

Peter's Conundrum

John 13.36-38

Series: Signs of Life

Corona Connections

November 22, 2020

I. **Pride before the fall**

- A. Saturday a week ago I was playing golf
 - 1. I played ok on the front nine
 - a. Can't remember the score – wasn't terrible
 - 2. But the back nine – I was clicking on all cylinders
 - a. I was cooking with gas
 - b. I was hitting most every shot the way I intended
 - c. I put together 9 pars in a row – played the back nine even par
 - 3. In golf psychology, nine holes like that can be dangerous
 - a. It can lead to delusions of grandeur
 - 4. I'm thinking, "I've finally got this game figured out"
 - a. "I can really play this game!"
 - b. "Finally got it mastered"
 - c. "Wonder what I have to do to qualify for the Senior's Tour"
- B. Then I played this past Thursday
 - 1. I couldn't wait to get to the course
 - a. I was on a roll
 - b. I knew what I was doing
 - 2. First hole – 8!
 - a. That was after I experienced both green side sand traps
 - b. Which means I ended up hitting out of one sand trap into the other sand trap
 - 3. I was 11 over par for the front nine
 - a. The 35 on the back nine on Saturday turned into a 47 on the front nine on Thursday
 - 4. It was as if an audible voice from God said, "Don't quit your day job"
- C. I love to play golf
 - 1. But golf is a sanctifying game
 - a. It was, after all, invented by a bunch of Scottish Calvinists
 - 2. It teaches you how inherently terrible you really are
 - a. It teaches you how vulnerable you are to failure
 - 3. Just at the moment you think you're on top of the world
 - a. You're in the lake or the bushes or somewhere near Davis Rd.
- D. I thank God that golf is only a game
 - 1. One psychologist said that games are "serious activity with non-serious consequences"
 - 2. I thank God that my failures on the golf course are not serious
 - a. Not life-threatening
 - b. Eternity doesn't hang in the balance if I miss the putt

- II. Text – **Peter’s Fall Predicted**
- A. Peter wasn’t playing golf
 - 1. There weren’t any Scottish Calvinists around in his day
 - 2. And he was playing no game
 - B. And yet he learned, the hard way, a similar lesson
 - 1. That, in spite of the fact that he was in the prime of his life
 - a. That he was hanging out with the King of kings
 - b. That he was the leader of King’s cabinet, as it were
 - c. That he was privy to many of the secrets of the King’s kingdom
 - 2. That he was a frail creature of the dust
 - a. That he was spiritually vulnerable
 - b. That he was a decision away from moral failure
 - 3. That in the very next moment he could go from the penthouse to the outhouse
 - C. And the consequences for just such a fall were anything but “non-serious”
 - D. In our text this morning Jesus predicts that fall
 - 1. And in so doing, warns Peter
 - a. With a warning that we would all do well to hear
 - b. And do well to take seriously
 - E. Because I don’t know about you, I’d rather respond to the warning and avoid the consequences
 - 1. Than, like Peter, have to learn it the hard way
 - F. **John 13:36–38** (NKJV) — 36 Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.” 37 Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.” 38 Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

- III. Don’t miss the obvious
- A. What are the lessons we can learn?
 - B. **Everyone can fall**
 - 1. If Peter can fall, any one of us can fall
 - a. He was in the prime of his life
 - b. He had, or so he thought, the world by the tail
 - 2. In fact, Peter was as prepared as anyone could be to face the temptations he faced
 - a. Jesus had warned the disciples that danger and tribulation would face them
 - b. He was with disciples when they were about to up to Jerusalem and Thomas said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him”
 - c. He was aware of the danger – brought a sword with him as they approached Gethsemane – and he used it
 - 3. And there was no lacking in zeal in Peter either

