

Welcome friends to another broadcast of “Morsels for Zion’s Poor”

Peter was a very strong, courageous, and faithful follower of CHRIST since the day that the LORD called him away from his fishing nets. He had every reason to be confident that he would remain steadfast. After all he feared no man. Yet, just prior to HIS arrest and trial, the LORD JESUS, said to Peter, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”* All of the events which transpired over the course of the next few hours were designed to occur exactly as they did to teach Peter, his own weakness in the flesh, and the utter faithfulness of GOD to sustain and keep him in spite of his failure, denial, and weakness of faith. Peter (along with the other disciples), was sure that he would not deny the LORD. Yet to a man they all fled and abandoned HIM as if they did not know HIM.

If one error characterizes the false gospel which is so common today, it is the constant attempts to stir up men to “believe” and “have faith”. Faith is commonly viewed as a trait which any man can exercise simply by deciding to do so. Many believe that it is possible for men to increase their “faith”, by obedience and determination, and thereby to gain favor in GOD’s sight by such exercise, as well as to perform great and mighty deeds thereby. If anyone could have done so it surely would have been a lion-like man such as Peter.

The LORD directed HIS disciples to set out by ship to cross the Sea of Galilee while HE stayed to go up into the mountains alone to pray. As darkness fell around the disciples, they found themselves toiling alone in the midst of stormy seas, without any knowledge of the LORD’s whereabouts or what HE was doing. Yet all the while HE was praying for them. HIS faithfulness and not theirs is what sustained them in the lonesome and dangerous journey. When HE appeared unto them, walking on the sea, they were very troubled, because they were not sure who or what was approaching. Peter, (being Peter) and perhaps exuberant at the thought of CHRIST walking on the water, called out to the LORD, confident that HE was their SAFETY. The LORD bid HIM to come to HIM. Peter, whose mind was on CHRIST and not the circumstances, descended from the ship and began walking towards the LORD. Even faithful men cannot walk on water. Yet here was Peter, walking on water, with his eyes firmly fixed on CHRIST. What we see next is that Peter began to sink as his focus became centered on the impossibility of his situation and not the MASTER who had called him. Quite often this account is set forth by “teachers” as an example of the failure of Peter’s faith. Yet the reality is that this is an example of the inability of all flesh and in this is not specific to Peter at all.

The LORD did not call Peter to come to HIM, hoping that Peter would traverse the water, only to be disappointed when he did not. Rather the LORD called Peter to HIMSELF, that HE might demonstrate to Peter the weakness of all flesh lest he be lifted up with pride and recount to the other disciples how he had “walked on the water”. This is not a picture of Peter’s having faith and then losing it any more than Samson’s strength was in the length of his hair. Rather the LORD would show Peter that without HIM he could do nothing. HE would teach Peter that there is no place of salvation except in the hand of HIM who plucked him from the waves. The LORD said to Peter, *“Wherefore didst thou doubt?”* This question is literally, “why were you wavering, or halting between two opinions?” Now the LORD knew the answer but HE would have Peter to recognize the impossibility of trusting the arm of the flesh and obeying CHRIST at the same time. There is no mixture of what man does and what the LORD does. Salvation is all of grace.

It was in this dire situation and state of halting mind, (not when he was in some triumphant condition of “faith” or “victory”), that the LORD was pleased to reach down and pluck him from certain destruction. And so it is that the LORD teaches men of their own weakness and shows them the peril they are in by nature, and it is HE who moves them to cry out for deliverance. Now the “if only” crowd would view this situation as a failure on Peter’s part, which “if only” he had kept the faith he would have triumphantly crossed the water to the LORD. Yet this is exactly what the LORD demonstrated to Peter that he could not do. The LORD puts HIS people in situations from which they cannot extricate themselves to teach them wherein their STRENGTH truly lies. This was not a failed experiment or test of Peter’s faith but rather a demonstration of the LORD’s faithfulness to lead HIS people in a way that they knew not so that they might learn not to have any confidence in the flesh.

Doubt is not necessarily a bad thing. Especially when a man is made to doubt his own strength and ability as Peter was. When the LORD delivered Peter safely to the ship, he understood the words of the Psalmist, *“But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.”* *“Thy free grace alone,”* #11 **If you would like a free transcript of this broadcast email us at forthepoor@windstream.net**