

5/25/25 Christ Fellowship

Hall of Shame – Peter – John 18

How many of you enjoyed history class in high school? Anybody? Maybe you had a good teacher and maybe you had a coach for a history teacher and you feel you didn't learn a whole lot. Some of you may remember your teacher just yapping out dates and names and wars and political parties and blah, blah, blah. Pretty boring stuff, right?

But what if you had a teacher who had been there and could tell you firsthand what happened? *“There I was a seventeen-year-old boy on a boat off the coast of Normandy 6 June 1944. They lowered the ramps and immediately everybody in front of me was shot and killed. Explosions everywhere! I fell in the icy water and dropped my rifle and just ran. I felt an enemy round glance off my helmet. I was wounded later in the shoulder but made my way to the beach...”*

That's a different story, isn't it? You'll remember that, as opposed to a teacher repeating back to you the year the Magna Carta was signed or something. A firsthand account by a good storyteller is always more interesting than somebody repeating back names and dates they have read.

That's what we have with the Gospel of John. John was a great storyteller and he was there as an eyewitness to things that some of the other Gospel writers had to get from somebody else. Not to diminish the other Gospels in any way but they just were told from different viewpoints and that makes the Bible interesting.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector and focused a lot on prophecy that would interest the Jews. Mark wasn't a disciple but was writing to Christians and he hit the highpoints of the life of Jesus to prove He was the Messiah. Luke was a medical doctor and you see that mindset in his writing. He was very meticulous and detail-oriented like a good doctor would be. But John was there. He was a young man who was a disciple and a close friend and follower of Jesus. He didn't have to interview anybody else to get the stories. He saw it. He lived it. He was with Jesus and heard Him, smelled Him and ate with Him. He was on the front lines and he was a good storyteller.

He doesn't start his book with a genealogy or even with the birth of Jesus. He starts off with a bang, with a hook that grabs you right off the bat. *“In the beginning was the*

Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Immediately you are interested. What Word is he talking about? Who is the Word? And you don’t have to read far to know John is already talking about Jesus. And it just makes for interesting reading. That’s just one of the reasons I tell people who have never read the Bible to start with the Gospel of John.

But today, as we continue our study of the Hall of Shame of biblical characters, we come to the story of Peter that is mainly in the 18th chapter of John. Peter was also a close disciple and follower of Jesus and you just have to like ol’ Pete. Mainly because so many of us can relate to him. And we relate to Peter because Peter said and did things that were sometimes just awkward or even wrong.

In the other Gospels we see the story of Jesus meeting with the Old Testament heroes Elijah and Moses in a supernatural meeting. And Peter blurts out in the middle of it, *“Hey Jesus, want me to build a tent and we can just all hang out?”* It doesn’t say it but I can just picture Jesus looking at Peter like, *“Would you please just stand there and be quiet?”*

But you have to give it to Peter. He was brave. He was passionate. He was a bit rash and impetuous but He loved him some Jesus and it showed...even if it wasn’t always what came out of his busy mouth. Let’s start by looking at **John 13**. Most of our time will be in **chapter 18** but let’s set the stage by looking at **John 13:36-38**. Jesus is trying to break the news to His disciples that He is going to die and is going to leave them but they aren’t understanding right now. So, of course, Peter speaks up.

Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”³⁷ Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”³⁸ Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

Now, how many of you think Peter sincerely believed his own words that he would be willing to die for Jesus? Absolutely he believed it. And don’t you know Peter could not comprehend what Jesus has just told him? Disown Jesus? Three times? Crazy!

But here is where things get interesting. Jesus knows what is about to happen. He has already seen it like He was watching a movie. He knows what Peter is going to do because He knows Peter better than Peter knows Peter. Jesus is God. He is the Creator and so He

knows what is going to happen and He allows Peter to do it. Jesus could have said, “*Peter, you are going to be tempted to disown me three times but don’t do it*”. No, Jesus just says what is going to happen. I want you to think about why and we will talk about it again in a minute.

So, Jesus is arrested that night in the olive grove and if you are a fan of Peter you know the story of how Peter pulls out his sword to protect Jesus and cuts off the ear of the Malchus the servant. Why do you think Pete cut off his ear? He wasn’t aiming for the guy’s ear. He was going to cut his head off, right? But the guy ducked enough that he only lost his ear. I love that about Peter! Was it a dumb move? Of course. Could he have gotten killed for it? Absolutely. Did Jesus need his help? Nope. But Peter wasn’t going down without a fight. Attaboy Pete. You gotta respect that, even if it wasn’t very smart. Now, I’m going to give you a hint as to what I believe is the answer to my question earlier. Why did Jesus allow Peter to disown Him? I think it had something to do with that impetuous but brave spirit he showed here. But let’s move on to **chapter 18** and see how the denial plays out.

