

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Marks of the Committed Christian, Part 2

Scripture: John 13:36-38

Code: 1543

Turn in your Bible to John 13 and we are going to look at verses 31 to 38 which we began last Sunday morning and we'll just review briefly the first part, and then consider primarily verses 36 to 38. John 13:31 to 38 is the entire text.

Now by way of a brief review, we realize that beginning here in verse 31 Jesus gives His valedictory address to the eleven. Judas has been dismissed from the little group in meeting in the upper room. It is the night before the crucifixion of Christ and Jesus gives His final message to His eleven faithful disciples. He really gives them four things within this message. He gives them some instructions, some promises, some warnings and some explicit commands. This is really the last set of orders that Christ gave His eleven before He died and it runs all the way through the end of chapter 16, all of these words are the last words of Jesus to His own. And they occur both in the upper room and in the Garden of Gethsemane for they spent that last night between those two places. And there are many words in here that are singularly important not only to the disciples but to us as well, for we have in these chapters here what has to be a composite detailed outline of what a committed disciple really is. For us not to understand the content of these chapters leaves us tremendously inadequate as disciples because they are basic to an understanding of what Jesus Christ required from a disciple. They're timeless principles. They had an instant application to the disciples and they have a lingering application to us which is just as critical.

Now we've already seen that the marks of the committed Christian are, first of all, that he is totally preoccupied with his Lord's glory. Secondly, he is totally preoccupied with his love. And today we shall see primarily that he is preoccupied with his loyalty. His Lord's glory, His love and His loyalty, and these ingredients are really the wrap up on a committed disciple. I could back up one, just thinking about it this morning, to the previous message that we gave on the first part of John 13 which concerned the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus, and add a fourth mark of a disciple, which would be lowliness. So if you want a four-point outline, you can go back to the first part of the chapter and the first real mark of a disciple is the idea of lowliness or humility. We talked about that several weeks ago.

But then for our study of these verses, his Lord's glory, His love and His loyalty. Now these ingredients, as I say, wrap up the committed disciple. Now we saw last time that, first of all, a committed disciple is preoccupied with his Lord's glory. He's not concerned about himself. He's not

concerned with his own glory. He's not concerned with his own boasting. He's not concerned with what brings honor to him. He's not on a popularity binge. He's not trying to climb the ecclesiastical ladder. He's not trying to get something bigger and better for himself. His greatest concern is his Lord's glory. He lives so that whatever he does brings glory to his Lord. And we saw this in verse 31 and 32, and I want to read them and just make a brief comment or two.

"Therefore when he was gone out," that is when Judas left after Jesus had sent him out, "Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him.'" Now we saw there three aspects of God's glory and of Christ's glory. Number one, Christ was about to be glorified. Number two, when Christ was glorified, God would be glorified in Christ. And number three, God would yet glorify Christ again some time in the future.

Now we realize that the first statement in verse 31 when Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," was a reference to His cross. When Judas went out, Jesus knew immediately that Judas was going to go to perpetrate the final transaction of his betrayal. And so Jesus was anticipating the cross and He was saying, "Now, finally at last we have reached a moment for which I was born, the moment that was planned before the foundation of the world. Now is the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus was anticipating His cross and it was on the cross that He was glorified. We talked about the fact that it seems a little bit strange and paradoxical that a cross could be a glory, but indeed it was because as He died on the cross, He was bearing the sins of the world, defeating sin. He was defeating Satan, destroyed the power of the devil which was death. He carried out the greatest act that anyone had ever done in the history of the universe, that of redeeming the entire human race, and for that He deserves glory. And thus even in His death He is glorified.

Then we saw the second statement that God is glorified in Him. And that when Jesus died, He not only was glorified but because all the attributes of the Father were manifest in His death, therefore the Father also was glorified. You see it was in the cross of Christ that God's wisdom and love and justice and mercy and holiness and all His attributes were most visible, they were all there in the cross, all of them, on display. And thus the Father was also glorified.

Then we saw in verse 32 that God yet has plans for the future to glorify Jesus Christ. And even when Jesus was saying that, the future glorification would come in His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation, He now sits at the right hand of the Father and ultimately in His glorious full glory when He comes again.

