

=LIFE OF PETER=

Lesson 7

Peter Receives New Hope

AIM: to teach my pupils that witnessing for Jesus and behaving properly are the two ways to live “for Jesus’ sake.”

POINT OF CONTACT: (Talk to the class as if you are speaking to each person individually.) Let us suppose that you are the richest person on earth, but that you are also among the most lonely. You would love to have someone with whom you could talk. Someone talks about you to another, “You know, I feel sorry for old _____ . He sits in his house all day with no one to call his friend. Let’s show ourselves friendly to him. Let’s go paint his house.” Another might suggest, “Let’s take up a collection and buy a new suit for him.” Would your deep desire for friendship and companionship be met as you watched painters from your window? No, of course not! With your money you could buy a new house whenever your old one needed painting. The new suit that the store delivery man brings to your door gives no special joy: your closet is already full of good suits.

There were some acts which Peter could have done, other than what he thought, that would have been for Jesus’ sake. As we talk about the lesson today, let’s decide what Peter could have done that would have really been for Jesus.

INTRODUCTION: Peter had been in the school of training to be a great apostle for Jesus. In our lesson for today we see him ready to take the final course before graduation. The course could have been entitled, “What Is Really Done for Jesus’ Sake?” The credit which he earned could have been called, “A Credit in Hope #1.” This last of Peter’s courses met on three different occasions: When Jesus was taken by the officers and servants of the high priest and Pharisees away from the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was being tried in the palace of the high priest, and after the resurrection of Jesus.

I. PETER HAD TO LEARN THAT JESUS DID NOT NEED HIM FOR DEFENSE.

1. Peter had said, “I will lay down my life for thy sake.” He thought that he could defend Jesus against physical enemies. John 13:37, 38.
 - 1) Jesus warned Peter that he did not know what he was talking about. Peter should not have been so sure of his reaction if the time were to come that his life would be at stake for Jesus’ sake. His faith was too unstable; in fact, without the strength that Jesus gives, no person can be sure that he will do right in any situation.
 - 2) Peter loved deeply. Of Peter’s assertion that he would lay down his life for Jesus, someone has said, “Nothing is more natural or common than the repetition, by the warm-hearted and ardent, of professions like these, in spite of warning.” Peter could not know the real meaning of the words, “for thy sake.” He did not understand yet what actions were really for Jesus. The Lord repeatedly told His disciples that His predictions of events to come could not be understood because it was not time for them to understand. They would know “afterwards.” John 13:36.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Mark 9:7.
 - 1) He is all-powerful. Matthew 28:18. There is no need for defending Him. In fact, to assume that Jesus needs to be defended by man, is to suggest that Jesus is less than all-powerful.
 - 2) Jesus is all-knowing. Jesus knew the course of events that would follow while He was on earth. He knew what He had to do to carry out the plan for the salvation of the world; He knew what and whom to avoid so that the plan would not be defeated, and He knew to whom He should surrender Himself when the proper time came to do so.
3. Peter tried to defend Jesus. When the crowd came to get Jesus, Peter drew his sword and attempted to kill the servant of the high priest so that he would not lay hands on Jesus.
 - 1) Jesus had told His disciples that it was time now to start traveling with sword and with money and with change of clothing. They should be ready to do what they could to defend themselves and to care for themselves. Luke 22:35-38.

- 2) With his sword, Peter cut off the right ear of Malchus. It has been suggested that Peter's intention was not to cut off just the ear of Malchus, but to slice off his head, but missed! Jesus healed the ear of the servant, and He taught concerning the powers that were waiting even then for His word that they should come to His aid if He wanted them. Matthew 26:52-54; Luke 22:51; John 18:10.

