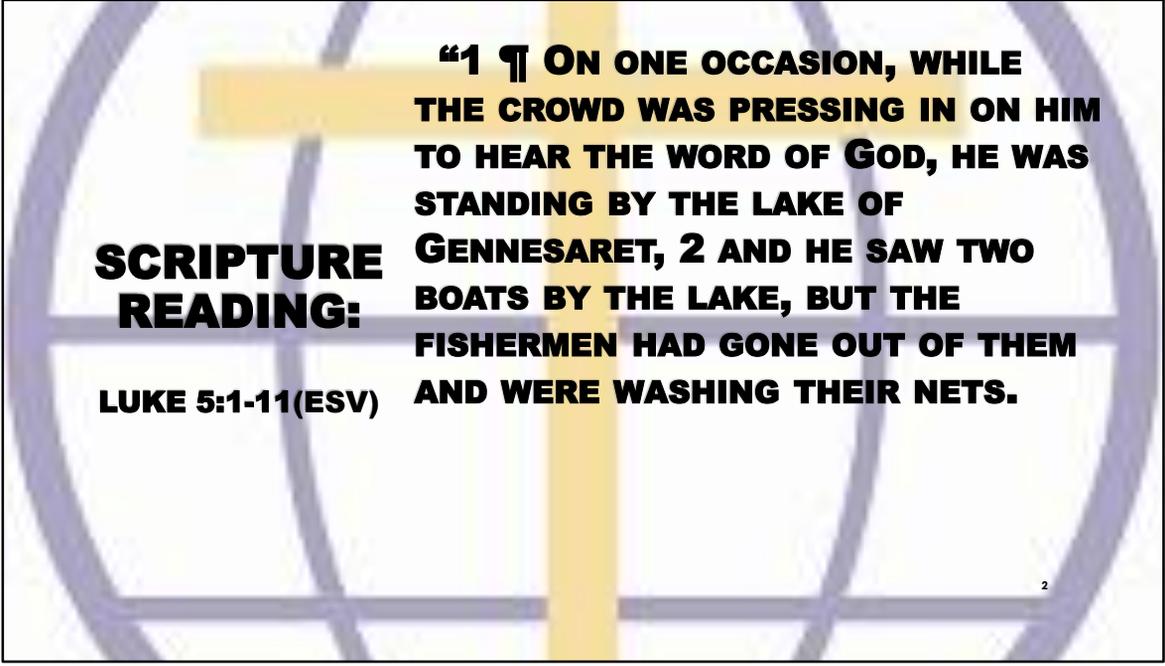


JESUS' FAITHFULNESS AND THE BOLDNESS OF PETER

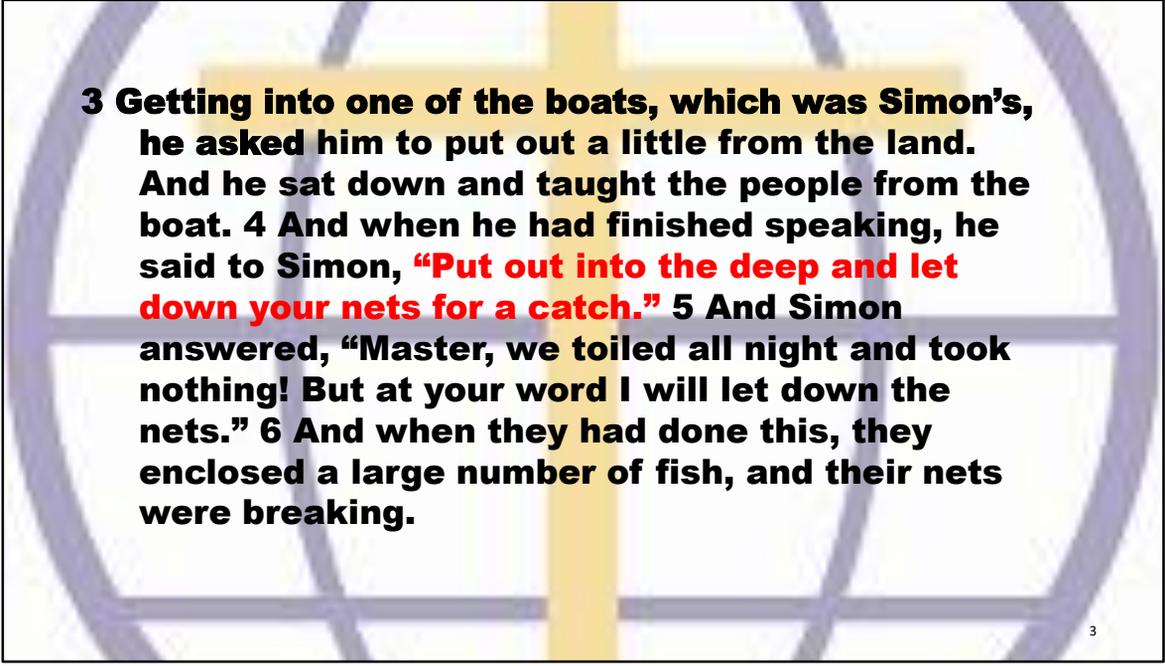
**Grace Communion International
Minister: Eric Vautour