So the glory of the Lord is the preoccupation of the disciple. Now notice this, God is glorified and Christ is glorified through the details of the gospel. When Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, the Father glorified, and I will be glorified again," all of this glorifying came through His

death, burial, resurrection, exaltation and coming again. All that glory came through those things. It is the glory connected with the pattern of Jesus redeeming men. The greatest glory that God can receive or Christ can receive is through the gospel. Christ died, rose again, exalted, coming again, that's the gospel, that's the good news and that is the ultimate glory for God. Therefore, the greatest way for you to give glory to God is to declare the gospel for the gospel radiates the glory of God like nothing else ever did or ever can do.

And we said to you some time ago, and it's true, that our worship...we talk about "how do you worship God"...our worship, the high point of our worship is in our witnessing because when we declare the gospel, we are radiating the aspects of the glory of God which make Him shine more purely than any other kind of aspect. God is most clearly seen in the gospel. His attributes are most clearly visible in the gospel. Why when God wants to show the angels how wise He is, He points to the church, redeemed men and says, "You see, that's what the gospel accomplished, that proves My wisdom." When God wants to show His marvelous grace, He points to us and lets the angels look at us so we can see His grace because we're the trophies of the gospel. The death, burial, resurrection, exaltation and Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the gospel and it most clearly shows the glory of God, therefore, whenever you declare the gospel, you are worshiping God in the highest sense. Worship is not sitting in a church singing a song, primarily. Worship is not thinking grandiose thoughts. Worship is declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ, that's the highest form of worship.

And so, the committed disciple is preoccupied with his Lord's glory. And as a result, his witness is aggressive. The committed disciple has an aggressive witness. And that's what he's talking about here when he talks about the glory of God. God gets glory when you declare the gospel. And what a tremendous thing it is to be able to stand up and declare to the world the good news that God loved them, sent His Son to die, rise again and come again on their behalf. That gives God glory. My friend, God gets...nowhere does God get as much glory as when you declare the gospel to somebody, that is the highest kind of praise and worship. And it's exciting to realize that.

For a long time in my own life I fumbled around trying to figure out how to worship God. And then I discovered the principle that worship is nothing but witness. And it's the highest form possible.

So a committed disciple is preoccupied with his Lord's glory, thus he is an aggressive communicator of the gospel. Secondly, and we're reviewing still, the committed disciple is preoccupied with His love. Verse 34, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another." Now here is the real visible mark that the world can see that verifies that we belong to Jesus. By this shall all men know that you're My disciples if you have love one for another. Turn it around, if you do not have love one for another, the world will not know that you are My disciples. Our testimony depends on our love. We are to love each other. How? As the Lord loved you, it says. Jesus said, "You love as I have loved you." What kind of love was it? It was love that loves

the unlovely, it was sacrificial love, it was costly love, it was indiscriminate love, it was pure love, it was divine love. And that's the way we're to love. We're to love each other.

Now Paul adds at the end of Galatians in chapter 6, I think it is, and verse 10. He says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are the household of faith." We're not just to love each other, but that's where we begin. And not until we have a healthy love for each other can we really begin to love the other people as well. And I think Peter's heading in that area in 1 Peter 4:9 when he says, "Not only love each other," in verse 8, but in verse 9 he says, "Then exercise the love of strangers without grudging." Our mark is to be love, we are to love and our testimony is to be the testimony of love.

Perhaps an illustration of that from Acts 4 will show you how it can work. In Acts 4 verse 32 it describes the loving character of the early church. "And the multitude of those that believed were of one heart and one soul." What a beautiful thing that is. "Neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own but they had all things common and with great power gave the apostles witness." See, that's the highest form of worship, witness. "Of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked." See if you do it God's way and everything is one and everybody is together and everybody is united and everybody is of the same mind and the same accord, nobody is going to lack anything. "For as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet and distribution was made to every man according to as he had need." And then he gives a little illustration of one of them.