Jesus is taken to the high priest of the Jews. We don’t know exactly but imagine a really nice house with an inner courtyard surrounded by a wall with gates on every side. The house would probably be at the center of the courtyard with gardens and trees and maybe a fountain. A high priest could entertain guests or even hold court if the weather permitted. It probably had a roof over part of it and that’s where the trial of Jesus was held. John is able to go right in because evidently the high priest knew him but Peter wasn’t known. Let’s read it in **John 18:15-18** first. *“Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ “You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter. He replied, “I am not.” ¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.”*

Boom! Strike one. And what an unnecessary strike it was, too. This is just some little servant girl making an observation. Hey, aren’t you one of His disciples? And what’s the worst that could happen if he had just admitted it? What’s she going to do? But Peter panicked and lied.

Have you ever done that? You heard yourself tell somebody something that wasn't true. The book *The Day American Told the Truth* says that 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial, and 36 percent lie about important matters; 86 percent lie regularly to parents, 75 percent to friends, 73 percent to siblings, and 69 percent to spouses. (*Daily Bread*, August 28, 1992.)

That's a lot of lying. So, we know people all over lie about everything. But this lie was especially egregious. Think about it. The servant girl knew he was lying. He came in with John who she knew was a disciple. And John heard him say it as well. We know because he wrote it down here. That had to be painful for John to hear. But then it gets worse as you know.

Skip forward to **verses 25-27**. You know it's coming. It's hard to read. You want to shout at your Bible, *"Peter! Don't do it. Don't say it. Just admit it."* But no. *"Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, 'You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?' He denied it, saying, 'I am not.'"*²⁶ *One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, 'Didn't I see you with him in the garden?'"*²⁷ *Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow."*

Strike two, strike three, Pete's out. And he didn't just deny it. Other records say he cursed and shouted. Then Luke adds this in his Gospel, *"The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.'"*⁶² *And he went outside and wept bitterly."*

That's too much. It's bad enough to realize Jesus was right and you really did deny knowing Him three times but then as you swore the last time to then look over between the trees and over the half wall and between the people and there you catch a glimpse of Jesus' bloody and bruised face looking at you! That's too much. Don't you know that's a sight Peter could never forget. And I don't think Jesus wanted him to forget it and I'll tell you why.

If you are a fan of Peter, what is it that you like about him? It's not just that he made some boneheaded mistakes like this and you can relate to them. You have to appreciate Peter's honesty and his spontaneity and his passion and his bravery, right? Who wouldn't want to be friends with Peter? He was a great guy. He had a lot going for him. I've known guys like this and they keep you entertained. It's not boring with guys like Peter and God wants that kind of person. And God can use that kind of person. But He can't use a prideful person.

So, Jesus allowed Peter to go through this unspeakably horrible experience to wring that pride right out of him. He wanted Peter to remember His face when Peter ever started to feel any pride welling up in him ever again. See, Peter had been on the inside with Jesus for the past three years. Peter, James and John were always with Him even more than the others. And they were always named just like that: Peter, James and John, with Peter being first. That will do something to a person that they can't even see or even imagine that they have. Very few people can look themselves in the mirror and think, *"Well, there's a prideful person."* But God sees it and abhors it and will not use a person until He allows that person to go through the painful difficulty of having that pride removed.

He did it with Job, you remember? Job was a great guy. God Himself even said Job was the greatest guy and called him His servant. But Job had pride and so God said, *"Okay, Satan, I'm going to use you like a tool to wring that pride out of Job so I can use him like I want to use him."*

He did it to the Apostle Paul as we will see in a couple of weeks. Paul, who was then Saul, was a passionate and energetic man determined to do what he thought was right. And he had a resume like nobody else. And God looks down and says, *"I can use that. But first I need to literally knock him off his high horse and bring him down a few notches before I can really use him."*

That's where Peter is in his process. He's been knocked way down. We have all disappointed the Lord but Peter did it at the worst possible time over and over and over with Jesus watching him do it just before His death. That's rough! So, let's now look at "No Pride Pete" in the last chapter of John. It's another famous passage. John 21, starting in verse 15.

Now this would make a lot more sense if we all spoke Greek and even more sense if we were there to see the conversation but let's start in **verse 15**. *"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, **'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'**" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Feed my lambs."**¹⁶ Again Jesus said, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Take care of my sheep."**¹⁷ The third time he said to him, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, **"Do you***

love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

So, here is what my commentaries tell me is actually being said here. First, it’s interesting that Jesus calls Peter “*Simon, son of John.*” That is his formal name but for a long time Jesus has been calling him by his nickname Peter. So, this just means it’s serious. Like when your mama used to call you by your full name. You knew you better be listening, right?

So, the first time Jesus asks, “*do you love me more than these?*” And we think Jesus is probably asking Peter, do you love me more than these things around us like the fishing boat and nets and all that because they had gone back to doing what they knew to do, and that was fishing. But Jesus is calling him out of that life and into fulltime ministry. So, He’s asking, do you love me more than these things. And the word Jesus uses for love is agape which is a love that God loves us with. It’s the highest form of love.