Date: February 10, 2019
5th Sunday After Epiphany**



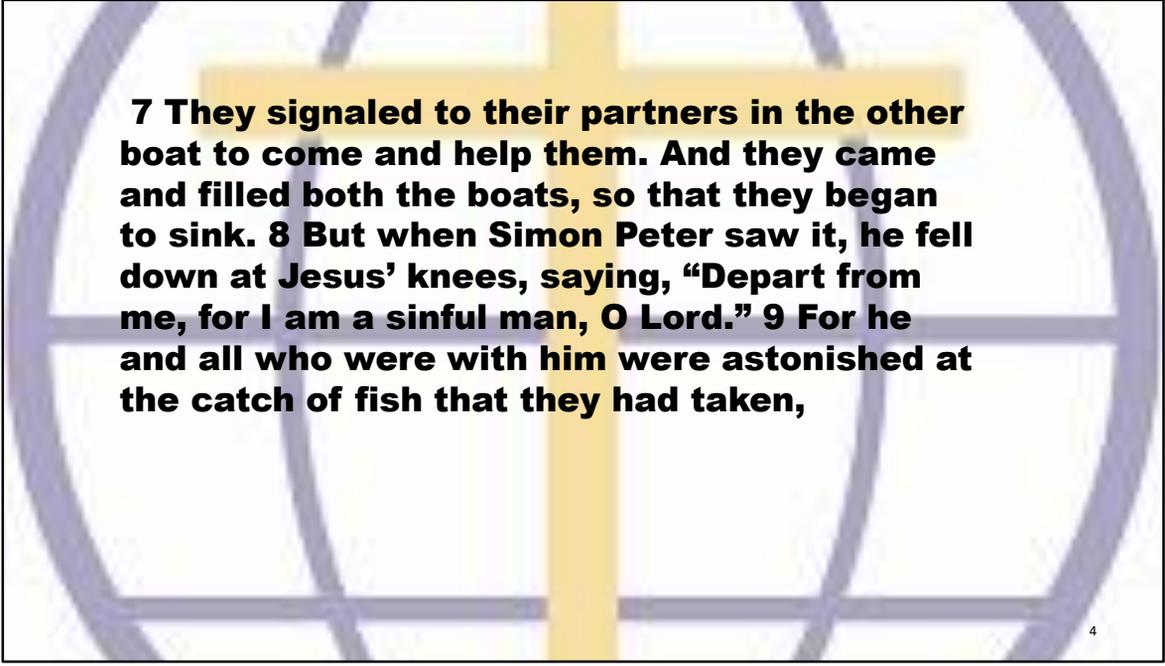
**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