Now there you have an interesting situation in the church in Jerusalem where they had the same mind...one heart, one soul. A unique kind of bond. Now as far as we know that is not the pattern for every part of the early church. You have a lot of people today who are running around, they go under the title, I think, of the children of God telling everybody to sell everything they have and if they really love God they'll....they'll sell all their possessions and just walk away from everything. There isn't one wit of proof that any other church in the entire early church era did what the church at Jerusalem did. As far as we know, this is the only church that ever operated on this basis and the reason they operated on this basis was because they had one ingredient that we don't have and that one ingredient was persecution. They didn't have any choice. They lost their jobs immediately. And the people with had to give to the people without because they had no other resources. But it still serves as a beautiful illustration of what unity and love can do and they had a devastating testimony, just dynamic.

That little church in Thessalonica that we talked about last week, you remember how I told you of their testimony. Paul said, "Boy, I don't even need to write to you about love, your love has been spread abroad the whole world, everybody knows about your love." They had a dynamic testimony.

They were right in the middle of a great highway from the east to the west and everybody that came through there began to sense the love of that little church within weeks after it was founded by the Apostle Paul. So much so that their love radiated all over the world. So our witness is love and where no love is, no witness exists.

John in 1 John, I think, helps us to understand something of the character of this. He says it's only normal for a Christian to love, in 1 John 2:10, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there's no occasion of stumbling in him." And he says, "If a man hates his brother, he's not in the light, he's in the darkness." Then over in chapter 3 he says this, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of that wicked one and killed his brother. And why killed he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." Do you know there's only one reason that you don't love? And that's because your works are evil. You're not what you ought to be. When you can't love somebody, that's sin..plain and simple. There's only one commodity that keeps you from loving that sin and most often it's the sin of pride. It was in Cain's case, jealousy springs out of pride. It's so important that we learn to love. We have the commodity given us by God, by the Lord Jesus Christ, all we have to do is let it out.

So, we saw the extent of our love...to all men, especially to our own brothers in Christ. The example of our love...Jesus Christ. The effect of our love...the world will know we belong to Him. And we can't expect the world to believe until we love like that. We can have all the orthodox teaching in existence and we can have all the right answers and all the little cliches but the world's not going to believe us until we love them. We can stand up and give all the answers to the world and tell them the truth and show them the little facts of the gospel and go through the whole routine, but until we love there's not going to be the kind of testimony that Christ wanted us to have. We need to show this world a visible love, a love that can say, "I'm sorry," and a love that can say, "I forgive you." We talked about that last week.

You know, in some places that kind of love, it can't even exist? When we were in Mississippi ministering with the black people down there, there was a pastor of the First Baptist Church in the town and it was a very interesting situation because he became very burdened for the black people, which was a serious crime on his part in that situation. But he did. And he began a little Bible study with a black janitor in his church. And he really just fell in love with this guy and they had such sweet fellowship together and this man whom I know began to share with him the tremendous need for the black people right across the tracks who aren't 200 yards away for them to hear the gospel. And the man became burdened, tremendously burdened.

Got up one Sunday and he preached on love. And he preached on what Jesus taught about loving people indiscriminately and carrying the gospel. Well the thing exploded with such a tremendous amount of impact on the people that he...he...a boycott was put against him. He couldn't buy things.

His insurance was cancelled, etc., etc. They threatened to throw him out of the church. And he pursued it the next Sunday, spoke on it again and he found his family threatened, several other things happened. And on Monday this all began to break loose. Tuesday he had a mental collapse, just a nervous breakdown, just completely collapsed. Took him to the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi and the next day he dove out of the third-story window and killed himself.

That's pressure. And, you see, that's the kind of thing that is absolutely destructive to the unity of the testimony of Jesus Christ. You can imagine what kind of testimony was left in that town. You see, that's the thing that is so diabolically disastrous to Christianity and to the love that we're trying to communicate. Now that's an isolated illustration. That's never happened before, maybe it never will happen again. But it's one that I saw happen and I knew the people involved in it. And it was as far out an example as I could ever think of a lack of love. But it's no wonder that the world doesn't see that we're the disciples of Jesus Christ when there's love like that...or lack of love like that, false kind of love so obvious.

All right, we come to the third in verse 36, of the marks of a disciple and this we're going to look at not by way of review because this is where we stopped last time. Now in these verses we see the third mark of a real committed Christian and the mark is loyalty...loyalty. And it's illustrated to us in a brief dialogue with Peter. Now this is a tremendous, tremendous insight and I believe God's going to really show you some principles here that can make a difference in your life.