But Peter is broken. He has no more confidence. He can’t even look Jesus in the eye anymore and claim to love Him with agape love. He has proven he doesn’t and so he responds to Jesus that he loves Him with phileo love, which is still love but it’s brotherly love. I know this has to be painful to Peter but it had to be painful for Jesus as well. Like a parent making a child admit he did something and then have to take the blame for it. It’s painful. But Peter had been shamed publicly in the courtyard of the high priest and this is how Jesus restores him publicly in front of the other disciples. It’s painful but it has to be done.

But Jesus is telling him to feed His lambs which means Jesus is telling him to pastor the church. Now, Peter has never even seen a Christian church yet nor does he know what a pastor is but he is about to find out. So, Jesus asks again. “*Simon, do you agape me?*” And again, Peter can’t bring himself to say agape so he says phileo. Now, think about the old Peter. The prideful Peter would have said, “*Oh, yes I agape you! I agape you more than anybody else has ever agape’d anybody. I am the most agape guy around, trust me!*” But not anymore. And this is right where Jesus needs him to be. And Jesus again calls him to pastor the first church with, “*Shepherd my sheep.*” Or, “*Take care of my sheep.*”

Then one last time, a time for every time Peter denied knowing Jesus, and He asks him again, do you love me? But this time Jesus uses the same word Peter has been using.

“Simon, do you even *phileo* me?” And all Peter can do is bow his head and basically say, “Lord, only you know.” Peter can’t even guarantee that. He is broken. He is crushed. He has no pride. He has no self-esteem, no self-worth. He’s done. Stick a fork in him. He’s done.

But Jesus again tells him to “*Feed my sheep.*” He has told him three times that he is going to be the guy to lead the new church that will rise up after Jesus has gone back to Heaven. But Jesus had to prove to Simon who was going to actually be doing it. Jesus told Peter earlier in **Matthew 16** that “*I will build this church, Peter.*” I will do it. Not you. You are going to be the leader, the pastor and I will use you but I will build the church.” And it’s the same today.

But Jesus couldn’t use that old prideful Peter. But now...now this Peter He can use and He is telling him in person and in public that Peter was going to, not just be restored, but be used by God in a powerful way. Jesus predicted Peter’s denial but here He is predicting his ministry. So, now, let’s end with a look at what happens and how the ministry of Peter looked in that first church.

You don’t have to turn far. It’s the next book, the book of Acts. Do you remember when Jesus told the disciples He was going to go away but He was going to send a helper for them? Well, that’s exactly what happened in **Acts chapter 2** when the Holy Spirit came on the followers of Jesus, including Peter and Peter preached his first sermon.

It reminds me of the time a few years ago I went to the funeral of a dear friend who was very old when he died. And for his funeral sermon, the family asked his older brother to preach. Both men had been preachers back in the day but the older brother had to be well into his ‘90’s. He struggled to get out of his chair and then he shuffled over to the pulpit and I was wondering if maybe we were going to have to have two funerals that day.

He got behind the pulpit all stooped over and adjusted the mic down to his level, opened his Bible and as soon as he spoke, the Holy Spirit gave that man the power to proclaim Jesus with a loud and clear voice, the voice of a 30-year-old! That old dude preached now! He brought it...but only through the power of God. (Marion Meeker)

I know for a fact that is what happened to Peter on the day of Pentecost. He got up to preach. Peter did it but it wasn’t the same Peter that pulled the sword. It wasn’t the old prideful Pete. It was the new and improved Pete being used mightily by God to bring 3,000

people to Jesus that one day. Boom! There's the first church and they are being preached to by the new improved pastor, Pastor No-Pride Pete and it was a glorious day. He didn't even need three points and a poem like most pastors. He just spoke the truth of the Gospel and God did the rest.

Now, do you see why God allowed Peter to go through that horrible denial process? Jesus could have stopped it a dozen different ways but He allowed Peter to have that free will and used that to wring all the pride out of him. And God may be allowing you to go through what you are going through for the same reason. **A.W. Tozier** said it best: *"It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply."* I believe that. And He doesn't use a man until He has crushed him.

Music

Nobody wants to be crushed. Nobody wants to disappoint God. But God allows us to make those choices and then uses those choices for His glory like only He can. Let's bow our heads right now and just go to God in prayer and ask Him for wisdom to make the right choices but to ask forgiveness of the bad choices and ask Him to then use us like only He can.

Do you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus today? It's the same kind of relationship that Peter had. And all you have to do is believe that Jesus is God, He died on the cross to pay the price for your sins that you could never pay. Ask Him today to forgive you of those sins and let your belief in Him change your life and start making you more and more like Him every day. Do it right now as the music plays.