LUKE 5:1-11(ESV)

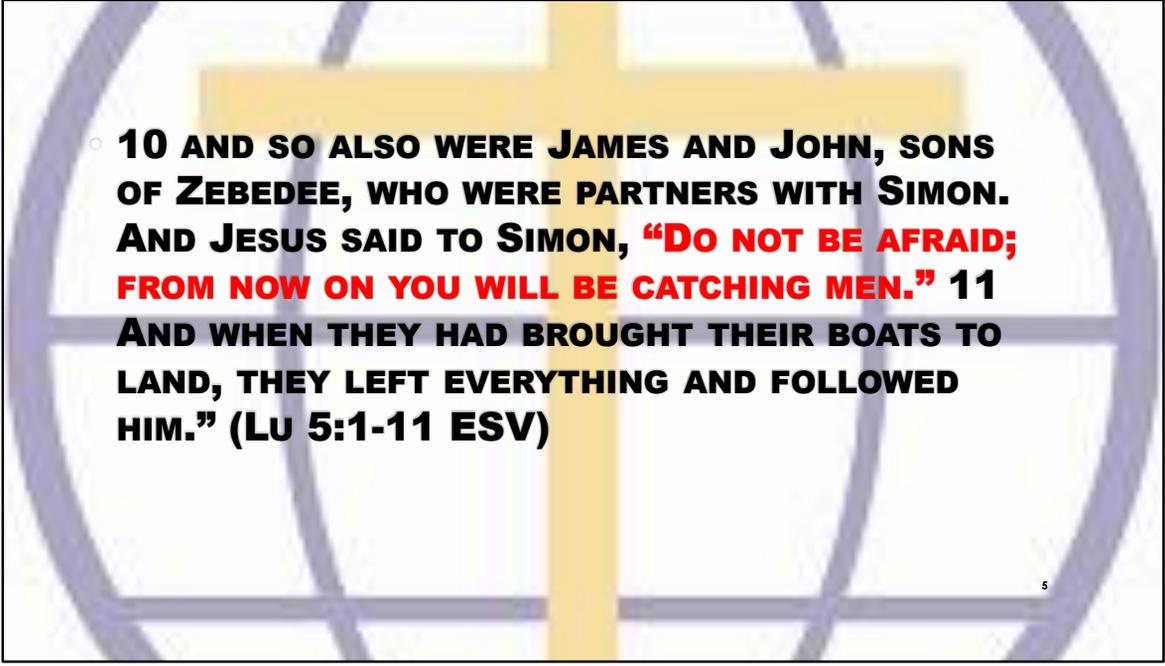
**“1 ¶ ON ONE OCCASION, WHILE
THE CROWD WAS PRESSING IN ON HIM
TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD, HE WAS
STANDING BY THE LAKE OF
GENNESARET, 2 AND HE SAW TWO
BOATS BY THE LAKE, BUT THE
FISHERMEN HAD GONE OUT OF THEM
AND WERE WASHING THEIR NETS.**