Discipleship is more than a promised kind of loyalty. It's more than just, you know, making a promise to God which we do so glibly and so frequently. Discipleship demands a practiced loyalty, an operating, functioning kind of loyalty. If you're like I am, all through your life you've been promising God things and you've been declaring your vow to God umpteen times...God, from now on I'll do this and I'll do this and from now I'll do this and I'm going to witness to So-and-so and I'm going to reach my neighbor. I'm going to pray more, read my Bible more. And you just..." This goes on and on and on and on in your Christian life, promises of loyalty. And here we see that the committed disciple doesn't promise loyalty only but he maintains it, he practices it.

Now just let me give you an introductory thought before we hit verse 36. Peter had been disturbed that Jesus was leaving. All this talk about Jesus going away really bothered Peter. And back there in verse 33 Jesus had said, "I'm only going to be here a little while. You're going to look for Me and you won't be able to find Me and you can't come where I'm going to go. I'm leaving." And Peter couldn't stand the thought of Jesus go away. He hated that very thought. In Matthew chapter 16 we are introduced to that problem there. Jesus was saying, "The chief priests and scribes and elders...I'm going to suffer many things from them, I'm going to be killed, I'm going to be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him." Imagine that? Peter's rebuking the Son of God saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." What are You talking about?

You can't go away. "But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan, thou art an offense unto Me, for thou savourist not the things that are of God but those that are of men.'" And the devil took over Peter's mouth in an effort to keep Christ from the cross at that point.

So what you have is kind of a strange attitude on the heart of Peter who does not want Jesus to be removed under any conditions. In chapter 18 of John and Jesus said to him, "Put away your sword, the cup which the Father has given Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" See, Peter didn't want to lose Jesus. Didn't want Him to go away. So in verse 36 with that in his mind, Peter speaks. "Simon Peter said unto Him, 'Lord, where goest Thou?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.'"

Peter's saying, "Lord, where are You going?" Implied...because I'm coming. You can't get rid of me. Jesus is going to the Father, He says, "Peter, you can't follow Me now, but you will afterwards," and he did, didn't he? Crucified upside down not too long afterwards. But Peter had this thing, he really wanted to be with Jesus and it really bugged him. He did not want Jesus to go away. Even long after this little conversation in chapter 21 of John's gospel, Christ has already been raised from the dead and everything, and He's going away again, this time permanently. And Peter's got the same problem. "Verily, verily I say unto you," verse 18 of chapter 21, "when thou wast young thou girdest thyself and walkest where thou wouldest but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee where thou wouldest not." In other words, he says when you're a baby, you took care of yourself...when you're a young man you took care of yourself, but one of these days somebody is going to take care of you, you're going to stretch out your hands...that's a picture of crucifixion...and here He's prophesying the death of Peter. Verse 19, "This spoke He signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this He saith unto him, 'Follow Me.'" So He told Peter he's going to die on a cross. "That's how you're going to go, Peter."

"Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved," this is John, "following who also leaned on His breast at supper and said, 'Lord, who is he that betrayeth Thee?' Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, 'Lord, and what shall this man do?' Jesus saith unto him, 'If I will that he tarry, what is that...till I come, what is that to thee, follow thou Me.'" Now what's Peter doing here? Really interesting. Peter's saying, "Lord, if I have to die on a cross, what happens to John? See, it might not be fair if I have to and John doesn't. I mean, does John just get to go with You? Do I just have to stick around and die on a cross? What happens to him?" Jesus says if he just tarries till I come, what is that to you? Follow Me.

So Peter had this thing that he wanted to go with Jesus and it kind of bothered him that maybe Jesus had these special plans for him to die in a special way and didn't have the same plans for somebody else. He wanted to go now. Now his love is admirable, but his belligerence is foolish.

Coming back to chapter 13 verse 36, he is unwilling to accept that reply of Christ and he makes a great boast in verse 37. "Peter said unto Him, 'Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?'" See. Now he realizes that at this time that Jesus has talked about dying. I mean, He has said if a corn a wheat has to fall into the ground, and all of this, and He's prophesied His death and so forth and so on back in Matthew 16 as we read it, he realizes this. So he says, "Lord, why can't I go with You now?" Now watch this one. "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Lord, if all You're going to do is die, I will be happy to die with You.