- a. His commitment to Jesus was thorough and emphatic
 - b. “I will lay down my life for Your sake”
 - 4. Peter was prepared as well as anyone – yet he fell
- C. Normally we aren’t as prepared for failure as Peter
 - 1. Think of David
 - a. Maybe we can relate to David even more than Peter – for David was older when he fell
 - 2. David was in his later years when he sinned with Bathsheba
 - a. He had been king in Hebron for 7 years before Jerusalem
 - b. Had gone through the trials and tribulations with his son Absalom, and survived it all
 - c. He was on the home stretch of his life and kingly reign
 - 3. He was old now; past the time when temptations would rear their ugly heads
 - a. We think of temptations as being something we deal with in our youth
 - b. David was anything but a youth
 - 4. He had decided to take a vacation
 - a. He deserved it
 - b. All he’d been through, a little R&R was in order
 - c. He didn’t need a McDonald’s commercial to say “You deserve a break today”
 - d. So when the army went out to battle, even though kings would normally go out with them, he took the day off
 - e. He relaxed
 - f. He decided to look after number one
 - 5. That’s when he saw Bathsheba bathing from the rooftop of the palace
 - a. And arranged to have her
 - b. And committed adultery with her
 - c. A sin that would eventually lead to murder
 - 6. And David, the Bible says, was a man after God’s own heart
 - 7. If Peter and David can fall
 - a. Anyone can fall
 - 8. The fall can be sexual
 - a. Financial
 - b. Emotional – susceptible to anger, irritability
 - c. Relational – fall into hatred
 - d. Power – take excess advantage of our privileges
 - e. List of sins into which we can fall is nearly endless
 - 9. Anyone can fall
 - a. And we can fall into nearly every category of sin
- D. There are two strategies the Devil uses with temptation
 - 1. When faced with temptation he wants us to think that there’s no way we can survive it, no way we can withstand the temptation
 - a. **1 Corinthians 10:13** (NKJV) — 13 No temptation has overtaken

you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

2. But the other strategy Satan uses is to convince us that we can't fall
 - a. We're too old to fall
 - b. We're too experienced to fall
 - c. We're too religious to fall
 - d. We're too moral to fall
- E. But anyone can fall

IV. **Why did Peter fall?**

A. **Not on the same page as Jesus**

1. Remember last week
 - a. Judas has left; Jesus dismissed him to do what he was going to do
 - b. Then Jesus says this
 - c. **John 13:33–35** (NKJV) — 33 Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
2. **John 13:36** (NKJV) — 36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"...
 - a. He completely missed the teaching about love!
 - b. Completely oblivious to one of the most important teachings Jesus had given to the disciples to date – the new commandment!
 - c. And instead he says, "Where are you going?"
3. How easy it is to get wrapped up in our own little world and miss what Jesus is really wanting to say to us
 - a. Peter is absorbed in Jesus leaving
 - b. So much so, that this critical teaching on loving one another as Christ has loved them is lost to him

B. **Overconfidence**

1. Already alluded to that in the illustration
 - a. Peter, if anything could be said about him, was that he had an overabundance of confidence
 - b. Of all the disciples, he was the one they relied on for guidance and direction
 - c. The disciples wouldn't do anything without Peter's affirmation
2. Overconfidence was evident in what Peter said to Jesus
 - a. "Lord, why can I not follow you now?"
 - b. Peter is so confident that he's actually Jesus' statement
 - c. Jesus: "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now"
 - d. Peter: "I can too!... I can certainly follow you"