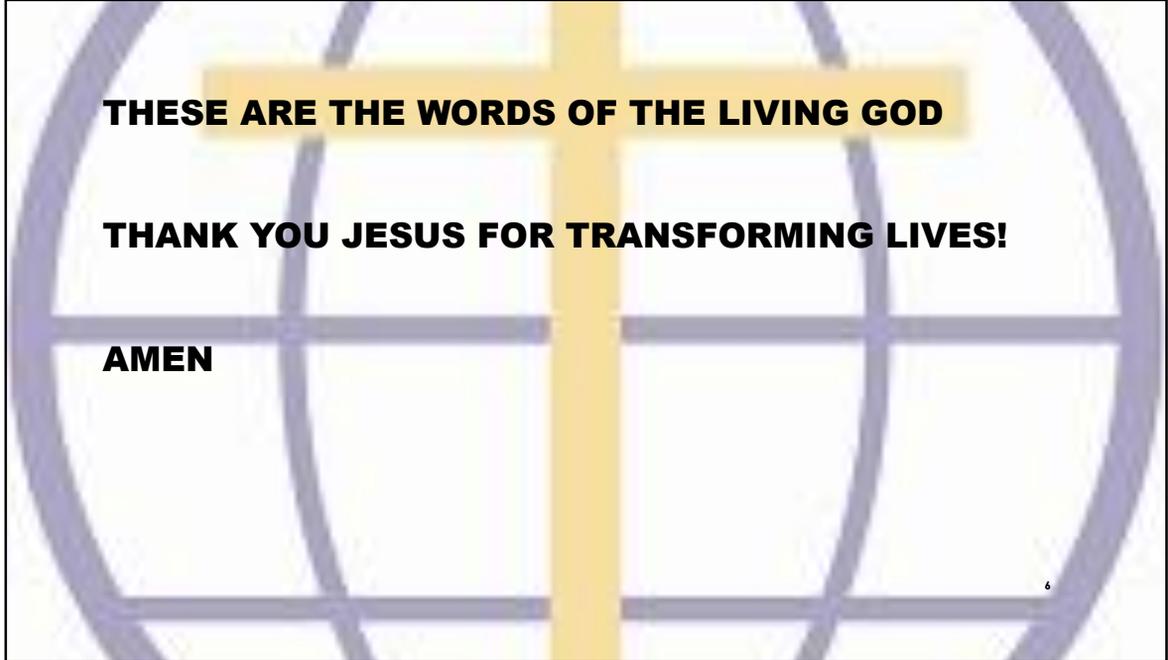


3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.



7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,

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- **10 AND SO ALSO WERE JAMES AND JOHN, SONS OF ZEBEDEE, WHO WERE PARTNERS WITH SIMON. AND JESUS SAID TO SIMON, “DO NOT BE AFRAID; FROM NOW ON YOU WILL BE CATCHING MEN.” 11 AND WHEN THEY HAD BROUGHT THEIR BOATS TO LAND, THEY LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED HIM.” (LU 5:1-11 ESV)**



During today's sermon, we are going to stop and think Peter's boldness and Jesus' faithfulness.

In setting the scene, Dr. Luke indicates in his Gospel that people were eager to hear the word of God from Jesus. They all realized that there was something very special about this man and his relationship with God. In the Old Testament, they were accustomed to hearing from prophets. At that particular time, the crowds did not realize that Jesus was the last revelation from God—that he was God in the flesh. They understood that in the past that God had spoken to their fathers through the writing and the words of the prophets. They did not yet realize that God the Father was speaking to them through his eternal Son. (Hebrews 1).

It is only by revelation that we can know that Jesus is the Son of God and a member of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Even today, many people have heard the name Jesus. They know he existed. They do not know or believe that he was God in the flesh while on earth, that he was resurrected from death by crucifixion and that he has now ascended to heaven as the

perfect man representing humanity.

The Bible does not tell us what Jesus preach to the crowd while standing in Simon's (later called Peter) fishing boat.

Peter had been fishing all night without catching anything. Jesus told him to go into the deep and give it another try. The catch was enormous so much so that his boat began to sink. They had to unload part of the cargo in his partners' fishing boat. There was so much fish that both boats were full, so full indeed that they began to sink.

Peter realized that he was before a perfect presence. Luke tells us that Simon Peter fell on his knees **and asked Jesus to go away from him because he was a sinful man.**

Fleeing God or asking God to depart is the normal reaction of sinful man.

It first began in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned and decided to function independently from God. Sin completely changed man's perception both of God and of himself. Both Adam and Eve realize that they were naked. For the first time in their life, they were ashamed of their nakedness and feared God's holy presence. We read in Genesis 3 that when they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, that the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

God called him and asked where they were. Adam admitted that he was afraid of God because he was naked.