"I want to go. I'm ready to die for You right now." Now, of course, he's rash, you know. He's...he's a...he's a braggart, you know, and I'm sure he said it, you know, for the benefit of all the disciples and he was saying it in the flesh. And worst of all, he's saying, "I know better than You. You think I ought to stay, but I say I ought to go." And yet in his heart he's burning with love for Jesus, you can't deny his love. Hankstenberg(???) said, "Of such stuff martyrs are made when the fullness of the Spirit is added." You see, he had the love, he just didn't have the direction of the Spirit. He was acting in the flesh.

So Jesus says to him in verse 38, "Jesus answered him, 'Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake?'" Will you really do that, Peter? "Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me three times." Imagine what happened to Peter. Yike! You know. What a shock. This was so shocking to Peter that he goes through the rest of the whole occasion through all this dialogue and never says another word, except to repeat this boast again. And you see that in Matthew 26, I want you to look at it.

They get out in the garden, and this is a different location this time. This has been burning in Peter's head. He's willing to die for the Lord. You come to Matthew 26 verse 30, "And when they had sung a hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives," this is the same night. "Then saith Jesus unto them, 'All ye shall be offended because of Me this night. For it is written I shall smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad,' prophecy from Zechariah. "But after I am raised up again, I'll go before you into Galilee." Now watch this, here he is again. "Peter answered and said unto Him, 'Thou all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.'" Peter says...I'll hang in there, Lord, I'll never be offended. "Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee that this night before the cock crows thou shalt deny Me three times.'" Now watch what Peter says. "Peter saith unto Him, 'Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee.'" And he said it so powerfully that all the disciples chimed in and it says, "Likewise also said all the disciples. We'll all die with You." Boy, that's terrific.

So, they came and got Jesus. Look at verse 56 and see what the disciples did. At the end of verse 56, "Then all the disciples died for Him." Is that what it says? "Then all the disciples were not

offended." No. "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Now, you see, there was a pretty big gap between their promised loyalty and their actual loyalty, wasn't there? And Peter is such a loudmouth about it. "I will never ever be offended...I will die." What does he do? Anything but that. There's a striking contrast between what Peter said and what he did. Instead of giving his life for Jesus, he'll try to save his life by denying Jesus, by backing off. And he doesn't just do it by silence, and he doesn't just do it by implication, he does it loudly with cursing to many witnesses. And he says, you'll do it, this is interesting in verse 38, "The cock shall not crow." That signified a certain time. There were four times in the night in the Jewish mind. There was evening from six o'clock to nine o'clock. There was midnight, the time from nine to twelve was called midnight. And there was the period from twelve o'clock to three which was called rooster crowing. And then there was morning from three o'clock to six. So when He says before rooster crow you will deny Me, He means some time between midnight and three o'clock in the morning. And then ole Peter would hear that cock crow at three when the cocks generally crowed and the tears would begin to flow.

Now these things hit Peter so hard, these prophecies, that Peter doesn't say anything else in this entire dialogue. And that's not like him cause he's basically kind of a jabber-mouth. You know, he's always talking. But he doesn't say anything, see. He must have just been sitting there mulling this over in his head. But he miserably failed the test of loyalty. And I want to show you the four reasons that he did and I want you to know that these four reasons can be applied to your life to determine whether or not you fail the test of loyalty.

Turn in your Bible to Luke 22, a parallel passage, and I'll show you how this works. Four things caused him to fail the test of loyalty. It was all right when he said it, he just couldn't do it. Number one, I'll give them to you real quick and then we'll go over them. Four things that Peter did that made him blow it. Number one, he boasted too much. Number two, he prayed too little. Number three, he acted too fast. Number four, he followed too far. He boasted too much, prayed too little, acted too fast and followed too far and the results were tragic.

