

A Sinking Heart

Luke 22:55-23:10 This passage in Luke tells about Peter's denial of Jesus. Yesterday we talked about the sinking feeling we experience when we face certain difficult situations. Fear and discouragement can cause the sinking feeling. Today we see an even deeper level of emotional turmoil. When Peter denied Jesus, he had more than a sinking feeling. He had a sinking heart. His heart was broken. When the Lord turned and looked at Peter after the cock crowed, Peter remembered the word of the Lord and how He told him that before the cock crowed he would deny Him three times. Peter left the scene and wept bitterly.

Peter had a broken heart, but more was broken in Peter than his heart. Something broke in Peter that changed his life. Earlier Jesus warned Peter that Satan wanted to sift him as wheat. Jesus said, "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: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (v. 31-32, KJV).

Peter responded confidently, "Lord I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (v. 33, KJV).

What did Jesus mean when he told Peter "when you are converted, strengthen the brethren"?

Wasn't Peter already converted? After all, he was the very disciple who confessed exactly who Jesus was by saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then why did Peter have to be converted? On that fateful day when Peter denied Christ three times, more than his heart broke. Peter's pride was broken. He was converted from the confident, independent Peter to the broken, dependent Peter. On that day Peter experienced his own crucifixion—the crucifixion of his own flesh.

It is not easy to die to ourselves. Daily we are exhorted to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit reveals who we are without Christ, the picture is overwhelming and we have a sinking heart. We sigh and ask, "Lord, am I that wicked?"

Just as Jesus went to the cross and Peter had his cross experience on the day he denied Jesus, we must also have our cross experience. It happens when we lay down our self-sufficiency, pride and independence, and when we recognize that without Jesus we have the capability of being just as wicked as Charles Manson the murderer. It is only when we recognize our weakness that we can then turn to Jesus to be our strength. A broken, contrite heart Jesus will not despise. We all have our appointment with the cross when we die to ourselves so we can live in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Have you been converted?

**READ: Judges 6:1-40; Luke 22:55-23:10; Psalm 95:1-96:13;
Proverbs 14:5-6**