There misperception of God and of themselves changed everything for humanity.

God had previously told them of the seriousness of their sin if they disobeyed him. He plainly told them that if they eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they would surely die. Their relationship with God would be severed or cut from the source of life who is God. When they did eat of this tree, they became captive to the power of sin and death. Adam and Eve felt unworthy to be before God and they fled from him. They were afraid of his holy presence. They were trapped in the false thinking and behavior that they could succeed apart from God.

Of course, their rejection of God did not stop God's mercy and love towards them and their descendants. **Man rejected God but God did not reject man.** This is important to understand.

The good news in all of this is that God knew before the foundation of the world that Adam and Eve would fall into Satan's trap of deceitfulness. From the beginning, from

before time, the triune God decided that Jesus would come to the earth to redeem us. Jesus accepted voluntarily.

In God's word, we see another example of someone becoming very fearful because he was in the presence of holiness. (Next slide)

“1 ¶ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 ¶ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”” (Isa 6:1-5 ESV)

Karl Barth describes the holiness of God very well.

“The holiness of God describes the form of his attitude in this fellowship. Sin is whatever disturbs and makes this fellowship impossible. For this reason God’s attitude in this fellowship is characterized by holiness, exclusiveness, the condemnation and annihilation of sin. The holiness of God does involve peril to the man with whom he has fellowship. Since sin disturbs this fellowship and makes it impossible, man himself becomes impossible. As a sinful man, he cannot stand before God. He must perish... In the presence of God man stands or fall as he becomes holy. But he becomes holy in virtue of the holiness of the God who graciously takes action on his behalf.” (Page 364 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

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As we remember from the Old Testament when God gave the 10 Commandments to Israel. God told Moses to set limits around Mount Sinai. If they came too close to the mountain, to God’s presence, they would die. Sinful man cannot stand in God’s presence and live.

We also read in the Old Testament that God’s presence was in the holy of holies. Only the high priest could enter the holy of holy once a year after he had purified himself as per God’s instruction. The high priest was not sinless. He could not stand in God’s

presence and live without submitting to the requirements of holiness instructed by God.

Once purified, the high priest would go in the holy of holies in God's presence representing all the people. He was prescribed exactly what to do and how the people could be relieved of their transgression and all their sins once a year. (Leviticus 16.) Because the high priest was not perfectly sinless, he could not take away sin. The Israelites could not enter God's holy presence.

The Jews celebrated the feast of Atonement once a year the day after the feast of Tabernacles. The Torah was read in the synagogue so Peter was aware of the holiness of God and how no one could stand before God and live. Peter did not feel worthy of being in the holy presence who was before him.

Peter had the humility to admit that he was a sinner.

Peter obviously did not understand at that time that Jesus, God with us, had come to the earth as a man to restore the relationship between God and man. God never stop loving man but man was trapped in the situation of slavery to sin and death which he could not escape. Peter did not realize that it was okay for him to stand before Jesus and be accepted, not because of himself but because of Jesus. He did not understand that Jesus had come to the earth to restore the broken relationship between God and man by taking on our broken human nature. Jesus came to the earth so that man could have fellowship with God again, a fellowship that had been lost at the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

In our age of feel-good psychology, even in the church we tend not to speak much about sinfulness and how serious it is. Just like Adam and Eve shifted the blame for their behaviour unto others outside themselves, we can see problems and sinfulness in others better than we see it in ourselves or admit in ourselves.

It's hard to accept God's diagnosis that we are sinners in need of God's grace and repentance.

The encouraging news is that in spite of Peter's fallenness and admission that he was a sinner, Jesus, the God man, was going to act on his behalf and on the behalf of all humanity so that we could enter the throne room of God with assurance through Jesus, the perfect man in heaven. This is an enormous privilege.

Instead of rejecting Peter because he was sinful, Jesus told Peter, after that miraculous catch of fish, that he would make Peter a fisher of men.