First of all, he boasted too much. Look at verse 33...look at verse 31 of Luke 22, we'll start there. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.'" Now, you see, when the wheat was sifted, that was to test the true, you know. And Satan wants to test Peter and see if he's for real. Satan loves to do that, did you know that? Satan came to Job, didn't he? I mean, to God and he says, "God, You don't have one guy in this whole world that will stick up for You. I can go down there and I can shoot the whole works and they'll flop." God says, "I've got one guy, Job, you go give it to him." Satan went down and he gave him everything he had. Job said, "Thou He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

You know what Satan spends a lot of his time doing? He's the accuser of the brethren, isn't he? He loves to accuse the believer before God. And Satan must have said to God here because He says,

"Satan has desired to have you," so the Lord actually knew what Satan was going to do and allowed him to do it. A great test for Peter. Satan must have said, "Lord, I don't think Peter can make it. I think Peter is a phony and I want a shot to him to prove he's a phony. I want...I want to put a test to him like sifting wheat." And so, the test began. Verse 32, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

See, He prophesied a couple of things there that Peter's going to deny Him, Satan's going to get at him, but He also prophesies you're going to be converted again. It doesn't mean saved, it just means turned around. He's going to blow it but he's going to turn around and get straightened out.

Now here comes Peter again, verse 33, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." There he is again. And you know what Peter's problem was, number one? He boasted too much...he boasted too much. So easy to boast. "God, I promise to do this..." and, you know, he was just boasting all the time. First Kings 20:11 says this, terrific principle, it says, "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself like he that putteth it off." Did you get what that's saying? I mean, don't boast when you put your armor on. You've got something to boast about it will be when you take it off. You know, you don't boast in the locker room before the game. If you've got anything to boast about, it will be that it's over with. So he says, "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off." It would have been better if Peter if he had kept his trap shut and made his boast after.

There's a great insight into the character of boasting in Proverbs, also, chapter 20 verse 14. "It is nothing...it is nothing, saith the buyer, but when he is gone on his way then he boasteth." Boy, isn't that what boasting is? You say to somebody, "Oh that was terrific, boy." "It's nothing, it's nothing. It wasn't anything." And then as soon as you're gone he starts, you know, "Boy, that was terrific," you know, boasting. Typical. We boast and James says the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. Listen, you have nothing to boast about and all you do is put yourself in a serious situation. Peter boasted too much.

There have been some classic boasts in the...in the Old Testament, I want to show you a couple there and one in the New Testament. In 1 Samuel, don't turn to these because it will take a little time, but 1 Samuel 17, I want to read this to you. One of the classic boasts of all time. Goliath. "Goliath said unto David, 'Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?' And the Philistines cursed David by his God and then they said this. And the Philistines said to David, 'Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field.' And David went zing-zing, zap and went over and chopped his head off." A foolish boast by a foolish man.

In 1 Kings chapter 18 we have another classic boast. Verse 17, "And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah that Elijah saith unto him, 'Art thou who troubleth Israel?' But he answered, 'I have not troubled

Israel but thou in thy father's house and that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Balaam. Now therefore send and gather unto me all Israel unto Mount Carmel and all the prophets of Baal, 450 and the prophets of the idols, 400 that eat at Jezebel's table." Now you've got all these guys together and you remember how the story goes. Over in verse 27 on down, there's all of them crying and going on and screaming to their gods and cutting themselves and so forth and so on. And Elijah comes through after all of the...all of the pomp and all of the boasting of all these false prophets of false gods, nothing...nothing at all was really accomplished except a disastrous destruction as Elijah moved against all of them and over in the nineteenth chapter, it records for us the final end of all these things and a tragic, tragic kind...actually at the end of the eighteenth chapter, tragic kind of destruction of all these false prophets who boasted in their gods.

There's another boast classically in the book of Esther. You remember in Esther how that Haman was so proud, the king invited me to dinner and he built the gallows to hang Mordecai on and wound up hanging on them himself. There's always been boasts.

In Acts 5 there was another classic boast. You may not be so familiar with this one. Chapter 5 verse 36, "For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nothing." Another classic boast.

It's a pretty dangerous thing to boast if you don't have anything to boast about. Very dangerous to boast in yourself, and that's what Peter was doing. He was boasting in his flesh. "I'll do this for You, God. I'll do that for You, God." And he wasn't in a position to do anything as he was operating in the flesh.

