resurrected but now He's just an occasional visitor They'd seen Him just twice before, since His resurrection (v14). The relationship appears damaged, they might have felt a bit disenfranchised. So, do they just revert back to their lives before Jesus? The dream is over, there's a new chapter opening in God's plan, but they don't feel part of it any more. Have you ever been there? Big changes all around you, but you feel like, you're not part of it, a bit left out?

Peter makes a management decision; he's going fishing, and off they all go. It was night time, all night long, the boat dragged the nets up and down, up and down; not even a welly! Sunrise, and they knock it on the head.

100 metres from the shore, a silhouette shouts to them; have you got any fish? They shake their heads. He replies, look at the starboard side of your boat, I can see loads of fish there - go get them. Well, what have they got to lose? Might as well try one last drop of the nets. Here goes. Well, the boat started to move, they had a battle royal to get all those fish on board. John mentions to Peter, I think that's Jesus. In an instant Peter loses all interest in fish, puts his coat on and swims to shore.

The other six disciples manage to drag all the fish to the shore, Peter helps and counts the fish, 153, not a Biblically significant number like 3, 7, 12 or 50. They see Jesus had already set up a barbecue with fish and toast on it and He invited them to breakfast.

Tuck in everyone to a hearty breakfast. Afterwards, Jesus turns to Peter and asks him a question, then another similar question and then repeats the second question -

V15. Question 1.) Do you love me more than these (referring to the other 10 disciples)? A bit ambiguous in NIV/NKJV, clearer in the Amplified.

Amplified - John 21:15 AMP

[15] So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these [others do—with total commitment and devotion]?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You [with a deep, personal affection, as for a close friend]." Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs."

Feed my lambs. This is one of a very few of Jesus's references to lambs. There's plenty of references to sheep, not least the parable of the Good Shepherd, but most references to lambs involved the lamb being sacrificed, and ultimately, Jesus was the lamb of God. The exception is - Luke 10:3. Why lambs? What does Jesus mean here; 'Feed my lambs'? To look after new converts.

Jesus repeats the question, V16. Peter repeats his answer. Jesus modifies His response, feed my sheep. What two things stand out from these verses? Peter's love for Jesus is important to Him, and Jesus rewards him with a commission.

V17. 3rd time of trying. Why did Jesus need to ask Peter the same question 3 times? Was it linked in some way to the three denials? I think Peter thought that Jesus was having a go at him; he was becoming increasingly agitated. Note, there's no record in any of the Gospels of Peter confessing, apologising, repenting or mentioning the denial. Have you a sin so bad in your mind that you struggle to confess it God? Back to the question. Peter's reply, and it's a good one; it's almost a question, you know all things, so why do you need to ask?

V18-19. Jesus tells Peter, he will be martyred. Poor Peter, I wonder how he felt, knowing he'd meet with an untimely and violent death.

V20. Peter points to John and asks, what about him? Note, John never refers to himself by name but description, and Peter refers to him by pointing. It's a human flaw, we feel a wee bit comforted if someone we know is suffering the way we do.

V21. Instead of telling Peter off, Jesus answers Peter's question with a question. What is it to you?