



Our Great Intercessor

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32)

In one evening, Peter experienced the full circle of faith, weariness, fear, and despair. He was in the Upper Room when Jesus washed his feet to indicate service and love (John 13:1-9). When Jesus tells the group that someone will betray him, Peter joined the other disciples in proclaiming, "Surely not I, Lord." (Matthew 26:21-22). As Jesus prepared the disciples for what was about to transpire, Peter, once again boldly proclaimed, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." (Matthew 26:33). Jesus went further and warned Peter of Satan's testing. The courageous, bold fisherman will be broken and his faith will be challenged.

The evening continued and Peter was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane trying to keep his eyes open. Once again, Jesus warned Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:37-38).

Judas, accompanied by Roman guards and religious leaders, identified Jesus with a kiss and the betrayal was set. In fear and confusion, Peter reacted with earthly strength and cut off an ear. Jesus immediately healed the centurion and reminded Peter of the Father's will (John 18:11-12).

Suddenly, the world has changed. Disciples fled fleeing while Jesus was arrested. In a matter of a few hours, Peter had experienced a whirlwind of events and emotions. He was dazed, confused and left to wonder at the validity of the Jesus' claim as the Son of God. He was vulnerable and couldn't imagine how his world could get worse, but it did. Three denials later, Peter is in despair. In shock and anguish Peter came to the realization that he has spurned his best friend, master, and teacher. The worst part was Jesus knew it would happen!

And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:75)

Jesus knew Peter needed to be tested. He needed to experience the betrayal and the subsequent bitter grief. Peter needed to leave fishing behind and come out on the other side as a strong leader. James 1:3-4 says, "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

What we see today that Peter probably didn't understand until later, is it could have been worse. Peter could have fallen away and left the new church without a leader. Thankfully, Jesus prayed specifically for Peter's faith. Yes, Peter would deny Christ. Yes, the experience would leave

Peter in despair and sorrow. Yet, Jesus was not done with Peter. He reaffirmed and restored Peter/s faith and their relationship. In Acts 2, Peter is boldly proclaiming the gospel to all in Jerusalem.

We have the same assurance that as Jesus interceded for Peter during one of his most difficult tests, Jesus will intercede for us. We will be tested. Not that God tests us (John 1:3). Instead, God uses difficult times to mature our faith, to increase our trust in Him, and to complete His perfect will (Romans 12:2). Our spiritually wise brother, Peter, poignantly teaches us:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3-7)

And like Peter we will come out on the other side of the testing perfect, complete and with a steadfast faith.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Whatever you are going through you are not alone. Find assurance and strength in knowing Jesus is praying for you!

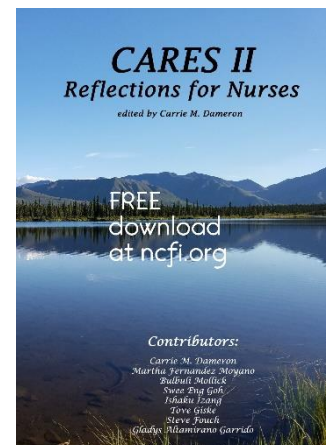
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