

When Our Best Is Not Good Enough

Peter had done it again. As he sat cold and shivering in the boat, he could sense his companions exchanging smug looks and mocking smiles.

Why, Peter thought miserably, does it always have to be me?

Peter always meant well, and he wanted to be like Jesus whom he loved and admired.

Jesus Christ had just fed about 5,000 men plus women and children from five loaves and two fish, [Matthew 14:13-21].

Jesus Christ then told His disciples to get into their boat and go before Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 14:22-27 [New King James] *“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’”*

The disciples had seen Jesus Christ perform many wonderful things, but to walk across a storm-tossed sea!!

Matthew 14:28-33 [New King James] *“And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’”*

Without one moment of hesitation, Peter had climbed over the side of the boat and with his eyes fixed on Jesus Christ took one step towards Him, then another, and then began to stride out confidently, filled with exhilaration.

The other disciples looked on incredulously, they were accustomed to Peter’s impulsiveness, but this beat everything.

Peter then glanced over his shoulder, taking his eyes off Jesus Christ.

The boat was now several yards away, now almost out of sight in the gloom.

Jesus Christ was still walking towards Peter, but He, too, was a long way off.

Suddenly it hit Peter, what am I doing? I can’t do this.

Peter’s brash confidence ebbed away, and to his horror he began to sink into the cold sea.

Jesus told the disciples to continue to row towards the shore and Peter was left with his thoughts, what had gone wrong?

Peter wanted so very much to be like his hero Jesus Christ but this humiliating failure must have left him crushed and discouraged.

Don't we all feel like this at times?

We may, like Peter, be utterly sincere in our desire to be like Jesus Christ.

We always do our best, but this seems not to be good enough.

If we are beginning to see this, we are learning an important lesson about being a real Christian, our best really is **not** good enough.

Human faith is not enough

Some people seem to be endowed with more natural faith than others.

Peter was like this, he had the type of personality that would jump into a situation where other, more cautious people, would hold back.

More often than not it would seem by the accounts in the gospels, it got Peter in trouble.

But you could not accuse Peter of lacking zeal and a positive, can-do attitude about life.

Jesus appreciated this in Peter and did not want to squash his personality.

But first Jesus Christ had to teach this enthusiastic, rather self-confident young man some important spiritual lessons.

God is certainly **not** against those who do the best they can, we can see this in His parable of the talents, [Matthew 25:14-30].

But we must always remember that our very best efforts are **not** going to be enough to save us. Otherwise we could be "saved by works," which is something the Christian Bible clearly shows is impossible.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [New King James] *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

We are **not** saved by works but **for** works.

To accomplish this we need something more, this is what Peter had to learn.

A different kind of faith

Peter had faith to step out over the side of the boat, but when he began to fully appreciate the consequences of what he had done by his "stepping out in faith," his own human faith broke down.

Jesus showed Peter that he really only had "little faith" because he had doubted.

What Peter needed in addition to his own faith was a different kind of faith that would not break down in the face of adversity.

But where can we get this kind of faith?

It was **not** something he could somehow work up himself.

Jesus had the needed kind of faith for He knew that humanly speaking what He had to do in His life was impossible.

Jesus had to live without once sinning, which is something even the most resourceful, enthusiastic, energetic, zealous human being **cannot** do.

Jeremiah 10:23 [New King James] *“O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”*

The prophet Jeremiah was well aware of this problem.

Hebrews 5:7-8 [New King James] *“who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”*

Jesus prayed earnestly to His Father for the faith He needed to live a life that would qualify Him to be the Saviour of all humanity.

Jesus knew that without the faith, that could only come from God the Father, He could no more live a life free from sin than He could walk on water, for instance.

Jesus Christ was flesh and blood and His weight and the force of gravity made walking on water impossible, but Jesus Christ did walk on water.

Jesus had the kind of faith that could surmount impossible odds, the kind of faith that could move mountains if need be, [Matthew 17:20].

Growing in faith

Peter must often have remembered what Jesus Christ had said to him as He led him back to safety after his failed attempt to walk on water, *“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*

Peter had doubted because he lacked the kind of faith he needed to keep on walking on water.

Peter’s human reasoning told him that he was in an impossible situation.

Luke 17:5 [New King James] *“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’”*

This request may well have been prompted by Peter.

This request was given on the occasion of Jesus Christ pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries, without faith it is very difficult if **not** impossible to forgive in the way Jesus Christ forgives us.

How did Jesus Christ reply to this request?

Luke 17:7-10 [New King James] *“And which of you, having a servant ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”*

Whatever we do serving Jesus Christ, we must be very humble. Even the apostles who did much more than others for Jesus Christ must never think they had thereby made Him their debtor.

Acts 20:28 [New King James] *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*

We were purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, as a bondsman would have been at a slave market, and have no personal rights only responsibilities to our Master.

As God’s servants, our whole time is filled with duty, we ought to make the end of one task the beginning of the next. The servant who has been *“ploughing or tending sheep”* when he comes home at night has work still to do, he must wait at table.

It is right that Jesus Christ should be served before us, *“prepare something for my supper ... afterwards you will eat and drink.”*

“Gird yourself” meaning to free ourselves from everything in our lives that is entangling and encumbering our serving Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ might require all of this from us as our Creator, Sustainer and Saviour but He does not insist upon it.

Matthew 20:28 [New King James] *“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, did this as an example for us to follow, but still leaves us with the free choice of becoming His disciple and servant.

“Does he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded of him? I think not.”

Christ’s servants do **not** so much as merit His thanks for any service we do for Him. **No** good works of ours can merit anything at the hand of God.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [New King James] *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

We will all fall short of the “good works” we should be doing for Jesus Christ, but we are bound to fulfil that first and great commandment to love Him with all our heart and body, [Luke 14:26].

It becomes us to call ourselves *“unprofitable servants,”* but to call His service a profitable service, that is, His grace towards us.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

It is out of gratitude for what Jesus Christ has done to serve us, His life, death and resurrection, that we should offer our whole body, mind and human spirit [Job 32:8] to Jesus Christ as our form of personal worship.

In this relationship with Jesus Christ, as our loving Master, our faith in Him will increase.

Peter, the man who nearly drowned in the Sea of Galilee, learned how to increase His faith by becoming a *“living sacrifice,”* bondsman of Jesus Christ and at the end of his life a literal sacrifice, as he served the Master he loved beyond all else.

This is our part, along with the diligent study of the Christian Bible [**Romans 10:17**] for the faith we need to please our Creator God, [**Hebrews 11:6**].

God's part is to send the Holy Spirit to actively dwell in us, so that as we are guided by Him as we walk with Him day by day, the very "*fruit*" of that relationship will be generated in us.

Galatians 5:22-23 [New King James] "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*"

Note one of those "*fruits*" is faithfulness.

Let us all learn that our best will never be enough, we must have complete faith *in* Jesus Christ by having the faith *of* Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.