II. PETER HAD TO LEARN THAT HE MUST TESTIFY OF JESUS' LOVE. See John 18:15-27.

1. Peter failed the first test of witnessing for Jesus. It was at a time when it looked as if he personally might suffer because of his testimony.
 - 1) It was during the questioning of Jesus in the palace of the high priest. Peter and John had followed Jesus as the band of servants and officers took Jesus bound from the Garden, on to Annas and then to Caiaphas, the high priest. John was known by the high priest, and so he had permission of the maid servant who watched the door to go into the palace where he could watch the proceedings there. Peter stayed outside, where he warmed himself at the fire. It was now probably close to the second watch of the night—the second watch being between 9:00 p.m. and midnight. John came back to the door to get permission to have Peter admitted, and the maid at the door asked Peter if he knew Jesus. Peter said, "I do not know him." Another servant in a little while thought that Peter's speech was that of a Galilæan. This servant asked Peter if he had been a companion of Jesus. Peter emphatically said that he did not know Jesus. About an hour later a man who was related to Malchus recognized Peter, because he had seen Peter in the garden. He asked him if he knew Jesus. Peter swore and denied knowing Jesus. Just then, the cock crew. (It was no doubt between midnight and 3:00 a.m. The third watch was the time of the cock crowing.)
 - 2) Peter wept bitterly at his failure. Just as the cock crew, Jesus looked at Peter. Peter remembered Jesus' saying that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crew. Peter ran out into the dark morning hours, broken-hearted at having committed such a terrible act.
2. Peter did pass succeeding tests. He had learned his lesson the hard way.
 - 1) As a result, he could write: "...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." It is a day-by-day readiness to tell the Gospel story that everyone should know how to be saved. I Peter 3:15.
 - 2) He learned never to have confidence in himself again. He said in I Peter 3:15, 16, "...with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience..." A constant self-examination needs to take place in the heart of the Christian so that the testimony which he is giving will not be nullified by his behavior. Peter had heard Jesus say, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." John 15:3. Whenever the time came that Peter would recall Jesus' words to his mind, he was made clean from this sin as well as others that he might have committed. He learned that his confidence should be in Jesus and His words.

III. PETER LEARNED THAT JESUS' ACCEPTANCE WAS ALL THAT HE NEEDED.

1. Peter had to learn to ignore the world's opinion of himself. It is Jesus' opinion of people that counts. Peter was afraid of what people could do to him. Nobody likes to have anyone criticize or make fun of him for his convictions or his associations. Everybody likes to be accepted. Peter failed to realize that the world is divided into two parts: One part is composed of the Devil and his crowd of unsaved people; the other part is formed by Jesus and His saved ones. Peter wanted to be accepted by everyone, and this is not possible. Jesus had said in Peter's hearing, "No man can serve two masters..." Matthew 6:24. In John 15:18-25, we read of further instruction which Jesus gave concerning acceptance of Christians by the world.
2. Peter was brokenhearted when he realized that he had failed Jesus. Now Jesus' body has been laid in the tomb. The opinions of those to whom Peter had lied did not matter now. There was nothing that they could do for him that would take the place of or be better than the fellowship that he had had with Jesus.
3. Peter's deep sorrow turned to joy in Jesus' acceptance of his repentance.

- 1) He learned that Jesus was still counting on his leadership among the disciples. Jesus had said to Peter before the crucifixion: "...when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:31-34. Peter was already saved when Jesus said these words; he did have faith. Whenever he got established in the faith, then it would be his job to be the leader of his Christian brothers. The angel gave specific instructions to the women after Jesus arose from the dead that the disciples and Peter be told of His resurrection. Peter was named separately to indicate that "he was the first among equals."
- 2) Jesus said that those who know Him would be given glory by Him. John 17:22, 23. Peter learned of this future glory. Glory which comes from Jesus is the only true, permanent glory that people can receive. We Christians shall receive glory from Jesus, and we do receive Jesus' glory. We shall also see His glory. Peter contrasted this future glory of the Christians with the cheap glory and success that this world offers to the unsaved. I Peter 4:13; 5:1-8.

CONCLUSION: We, like Peter, need to learn not to fight nor argue to convince people of Who Jesus is and what He can do for them. We need to talk with them about their needing Him as their Saviour. The most important achievement for us Christians to reach is the achievement of being ready always to answer everybody concerning the hope that is within us. Our answer must be given from hearts that are being perpetually cleansed by the blood of Jesus and by the remembrance of His words.