

Reading: John 13:31-38

Theme: Pride before a fall!

In the verses we read we have seen 3 main things so far in previous weeks:

- 1. The glory of the Son of Man and God (v31 & 32);**
- 2. The physical absence of Christ (v33);**
- 3. The physical presence of Christ's people (v34-35)**

Now we going to come to the 4th area involving Peter and we will see **Questioning Self-Confidence Smashed. (v36-38)** There is a proverb "*Pride comes before a fall*" and this is shown clearly by Peter's actions later that night and into the next morning. We will look at these verses using 3 headings - each taken from the main heading for this 4th area:

A. Questioning. (v36)

Peter, in v36, asks the obvious question based on what Jesus said at end of v33. I doubt he is on his own wanting to know the answer, but he is curious, is wondering, but this question is almost out of place. Jesus has spoken of His being glorified and all that follows on from that. Jesus gave the new commandment and the need for obedience to such. He has been quite clear about these things which had big implications. Human nature being what it is, Peter wants to know more about that which seems to be secret and wants his curiosity gratified more than his life and his conscience taught.

Peter asks "*Lord where are you going?*" It appears he had not been listening, not been paying attention over recent weeks, months, even that evening. Jesus had spoken to the Jews of

His death (John 7:33-34; 8:21) using similar words to v33, had spoken most clearly in recent weeks of His death and sufferings to His disciples. He had been anointed for the day of His burying even earlier that week (John 12:7); had spoken to His disciples only a few moments earlier of Him being glorified, of only being with them a little while longer. Surely, Peter had some clue, some inkling as to what Jesus was referring to! Perhaps he knew, but was curious to find out more, even to talk Him out of it - as He had tried previously. So, Peter asks the question as to where Jesus was going.

We can so often have questions - not because we are ignorant, but because we like to speculate and question. Yet our Lord wants us to be, first of all, obedient to those things He has clearly revealed to us and not to be caught up in speculative, even divisive questions.

Peter's question is met by Jesus' answer "*Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow.*" Peter was curious, wondered if he could share this going away with Jesus. He could not then at that time enter into such. The atoning work of Christ could only be accomplished by Him. Peter will claim he was ready to die with Jesus and this was probably in his heart as he asks the question and declared that if it was death, he would die with Jesus. Yet Peter could not go there with Jesus and die, but if Peter could not die then, he would "*follow later, follow afterwards*".

Jesus is probably saying that it was not time for Peter to die, but he would later die and die by crucifixion (*so church history tells us*), but his time was not now, but later,

afterwards. This would happen after he had matured, served Jesus, after he had grown in strength and would be given dying grace. At that time Peter was still not ready for his death – as he would show initially by denying Jesus and running away.

Peter would suffer martyrdom and so follow Christ to the cross. Not that Peter's death was in anyway comparable to Jesus' death except in that it was by crucifixion. Peter's death had no merit in it, did nothing towards our eternal salvation. Only Jesus' death accomplished our salvation.

Jesus' words could also mean that He was going to be glorified and go to glory i.e. heaven, so Peter would one day follow Jesus to glory and do so only because of all Jesus would accomplish. Just as Jesus went to His Father via the cross, so too would Peter go to the Father via his own literal cross.

We are to understand that the Lord Jesus considers how we are as individuals, for He knows what we are like totally, our constitutions, frames and possibly we are not ready for something now and He will lovingly and wisely spare us that now. Maybe some suffering, or grief or trial; some hard time, but that doesn't mean we will be guaranteed exemption from it for all our lives. It may be we will have to grow, mature, be prepared for such and then, in our Lord's wise and loving care, we will have such. It may be that we not ready for blessings at this time also, could not handle such at this time e.g. Joseph.

We all have work to do as well needing work to be done in us by God. It has been said that a Christian is immortal until God's purposes are finished in and with us. Then, and only then, He will take us home. We also will follow our Saviour and go to glory and it may be through our times of hardship, or our own" crosses". It is unlikely we will be taken straight to glory the moment we believe and may have many years to wait, many ups and downs could lay between our conversion and going to heaven, but we shall follow later and we **will** be with Him in the glory of heaven whenever and whichever way He takes us there.

B. Self-confidence. (v37)

I think Peter realised that death was involved somewhere along the line and he, self-confidently, says he wants to follow Jesus there and then, for he was willing to die for Him and with Him. I don't think we are to put Peter down too much as we read his words, as it reveals his big heart as well as his big love and devotion to Jesus. He said what he truly felt and at that time - he was willing to die for Jesus. He also reveals, what we know only too well of him, his impatience when he says "*Why can't I follow you **now**?*" In many ways Peter was a man of our own generation, the now generation - I want and I want it now! I need it now! I want to do this now. Peter had seen and done great things, he had walked on water, seen the Transfiguration, healed the sick, cast out demons so asks why can he not be involved and involved now?

