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Peter's Growth

I had an old vacuum salesman tell me the secret of his success. I'm sure that getting people to purchase a different vacuum could be quite a task for any person, yet he was very successful. The salesman believed in his product so much that he told me he never had to knock down the competition; he only needed to show off what he was selling. The Lord used his example to help me understand the way He wanted me to view my personal walk into Him. He desired for me to change my life, but I was to focus on His goodness and not my struggles.

It can become defeating to your heart if you line up all of the areas that you need to change, but if you keep your eyes on the love of God, you will continually be encouraged to keep growing in Him. Peter is a great man for us to examine for ourselves because the gospels did not hide his struggles and weaknesses of character. Instead, the Bible shows the growth of a man in character of faith and in the wisdom of God.

We can learn from him that some things take time in our own walk and that God is understanding and forgiving in our failures. Peter made many missteps in his life, but he also learned how to get back up. If we can ever find an example of a man who overcame his weaknesses and never gave up, it is Peter. He shares a secret of his victories as he said *"for God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," 1 Peter 5:6.*

Peter's life encouraged me because there were many changes that happened quickly for me, but there are other areas that have taken long seasons to get out of my life. In those hard seasons, I came to realize how much God wants to be involved with me, in every aspect, as I walked through the good and the bad. If we are not careful, we can get so focused on our battles that we never allow ourselves to stop long enough to fall in love with Him. If we keep looking at our struggles when we approach God, we can miss the greatest part of being a believer, which is intimacy with Him! It's from His love that we will find the courage and hope never to give up as He trades His strength for our weaknesses.

I wish I could write to you about the great fortitude that I moved forward into God with, in every area, but the truth is, I failed miserably many times in some areas. Now I can look back and say I wish I knew then what I know now and I may have acted stronger, but it was also in those times of failure I discovered an aspect of the love of the Father that was so deep, kind and gentle. God isn't only here when you are victorious, He's also here in your defeats. It's in my failures, when I was the lowest, that I learned that I could still lean on the love of God as my strength and hope for my future.

To keep moving forward, I had to believe there was more to life than how I was living. I had to hold on to the Truth of who the Word of God saw me as. Then even if I failed, I was quick to get up and keep walking toward the plan of God. I kept telling myself that one day, God could use me. I reminded myself that I was strong in Him and not weak. My best attribute was that I refused to quit believing in God's promises. If you are not perfect yet, then just keep thinking of Peter and you'll feel better.

Peter was a disciple, but he was more than that, he was also one of Jesus' best friends. Can you imagine the intimate time spent with Him, all the traveling, the teaching, the meals, and the experiences that he had gained since he was called to walk alongside Jesus? The miracles he personally witnessed, the love he felt when he saw those hands reached out and embracing broken people. Every day for years watching Jesus operate in the power and wisdom of God had to transform the person that Peter was.

In his life, he went from being Simon the Fisherman to being Peter the Fisher of Men. From a disciple to a mighty apostle of the church. It's so important that we celebrate Peter's life and successes in his adventures of living for God. It's also wonderful that we can see the journey that he took from the beginning of his walk to the end of his life as a martyr for the Gospel.

History tells us that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome fulfilling the prophecy that Jesus told him in *John 21:18-19* "*Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.*" This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "*Follow Me.*"

Peter's life ended in great victory, mainly because he was able to conquer the fear that he failed too many years earlier. He failed in fear when Jesus was placed on the cross, and he denied Christ and yet just a few hours earlier, he thought he was strong enough to lay his life down. It reads in *John 13:37-38*, "*Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.'*" *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.'*"

Although Peter wanted to lay his life down and believed he would stand strong, Jesus told him that he didn't have it in him yet. Peter failed that time not because he wanted to fail, but because he did not have enough of God in him to succeed. After His epic failure of fear for his life, Jesus not only restored him but also allowed him to face that same area years later only this time he looked at martyrdom and did not flinch. God walked with him through all of his struggles all the way to victory, and He will do the same for you. Don't give up, keep pressing in because great victories are ahead!

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