Peter did not want to be in the presence of Jesus but Jesus told him that he could be saving his presence. Jesus had big plans for Peter.

As we look at God's word, we see God's patience with Peter. When we read about Jesus's attitude, we read about God the Father's attitude and the Holy Spirit's attitude. We see the attitude of the one God.

Peter made many blunders. He sinned while in the presence of Jesus. He simply did not understand in spite of what Jesus was saying and in spite of the many miracles Jesus did to prove that he was the Son of Man, the son of God. Jesus not only performed miracles but he also forgave sins, a prerogative belonging only to God.

This morning we will not have the time to go into all of Peter faux-pas and misunderstandings but we will look at a few.

“21 ¶ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.””
(Mt 16:21-23 ESV)

Peter's understanding was imperfect. In verses 13–21 of Matthew 16, we read that Jesus said to the disciples, “But who do you say that I am?”. Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ the son of the living God.” And Jesus went on to tell him that this revelation did not, from flesh and blood, from man, but that it had been revealed to him by God the father who is in heaven.

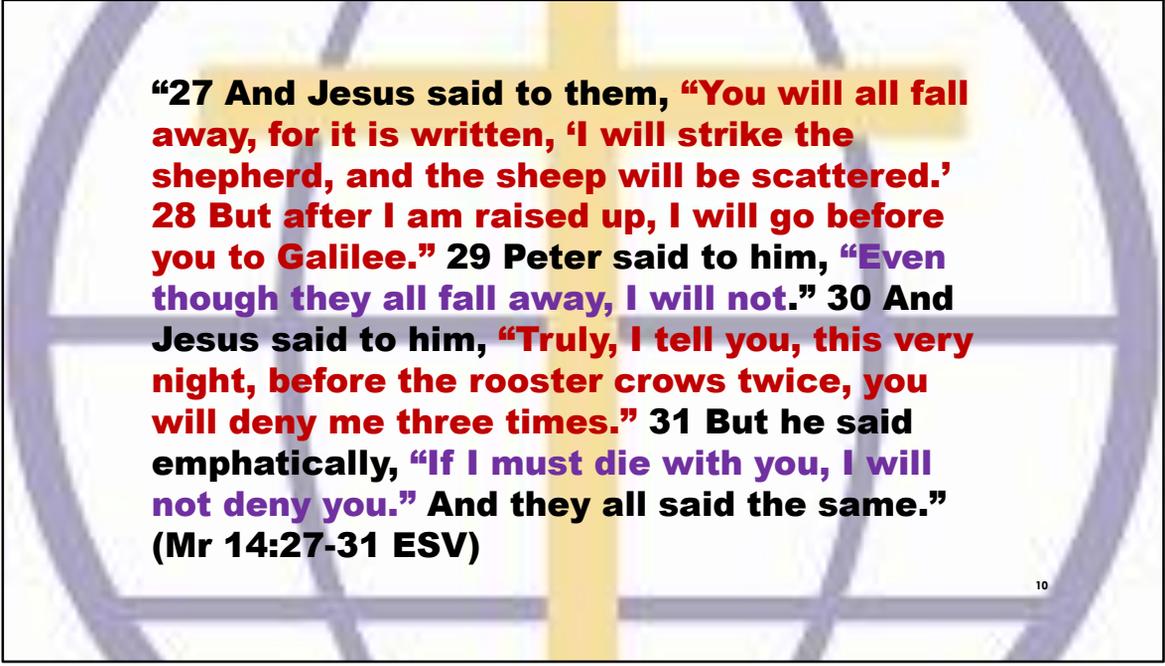
Although he understood by God's revelation who Jesus was, he did not understand Jesus' mission. When Jesus told his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem to suffer much from the religious establishment and be killed, but Peter could not accept this. Jesus told them that he would be raised on the third day. Peter, in his human thinking, to Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. He probably thought that he was offering a word of encouragement by saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”

Jesus told him in no uncertain terms that what he was saying was not from God but from Satan himself. He told Peter that he was a hindrance, that he was not helping and that his mind was not focused in the right place. He was not seeing why Jesus came to the earth.