To his mind and heart, he really meant what he said. Sadly, good intentions in a cosy room, after a special meal with friends are far more attractive than when out in a cold dark

garden and facing a hostile mob! What was said was meant at that time, but Peter was full of false self-confidence “*I will lay down my life you*”. He felt he knew his heart, but his, as well as all our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked and we can’t understand them and Peter’s heart deceived him, for he was puffed up with self-confidence in his own strength and abilities, but it was a strength that proved to be his weakness.

I want us to learn from Peter and have a heart as big as his, a heart that loves and vows affection to the Lord Jesus, but we are also to be warned not to be puffed up in our own self-confidence and pride. We are to have a right questioning of our own steadfastness, abilities, talents and perseverance. We are to be very careful and take heed that we who think we stand; as we could so easily fall and even fall grievously and publicly. We may be sincere in our determination, but that does not mean we are guaranteed to stand firm! We may, in a fit of emotion or passion, pledge undying love and service to the Lord Jesus, but in the harsh realities of life it may soon evaporate.

We may feel we are a strong Christian and yet our supposed strength is because we have, in God’s grace, been kept from temptation, or been sheltered from conditions that would expose our weaknesses. We could so easily have Peter’s spirit upon us and have an unprepared self-confidence and be totally unprepared and ill-suited to that which we claim. We could, by nature, have puffed up ideas of ourselves, our abilities, talents, usefulness and worth; even that we are indispensable to our firm, club or church. Realise that graveyards are full of “indispensable” people and their causes go on!

If we feel like that, then we are showing our ignorance of our own hearts and our own frailty. The devil knows how to attack us as individuals. He knows our every weakness and every supposed strength and he can use those so easily to his own advantage! The more confident in self we are, then the more exposed to danger we are. The humblest ones are the safest - as pride really does go before a fall. If we do not trust in self, it means we are to have a greater trust in the Lord Jesus to keep us and help us. The trouble is we often say with our lips what we may not believe fully in our hearts! This is more than an admission of our proneness to self-confidence; this is a realisation of heart of what is really true of us as an individual, else we could have an air of arrogant self-confidence upon us as did Peter. We will go on to see how the Lord dealt with Peter, which at first seems harsh as Peter's words are:

C. Smashed. (v38)

Peter's self-confidence, his ego, his proud words seem smashed by the Lord Jesus. One moment fine words, no doubt drawing out admiration from the others, but then Jesus speaks of Peter denying Him 3 times and even questioning if Peter would really lay down his life for Him. There seems to be a note of irony in this verse "*Will you **really** lay down your life for me?*" Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself and the Lord Jesus would have to smash Peter's boasting pride which was shown by Peter's words. This is not some cold heartless putdown or exposé. It is the wise and loving Lord Jesus' smashing of arrogant self-confidence for Peter's good.

How Jesus must have winced inside as He heard Peter's vain boasting words, for He knew that he and the others would soon desert Him, but Peter would soon be denying Him even when challenged by little girls and all this occur before the sun rose the next morning.

To try to remove from Peter his arrogant, self-confidence spirit, Jesus has to sadly, but lovingly smash this boasting even at that time and He did so for Peter's own good. Those words were as some really bitter tasting medicine which Peter didn't want. It must have really hurt Peter to hear Jesus say such things, yet as the medicine was tasted in its full bitterness as the cock crowed for the 3rd time, its bitterness caused him to weep bitterly - for he realised Jesus was right, knew him and what he would do! It affected him as Jesus smashed his proud claims - for we have nothing more recorded of Peter saying anything during that evening and it even affected him deeply from the next morning on – it is said he couldn't hear a cock crow without weeping.

The Lord Jesus knows us through and through, knows us far better than the depths to which we would sink if He was to leave us alone, allow us to be tested. We may hear of "supposed" Christians and what they have done and we may feel or say we would never do that! Yet can we be sure? Could we say we would stand given their background and circumstances, given their temptations? How do we know we would stand? How do we know we wouldn't have sinned worse, or sooner and not resisted as they had resisted? We are not to be presumptuous and have a false confidence in ourselves. We are to always pray and mean "*lead us not into*

temptation, but deliver us from evil". We are to watch and pray, be on our guard. We are to put on the **whole** armour of God, put each piece on with prayer. We are to seriously and carefully guard our own hearts, for out of it are the issues of life.

False pride and arrogant self-trust are dangerous, for the arm of flesh will fail us and we will show our strong weaknesses! We are to learn from Peter and the Lord's dealing with him. Yes, it may seem that hard words were said to Peter, but there was a note of mercy mingled in it, for Jesus told Peter of a preacher of repentance – a cockerel! See that as that preacher sounded forth at dawn, so the Lord used it to bring Peter to repentance.

Our God uses the strangest of things in His work, even mortal creatures such as us, telling incomparable riches of the Lord Jesus, so that **all** the glory will go to Him and Him alone. May God use us all to bring many to know Him, to return to Him and seek His forgiveness. May we all know His grace in our lives and it enabling us to stand in His strength alone.