

Human Estimates In The Light Of The Bible. Over-Estimating Self

Text: Mat 26:30,35

1) The sad mistake of Peter

Suggested Hymns:

2) The loving correction of Jesus

48, 310, 330, 292, 54

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 26:30-35, ³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* ³² *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* ³³ *Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."* ³⁴ *Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."* ³⁵ *Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

During Lent we gather to study the Passion-story. The Passion-story is the story of the redeeming love of Jesus. As we follow the silent Sufferer from Gethsemane to Golgotha, we marvel at the wonderful love which drove Him into suffering, the cross, and the grave. We follow in awe and reverence as Jesus sheds His blood, and lays down His life, for sinful man.

But as we follow the Saviour through the story of His Passion, we do not only catch a vision of the holy, innocent, wonderful Saviour, we also see man revealed in the blackest colours of sin and iniquity. We see sin, error, wickedness, and faithlessness, on the part of the enemies of Jesus, and we notice some of these same weaknesses in His friends. But through it all we see the love of Jesus reaching out, even in His suffering, to weak, sinful mortals, guiding them, correcting them, and leading them to the truth, trying to save their souls.

During this season of Lent we are going to study some of these characters of the Passion-story. We will see how mistaken, how shamefully wrong, they were in many of their estimates. We will see how the Saviour tries to correct these mistaken human estimates and lead the poor erring people to penitence and faith.

This we will do under the general caption of “Human Estimates in the Light of the Bible.” On the basis of our text, we shall consider “Over-estimating Self.” May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Sad Mistake of Peter

The zero hour of the Master’s life had come. Jesus had just celebrated the Passover Meal and instituted the Lord’s Supper. Jesus now walks with His disciples to Gethsemane. *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Then Jesus makes the statement in our text, *“All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”*³² *“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”* Here He points to His suffering through the prophecy *I will strike the Shepherd.*¹ But He also points to His victory, *“But after I have been raised.”* Jesus also states that all the disciples would be offended because of Him and would be scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd.

Next we read of Peter’s statement of overconfidence. *Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* He is better than others! *“Even if all are made to stumble because of You,”* he, bold Peter, the frank confessor, would never be offended or stumble because of Jesus.

Peter was promptly warned directly by the Saviour of his impending denial. *Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* But Peter professes his willingness to die rather than deny. *Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”* Here we have proud Peter, presumptuous Peter, who over-estimates self. Peter seemingly forgets that security is the chief enemy of sinful mortals.

The attitude of Peter in this case is characteristic of the man. He showed the same attitude on other occasions. Think of the story of the foot-washing recorded in John 13. First Peter thought it was too much, then he decided it was not enough. First he said in John 13:8, *“You shall never wash my feet!”* but then in verse 9 he said, *“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”* This shows plainly that Peter’s estimates were frequently overdrawn, and yes, utterly wrong.

These are sad results of over-estimating self on part of Peter. Only a short time later he who had such a good opinion of himself, who would not be offended, who would be ready to die with his Master, is not even willing to watch with Him for one hour during His terrible struggle in Gethsemane. Peter, who positively denied the possibility of denial, shamefully denies Christ in the palace of the high priest.

Let us compare Peter’s statement in our text with his statement in the court of the high priest. *“Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* ... And then *in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, “You also were with Jesus of Galilee.”* ⁷⁰ *But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are saying.”* ... The Second time, ⁷² *But again he denied with an oath, “I do not know the Man!”* ... The Third time *Then he began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man!”*

The mistake of over-estimating self is a common weakness of the human race. We have many Biblical examples. Think of Goliath, as we read in 1 Samuel 17:43-44, ⁴³ *So the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.* ⁴⁴ *And the Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”* We all know what happened.

Consider the pride of Ben-Hadad in 1 Kings 20:10. Remember also the overconfidence of Nebuchadnezzar as we read in Daniel 4:30-32, *The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”* ³¹ *While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!”* ³² *And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They*

shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

Over-estimating self is the weakness of many people today. It is one of the many faults of youth. So many young people, because they are at the height of physical vigour, think too much of themselves, their judgment, and their ability.

Overconfidence is the weakness of the worldling. Most of the people of this world think they are better, stronger, and wiser than other people. They forget Proverbs 16:18, ¹⁸ *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Even some Christians cherish the same false notion. They insist that their views, their plans, and their ideas are the only right ones in the home, in the church, in business, and yes, even in the nation. Not because these views may be moulded by the Christian knowledge they possess, which is a distinct advantage of the Christian over the worldling, but simply because they are their own personal views and they think so much of themselves. Yes, like Peter, we often think that we know things better than the Lord and even attempt to cross His wise divine plans.

Many people therefore also have the sad experience of Peter. Over-estimating self, they do things that are utterly wrong and come to a shameful fall. It seems as though the Lord at times at least permitted a presumptuous Christian to fall in order to cure him of his pride and self-sufficiency.

It happens that Christians fall so badly, that the very jar of their fall wakes them up and they see the folly of their ways. Just in this way the correcting influence of the loving Saviour often makes itself felt.

2. The Loving Correction Of Jesus

The Saviour tries to correct the wrong estimate of self on the part of Peter by warning him. ³⁴ *Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* He endeavours to keep Peter from overconfidence.

We note the same loving correction in Luke 22:31-32, ³¹ *And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as*

wheat. ³² ***“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.*** Here Jesus also adds the fact that He will pray for Peter. This shows the real love of the Saviour for His erring disciple. Intercession is indeed one of the greatest gifts of friendship.

But Peter does not heed the warning of the Master. Confident of self, he enters the very palace of the high priest, mingling with the enemies of Christ, and comes to a shameful fall. But still Jesus does not forsake His erring disciple. Jesus did not say to him: *“I told you so. I warned you. You did not heed My warning. Now see how you can get out of your trouble.”* No, as we are told Luke 22:61, the loving Saviour looked at Peter, a serious look of reproach, a loving look of pleading, and thus brought him back to penitence and faith. We read in Matthew 26:75 that Peter *went out and wept bitterly.*

The Saviour continued His corrective influence in Peter’s case after His resurrection, John 21 in the miraculous catch of fish. Then three times Jesus said ***“Simon, ... do you love Me?”*** Peter was restored to apostleship. Jesus made new man out of him. Peter became one of the great builders of the Church. The Peter of the Acts and of the Epistles, who was now aware of his weakness, is a different Peter from the Peter of the Gospels.

Our Saviour uses similar corrective influences also in our own lives. We are constantly in danger of over-estimating self are warned through the Word. This sermon is one of the means the Saviour uses to warn us.

As mentioned before, the Saviour may also permit us to fall into sin. When down in the mire of sin, when we are covered with the filth of disobedience, murder, adultery, fornication, dishonesty, when disgrace, dishonour, even a prison sentence stares one in the face, he readily loses pride and overconfidence.

To correct us, the Lord may also use affliction and illness. Through illness He may bring us to great physical weakness, and when people are physically weak, at the brink of the grave, the proud spirit is often broken. And even when we have fallen like Peter, Jesus still calls us to repentance. He speaks to us through His Word. Scripture says in Proverbs 28:26, ²⁶ ***He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.***

The warning and the comfort of the text is that we certainly ought to learn from the shameful mistake of Peter to be careful not to over-estimate ourselves.

Certainly we ought to be cheered to see how lovingly the Saviour seeks to warn, to correct, to help, to restore, to forgive, and to save. Certainly we have no reason to boast, but we have every reason to say with the hymnist,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Zec 13:7