The Jews of the time had a distorted view of who the Messiah would be and what he would do to save Israel. They thought that he would be coming as a conquering King. Instead, Jesus came to the earth to enter our experience and to submit himself completely to the penalty of sin which is death even though he was sinless. Maybe he did not hear the words that he would be resurrected on the 3rd day?

Peter's misunderstanding never changed Jesus' mind about Peter's calling. Through Peter's participation, Jesus would build his church from Peter's human leadership.

We ought to find great encouragement in Jesus' attitude towards Peter because this is the attitude he has towards all who place their faith in him.



“27 And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” 29 Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” 30 And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” 31 But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.” (Mr 14:27-31 ESV)

10

Jesus knows the human heart. He knew the heart of the disciples that without the presence of the Holy Spirit within them that they could not keep their good intentions even if their desire to do so was one of confidence. Jesus told them the prophecy found in **Zechariah 13:7** would be fulfilled. When the shepherd would be struck, they would be scattered.

Peter was very confident in his ability to withstand anything to stay faithful to Jesus. In other words, he said that if all the others failed to stand by Jesus that he was different, stronger, more determined, that he would not falter.

Jesus told him very clearly what would happen. Before the rooster would crow twice, Peter would deny him three times. He did not believe the words of Jesus so confident was he in his own determination. He told Jesus that he would die rather than to deny him.

Of course we know what happened. Peter denied Jesus three times and like the others, he abandoned Jesus. He even went further than the others. The others fled for fear of their life. Peter followed Jesus for a while but when confronted that he was one of his disciples, he flatly denied it. It was only after that he realized what he did. He felt

deep remorse and regret.

Betrayal by a friend is a very difficult thing to deal with. Jesus, being sinless, continued to love Peter in spite of his sins. He took Peter's sin as well as all of our sins to the cross by being sin for us. He had no sin. He was sinless. He condemned sin in the flesh by completely defeating it through his death and resurrection. Sin is a horrible thing in God's eyes. He opposes sin with a passion because it hurts us too much. How much he hates sin and its consequence is shown by the price he paid to overcome and defeat it for us. He gave his very life!

Before I even knew that God was calling me, I was once betrayed by three colleagues. I remember well the devastation I felt when they turned against me because, rather than confronting the boss, I was following his instructions which I thought at the time were good. I did not see any problems. I was enthusiastic in what I was doing and had no idea that they felt my behaviour made them look bad. I was completely oblivious to their thoughts and feelings. Obviously, they had talked about this among themselves before confronting me. Jesus understands our struggles because he went through our regular human experiences, which are too often tainted by sin. Of course, unlike us, he never sinned.

Jesus took on the cross more than the betrayal of Peter. He took the betrayal of all of us with him on the cross.. As the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21, **“ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.” (Col 1:21-23 ESV).**

Jesus cancelled the record of death that stood against us with its legal demands. We are forgiven because all of our trespasses, our sins, our debt has been nailed to the cross. (From Colossians 2:14)

Just like Peter, because of what Jesus did on the cross in our place, we are presented holy and blameless and above reproach before him as we continue in the faith stable and steadfast. This is the gift that Jesus gives us, a gift for which we have no merit.

Jesus never abandoned Peter because he sent for him. Immediately after his resurrection, he told the women to go and tell Peter that he was resurrected. Even at that, Peter did not believe it. He had to run to the tomb and see for himself.

After the day of Pentecost, when Peter with the other disciples received the gift of the

Holy Spirit, he was emboldened to follow Christ to the point of death.

Many speculate that Peter and Paul were both martyred during the persecution of the early church. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified, but he asked to be on an upside-down cross, declaring he wasn't worthy to die as his Lord died. But before that, the Romans crucified his wife right in front of him as he yelled to her, "Remember Christ! Remember Christ!" (From <https://equipper.gci.org/2019/01/sermon-for-february-10-2019>)

We can learn a lot from the life of Peter. First of all, we see that God is completely for us.