Now it is true that in a sense the Christian does have a right to boast. There is a legitimate boast and there are several principles that I can just quickly share with you. One is in 2 Corinthians 7:14 where it says this, "For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed but as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting which I made before Titus is found to be true." Now Paul says I have been boasting to you and I'm not ashamed of it.

Now what had he been boasting in? Well this whole section of 2 Corinthians is all about what he was boasting in, let me show you. First of all, he was boasting in others. He was boasting in others and that's legitimate. Chapter 8 verse 24, "Wherefore show ye to them and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf." He was boasting about the love of others. It's a tremendous thing to be able to boast about somebody else. And it's not an easy thing, is it? We always tend to boast about ourselves and to boast about somebody else means you're in a humble situation.

Chapter 9 verse 3, "Yet have I sent the brethren lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf." In other words, again he's saying I'm boasting of you. Chapter 11 verses 9 and 10, he says, "And when I was present with you and lacked, I was chargeable to no man for that which was lacking to me, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied," they took an offering for him, "and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia." In other words, he was again boasting about the faith and the generosity of these believers. Boasting in others is a good thing.

There's another thing that Paul boasted in in this passage and that was he boasted in his call to the ministry, and that's a beautiful thing. Verse 13 of chapter 10, "But we will not boast of things without our measure but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us." Back in verse 8, "I boast somewhat more of our authority which the Lord hath given us for edification." In other words, he's boasting in his call to the ministry.

Then the climax in verse 17, "He that glorieth, let him glory...what?...in the Lord," and he boasted in Christ. Peter's problem was he boasted in himself, and that's disastrous.

Second problem Peter had, very quickly, Luke 22, he prayed too little. He boasted too much and then he prayed too little. Verse 39, so important, Luke 22, "And He came out and went as he was accustomed to the Mount of Olives and His disciples followed Him." They followed up in the mountain. "And when He was at the place, He said unto them, 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.'" Now look at verse 45, "And when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them...what?...sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, 'Why sleep ye? Rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation.'"

You know why Peter entered into temptation and denied his Lord? He fell asleep instead of praying. Prayer is a deterrent to temptation. Did you get that? If you wonder why you're being tempted of Satan constantly, it's probably because you're not praying. "Pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Peter's problem, not only he boasted too much, put confidence in the flesh, but he prayed too little. He had so much confidence in the flesh that he didn't think he needed God and he prayed too little. Prayer keeps us from sin and temptation, but Peter didn't pray, he went to sleep and so did the others. He slept instead of praying.

Over in 1 Peter 4:7, it's so beautiful. When Peter wants to give instructions to Christians, you know what he says to them? He says this, he says, "Be sober minded and watch unto prayer." Isn't that good? Now he's not just talking off the top of his head, he's not talking out of a theology book, he's

talking out of his own life. And watch means stay alive, stay awake, stay alert and pray. The greatest disaster that ever fell into Peter's life fell because he went to sleep. Sleep is a nice thing but it's not a substitute for prayer.

So he boasted too much, prayed too little. Thirdly, he acted too fast. Boy, he was so impetuous. And we're like that, you know? "Okay, God, here I go, God, I'm running right out there and do that job, God. Here I go, I'm just going to go do it." We just kind of bomb out there, we don't even know whether God wants us there or not. That was Peter. Verse 50 of Luke 22, and they all come to get Jesus, you know, in the garden and Peter's going to act, he's ready to go. Verse 50, "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear." Now that's Peter, just winging, swinging a sword there. "And Jesus answered and said, 'Permit thee thus far,' and He touched his ear and healed him."

Now the phrase "permit ye thus far" is really, really interesting. What it means is this. Pardon me, fellas, excuse Peter here...and give him an ear, see. Excuse this resistance, is what it means. Well, I'm sorry about this, here's your ear back. See.

