

Folding Under Pressure

Description

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and one maid came up to him
70 But he denied it falsely before them all, saying, I do not know what you me
71 And when he had gone out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said t
72 And again he denied it and disowned Him with an oath, saying, I do not know
73 After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, You certain
74 Then Peter began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not even k
75 And Peter remembered Jesus' words, when He had said, Before a single rooste

Matthew 26:69-75 AMPC

Simon Peter was a fireball according to the Gospels. He was by far the most outspoken apostle/disciple in the scriptures, also possibly the most most confident/bold apostle given his decisions to step out of the boat and walk on water, in addition to asking Jesus for clarity as to the meaning of several parables, and most importantly during the last supper when he boldly proclaimed to Jesus and the rest of the apostles that;

35 Peter said to Him, Even if I must die with You, I will not deny or disown You! And all the disciples said the same thing.
Matthew 26:35 AMPC

These moments and actions by Peter are very important to understand and remember because they created an opportunity for Peter to “prove” his love and devotion to Jesus at the moment mentioned in the verses above. Its also important to understand that Peter didn’t do empty boasting, but that in fact Jesus had acknowledged Peter for his faith and discernment in earlier moments:

- Matthew 16:17-20
- Luke 22:31-32

It’s important to note these instances of Jesus commending and encouraging Peter because in the main verses above what proceeded that scene was Jesus telling Peter during the last supper that he would deny him 3 times. Of the apostles, Peter could be called the “rider”, or most loyal one when solely considering his rhetoric in the scriptures, but while Jesus is being disrespected and tried before the high priest, Peter is outside in the courtyard with others who have identified him as being a following of Jesus. Now Peter has the opportunity to stand firm in the face of non-believers while Jesus is being persecuted inside the home. It’s perfect, even better than that, he has the opportunity to prove Jesus wrong, as the maid/servant girl asks him if he was a follower of Jesus. As the climatic moment rises, and nearby people begin to pay attention, all eyes begin to shift to Peter awaiting his response, and what does he do at the end? He denies Jesus, cusses, and swears that he doesn’t even know the same Jesus that had earlier hand selected him to accompany him to pray with him in his most vulnerable and troubling moment (Matthew 26:37-38).

Why does this moment mean so much to me? Peter like many of us current believers overestimated his commitment and resolve. He believed that he would stand tall regardless of the pressure and circumstances, yet when the opportunity arose for him to display his faith and trust in Jesus, he cowered and decided to blend with the world, completely denying a relationship with Christ. Now some of you may be saying that that isn't me, but it actually is. All of us including me are guilty of not acknowledging our faith or values at all times, and not being the best representation of Christ on occasion. We have been in a conversation or setting and remained silent when someone spoke against Christian values and standards, or when they were lost and in need of an encouraging word, or from my perspective when we are ill-equipped to provide direction or represent Jesus to someone because we haven't done the necessary work to be minister to someone in the moment. What we also must remember is that Jesus knows this; he is aware that we will fall, he knows that we aren't perfect, he knows that we will have Peter moments, which is why he chose to submit to the Father's will while praying in the garden of Gethsemane, because he knew that we needed the redemption and grace.

Reflection Time

What causes you to fold under pressure? Is it fear, feelings of inadequacy, doubt, anxiety, something else? Like Peter it is very easy to project that we are "riders" and not acknowledge our deficiencies or fears before Jesus, or even ourselves. I challenge you to take a moment and inventory yourself and life to see where you tripped up, how the Holy Spirit helped you to get it back right, and/or the places where you fell and remain laying. Accept the forgiveness that has been extended to each of us by grace, but also continue moving forward understanding that he is the author and finisher of our faith.

Category

1. Is It Me

Tags

1. Doubt
2. Is it me?
3. Lent 2022
4. March 2022
5. Mark
6. Peter
7. The Gospels

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