3. Then comes the audacious claim: “I will lay down my life for Your sake”
 - a. Oh really!
 - b. This is one of the great ironies of this episode
 - c. Peter claims he would lay down his life for Jesus
 - d. But Jesus was leaving so He could lay down His life for Peter
 4. Peter didn’t understand that apart from Jesus, apart from abiding in Him, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit in his life, he’s just a pathetic, weak spiritual failure
 - a. That’s why Jesus spent Chapter 15 in John teaching the disciples about abiding in the vine
 - b. Where He said “Apart from me you can do nothing”
 - c. Luther: “Nothing is not a little bit of something”
 - d. Nothing is nothing; apart from Jesus, we are toast
 5. I don’t want to be too hard on Peter
 - a. His excessive confidence, his enthusiasm, was born out of devotion to Jesus
 - b. But it was an ignorant enthusiasm
 - c. He didn’t realize what it really took to withstand temptation
- C. **Failure to pray**
1. Not far from overconfidence is the failure to pray
 - a. Indeed, if you feel like you can’t be tempted, or are not susceptible to temptation, you would not spend the time with God in prayer, seeking His spiritual resources which can alone keep you from sinning
 - b. Amazingly, prayer is one of the key features of Jesus’ own warnings to his disciples in order to avoid falling into temptation
 - c. At least three times Peter, along with the disciples, was warned
 2. **“Pray that you will not fall into temptation”**
 - a. Jesus said it to the disciples when they first entered the Garden of Gethsemane (**Luke 22.40**)
 - b. Then He said it a second time to Peter after Jesus returned from His first episode of prayer in the Garden and found them sleeping (**Matthew 26.40-41, Mark 14.37-38**).
 - c. Then He said it a third time just before the Jewish militia arrived to take Him prisoner and Judas identified Him with a kiss (**Luke 22.46**)
 3. Three times in one evening – Jesus urges them to pray
 - a. Not just to pray in general
 - b. But to pray that they would not fall into temptation!
 4. Overconfidence leads to prayerlessness
 5. Recently in Study with the Pastor, using the Scripture Union Encounter With God devotional, we studied the episode with the blind beggar
 - a. The beggar who wouldn’t be silenced; who called out to Jesus in a cry of utter desperation
 - b. In our staff devotions we discussed times when we cried out to

- God in desperation
 - c. We observed that a lot of the time we really don't realize that we really are desperate
 - 6. How easy it is to become complacent, to become overconfident
 - a. So our prayers are listless, lifeless, lethargic
 - 7. Peter was urged three times by Jesus to pray lest he fall into temptation
 - a. Evidently, he was just as oblivious about that admonition as he was about the teaching about the New Commandment
 - 8. Prayerlessness is a second reason why Peter succumbed to temptation
- D. **Distance from Jesus**
 - 1. There is yet another reason Peter succumbed
 - 2. After Jesus had been arrested, the disciples scattered
 - a. Peter evidently did too – for a time
 - b. Then curiosity got the better of him
 - c. And he turned around and followed after Jesus
 - 3. But note what the NT says about that
 - a. **Luke 22:54** (NKJV) — 54 Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance.
 - 4. He followed Jesus – but he kept his distance
 - a. Jesus was in danger; He had been arrested
 - b. A trial was imminent
 - c. The die was cast
 - d. The Romans would be involved
 - e. Peter could see things going south in a hurry
 - 5. He followed – give him that much credit
 - a. But this is a far cry from Peter's audacious exclamation, "I will lay down my life for Your sake!"
 - b. Maybe not
 - c. "Let's see what might happen first – don't want to be too hasty"
 - 6. The more we keep our distance from Jesus, the more susceptible we are to temptation
 - a. Oh, we follow Jesus, to be sure
 - b. But we try not to get too close
 - c. If we're too close to Jesus people might think we're fanatics
 - d. So we'll accept the label; but let's not overdo it
 - e. We'll follow at a distance
 - 7. When Peter did that, his claim that "I will lay down my life for Your sake" turned into a denial in the terrifying face of – a servant girl and her friends!
 - a. Not even in the face of the Jewish religious leaders
 - b. Not even in the face of Roman soldiers or Pontius Pilate
 - c. But when confronted by a bunch of lowly servants he swore with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"
 - d. Only hours before, "I will lay down my life for Your sake!"
 - e. Now – "I don't know the Man!"