See Peter was running out there with his big sword, you know, cut a swath right through the whole Roman army. And Jesus says, "Pardon my friend, he's just a little impetuous here." I wonder how many times Christ has had to say that in defense of us. "Pardon me, he just doesn't know what he's doing, he's just kind of running loose out there." See. Boy, it's so easy sometimes, you just grit your teeth and run around chopping off ears, you know. Here I go, God...you know, and the Lord says...That's not the idea, see. I mean, God has a specific will, be sensitive to what it is. It reminds me back there of David's plan. I'm going to build a house for God. Nathan says, "David, terrific idea, go build a house for God." David is all excited about going to build a house for God. God comes in the night to Nathan and says, "Nathan, I don't want David to build Me a house. You didn't even ask Me." What did David say later on in the Psalm? He said, "Lord, keep me back from presumptuous sins." Don't let me run ahead of You.

Peter thought he was helping but he was doing the very opposite...the very opposite. The passage comes to mind at this point that just gives a little more of the details. In verse 53 of Matthew 26, don't turn to it, "Jesus said unto him, 'Don't you know that I can pray to My Father and He would give Me more than twelve legions of angels?'" Now that's somewhere possibly between three thousand and six thousand men per legion. He says, "Peter, I really don't need your sword. That's not the way it's done.

So he boasted too much, prayed too little and acted too fast. And the fourth thing he did, he followed too far. And this was really the greatest disaster of all. Verse 54, "Then they took Him, " they took Jesus, "and led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house...now watch this...and

Peter...what?...followed far off." For the first time in three years Peter willfully followed afar off and it was dynamite...it was dynamite. The natural end of all of his weakness was cowardice. "Lord, I'll go to prison and I'll die for You," and when they captured Jesus, boy, Peter was way back. For the first time, Peter drifted from a closeness with Jesus. And you know what the effect was? Look at verse 55, "And when they had kindled the fire in the midst of the court and were seated together, Peter sat down among them." Now he's sitting down with the unrighteous. "And a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, earnestly looked upon him." She's trying to figure him out in the flickering fire at night. She's not too sure who he is. And all of a sudden, she says, "This man was also with Him, with Jesus."

"And he denied Him saying, 'Woman, I know Him not.' And after a little while another saw him and said, 'Thou art also of them.' And Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And after about the space of one hour, another confidently affirmed saying, 'Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him for he is a Galilean.' And Peter said, 'Man, I know not what thou sayest,'...and watch this...and immediately while he yet spoke...what?...the cock crowed and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered." Oh what a deal.

There he is within visual sight of his Lord, denying Him three times. And when the cock crowed, Jesus turned around and looked at Peter and Peter remembered. And bless his heart, in verse 62 he just ran away and wept his heart out.

My friend, it's pretty important to stay close to Jesus, isn't it? Peter followed too far off. He boasted too much, prayed too little, acted too fast, and followed too far and the disastrous result is obvious.

What about your loyalty? What about it? How much do you promise Jesus? That you'd love Him? That you'd serve Him? That you'd be faithful not deny Him for sake, sin, live or die for Him, witness to that neighbor, that you'd begin this week to really prepare that Sunday school lesson, that you'd really work on it? That you'd really work on that Bible study? That you'd lead somebody to Christ? That you'd follow up a new Christian? That you'd go to a Bible school and train for Christian ministry? That you'd go to the mission field? That you'd send something to a missionary? Or that you'd start to give more to God's work? What kind of promises have you made? And how do you pass the loyalty test? Did you boast too much? Pray too little? Act too fast? Follow too far? How many hundreds of promises have you made to God and never kept? And I've done the same thing. I thought to myself, it's not enough for Christ to suffer a Judas kiss a million times without having to suffer a Peter disloyalty from every single Christian that's ever lived. And we've all done it.

And it's tragic, dear ones. I look at my own life and I see the things I promise God and the disloyalty of it so often. And I pray for all of us that God would help us to be loyal, to make our words to our Savior worth the speaking because our lives match them.

Well Peter finally passed the test. He finally preached, finally suffered and he finally died for his Lord and he was loyal to Jesus Christ. The first part of the story is kind of sad, but you read the rest of it in the book of Acts and you'll see a dynamo in Peter. And you can turn it around in your life today. Have you been disloyal to Jesus Christ? Today you can have a change. And like Peter, this can be a transforming moment in your life and from now on boast a little less, pray a little more, act a little slower and follow a little closer.

Our Father, we thank You for what we've learned from Peter. We just pray, Lord, that somehow these just basic, simple truths will find lodging in our hearts to the glory of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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