Although we may fall in sin, Jesus never leaves us.

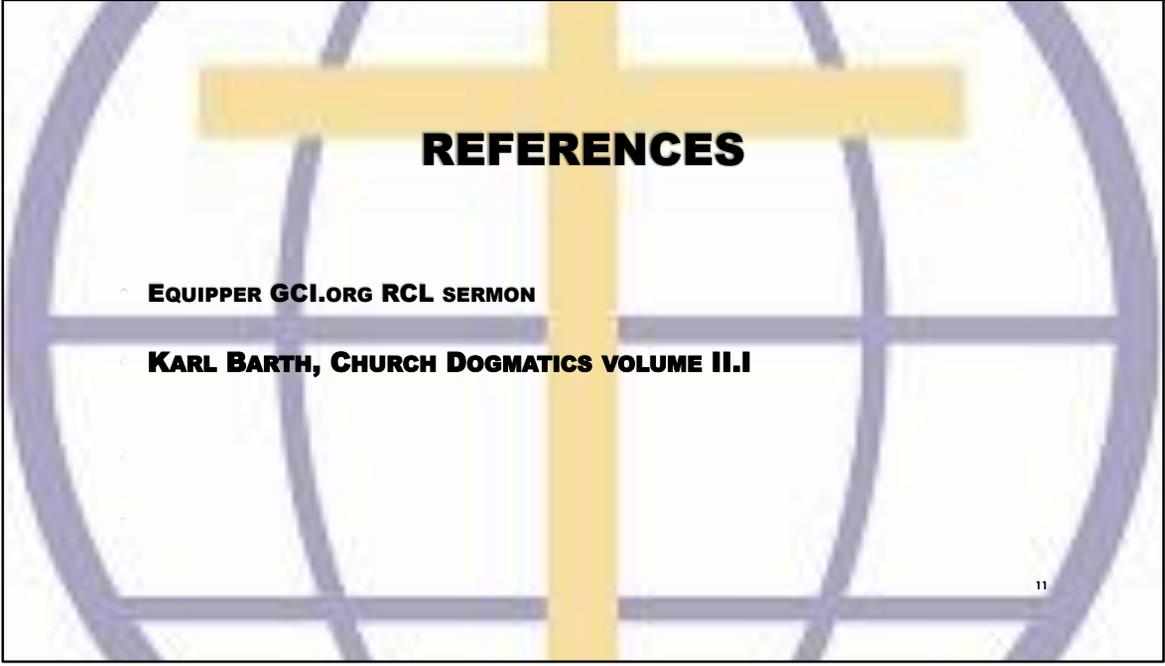
The apostle Peter was not afraid to act even if he made mistakes. The lesson for us is that even if we make mistakes, and we all do, that should never be an excuse to keep us from following Jesus where he leads us through the Holy Spirit. Past mistakes ought not to influence how we respond to God now or in the future.

The apostle Peter was so confident in what Jesus did that he wrote, **"3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire".** (2 :e 1:3-4 ESV).

Peter's life before he died was not always perfect. He was bold and he charged ahead serving God. He was confident that in Jesus, God has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness or holy living through the knowledge of God. Then he gives us the following encouragement. **"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."** (2 1e 1:10 ESV).

Let us find encouragement in God's love and mercy towards us, encouragement in what Jesus did for us and the encouragement we find in Peter's enthusiasm in following Jesus, his steadfastness and perseverance in spite of the mistakes he made. Jesus never left him! As Peter, let us be attached to Jesus because he is attached to us in the most intimate way, living in us through the Holy Spirit!

Let us pray.



REFERENCES

- **EQUIPPER GCI.ORG RCL SERMON**
- **KARL BARTH, CHURCH DOGMATICS VOLUME II.I**