8. Peter was following Jesus
 - a. But at a distance
 - b. What about you?
 - c. How closely are you attached to Jesus?
9. Reminds me of an OT story concerning David
 - a. David was on the run from Saul
 - b. One of the priests – Ahimelech – had assisted David when he had passed through Nob in his escape
 - c. Saul discovered how the priests had helped David, so he murdered the priests of Nob – 85 of them!
 - d. But one of them escaped – the son of Ahimelech, a priest named Abiathar
 - e. He comes to David, tells him that his father and all the other priests of Nob have been killed by Saul
 - f. David says, essentially, “I knew that’s what would happen”
 - g. Then this is what is remarkable about that story
 - h. David tells Abiathar: **1 Samuel 22:23** (NKJV) — 23 “Stay with me; do not fear. For he who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you shall be safe.”
 - i. Do you see what David is saying?
 - j. “Abiathar, Saul is out to get me. He wants to kill me. I’m as good as dead... but stick with me and you’ll be safe”
 - k. What I would have said would have been, “Look Abiathar, Saul wants to kill me. The last guy you want to hang around with is me! Get as far away from me as you can!”
10. But you see, that’s not God’s economy
 - a. Jesus is as good as dead in John 13
 - b. But the safest place to be is with Jesus
 - c. The world says, the safest place to be is away from Jesus
 - d. Peter follows – doesn’t want to get too close
 - e. But you can’t be too close to Jesus

V. **Peter v. Judas**

- A. This can be a very challenging passage
 1. One of the disciples – arguably the strongest, most passionate, most zealous – the leader of the disciples – fails
 - a. Reminding us of how frail we all are
 - b. How susceptible to temptation we are
 2. But this section of John is not all gloom and doom
 - a. There is a powerful comparison unfolding in this section
 - b. A comparison between Judas Iscariot – who betrayed Jesus
 - c. And Peter – who denied Jesus
 3. The end of one was final
 - a. Judas was the one who was lost
 - b. **John 17:12** (NKJV) — 12 While I was with them in the world, I

kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

- c. Judas – the son of perdition
- d. Lost forever
- 4. The end of the other was not
 - a. Peter’s fall was serious
 - b. Peter’s fall was consequential
 - c. But it was not final
 - d. Why not?
- B. Why was Peter’s fall not final?
 - 1. Jesus prayed for Peter
 - a. **Luke 22:31–32** (NKJV) — 31 And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”
 - b. Boice: ... Satan had come to Jesus boasting that Peter was nothing but a bag of hot air and that if he, Satan, were allowed to blow on him, Peter would sail away like chaff when the wind separates it from the grain at threshing time. Jesus answered that there was indeed a great deal of chaff in Peter but that Satan was wrong in thinking that Peter was nothing but chaff. ‘My grain is in Peter,’ he said. ‘Consequently, I will let you blow on him; but when you are done all you will have succeeded in doing is blowing away some of the chaff. Peter will be stronger than before.
 - c. Amazingly, Peter failed to pray
 - d. But Jesus prayed for Peter
 - e. That his faith would not fail
 - f. What would we do without the prayers of Jesus for us!
 - g. **Hebrews 7:25** (NKJV) — 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
 - h. If you believe in Jesus, He’s praying for you!
 - i. That your faith would not fail
 - j. If it wasn’t for the prayers of Jesus, I’m toast; I’m chaff – blown away with the wind
 - k. If there is any vestige of faith in me it’s because of the prayers of Jesus Christ
 - l. That’s why Peter’s fall was not final
 - m. That’s why ours won’t be either if we are genuine believers
 - 2. Jesus restored Peter
 - a. Recorded in John 21
 - b. Peter denied Jesus three times
 - c. Jesus asked Peter three times, “Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?”

- d. Then Jesus said, “Feed My sheep; tend My sheep; feed My sheep”
 - e. **1 John 1:9** (NKJV) — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - f. When Jesus restores, He gives us a place of ministry
 - g. It might not be the same as it was
 - h. But Jesus is not finished with us
- C. This is a sobering passage
- 1. But it is not a passage without hope
 - 2. Confess
 - a. Overconfidence
 - b. Prayerlessness
 - c. Distance from Jesus
 - d. Any sin into which temptation has led you

Benediction

Jude 24–25 (NKJV) — 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.