

78 – What Jesus Saw

John 13: 36-14:14

God knew how weak we were when He called us. Yet He wanted us anyway. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. Nothing we do surprises Him. In one of the psalms David says, “He knows our frame, He knows we are but dust” (Ps 103:14). Clearly He’s not impressed with our natural capacities. How silly our well-intended promises must sound to Him when we try to assure Him that we will never fail that way again. Yes, it pleases Him that we want to please Him, but He knows only too well that our willpower is hopelessly weak in the face of severe temptation. That doesn’t mean we can’t be victorious. It doesn’t mean we won’t be victorious, but it does mean we won’t until the Holy Spirit indwells us and we learn to lay hold of His power, until we truly discover that “greater is He who is in [us] than he who is in the world” (1Jn 4:4), until we’ve learned how to “put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit” (Ro 8:13).

Peter meant every word he said when he vowed to the Lord, “I will lay down my life for You” (Jn 13:37). But Jesus saw his weakness and replied, “Will you? Actually you will deny Me three times before morning” (paraphrase). Peter would have been wise not to take that discussion further. But he felt he knew his heart, he knew he really meant it, so he argued with Jesus. He said, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You,” and all the other disciples said the same thing (Mt 26:35). Yet as you and I know, because we’ve read ahead, they all failed just as He said they would, not at first (Jn 18:10), but later after Jesus was arrested. That bold resolve collapsed, and they fled. As He died on the cross they watched fearfully from a safe distance. In the days before His resurrection they met in secret behind locked doors.

But the amazing part is that even though Jesus knew they would fail to keep those promises, He went on to tell them how much He loved them and what wonderful apostles they were going to be in the future. He looked past their failure and saw their glory. He looked past the broken promises and saw men full of the power of the Holy Spirit. What did He see that evening? Whatever it was we need to see it too.

Confronting confusion (Jn 13:26-14:14)

• DBS (Sun-Sat)

What a discouraging evening that must have been: Peter promising he would never deny Him (Jn 13:37); Thomas proving he had no understanding whatsoever of the cross or resurrection (Jn 14:5); Philip asking Jesus to let them peek into heaven (Jn 14:8); and Judas, the son of James (Ac 1:13), making sure everyone knew he was still waiting for Jesus to declare Himself King and set up His throne in Jerusalem (Jn 14:22). And that confusion didn’t disappear. They made more foolish statements that evening as they walked toward the Mount of Olives (Jn 16:17-19, 29-32). If it were anyone other than Jesus listening to those comments, that person would have been overwhelmed with a sense of failure. Here they were in their final evening together, after at least two and a half years of constant teaching, yet it was obvious that none of those men understood the main truths Jesus had been trying to teach them.

What Jesus saw

But here is what’s so surprising: Jesus wasn’t discouraged. Yes, He challenged them and tried to correct their confused thinking, but He didn’t announce that they were all miserable failures. He was able to see past where they were at the moment to where they would be after God had worked a miracle. He saw past their weakness to the strength they would have once they were filled with the Holy Spirit. He was so confident of what God would do He was able to be patient with them before that miracle arrived.

Whatever Jesus saw that evening we need to see it too. Those truths hold the key to unlock hope when we become frustrated with ourselves over repeated failures, and they produce a confidence in God that enables us to be patient with others who have not yet learned to walk in victory. Thankfully, what Jesus said to His disciples that evening reveals many of those truths. Here are four:

- 1) He saw their weakness. He was not surprised. He knew them better than they knew themselves. He knew they would fail until they learned to walk in God’s power.
- 2) He saw the gift of His cross and resurrection. He knew it would release a new level of relationship with God, one that had never been possible before in all of human history. God would:
 - Wash away their sins (Eze 36:25)
 - Transform the heart (Eze 36:26)
 - Place the Holy Spirit within each believer (Eze 36:27)
- 3) He saw the depth of His commitment to them. Like a young man returning for his bride He passionately loved them and would come back and be with them forever.
- 4) He saw the change that would take place in them after Pentecost. He saw them walking in victory and doing wonders for God.

Jesus didn’t ignore His disciples’ weakness. He saw it, but He also saw beyond it. And that vision released hope. He was certain that, in time, they would become who God called them to be. As we face our own weakness, and weakness in others, we need to see what Jesus saw.



LIFE LESSONS WITH DR. STEVE SCHELL

Teaching the Bible
practically & understandably
and seeing lives changed by
the truth of the Gospel

What we need to see

When we look at ourselves or other believers we need to see those same four truths:

- 1) We need to see our own weakness. Until we realize that “the spirit [may be] willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41) we will try to obey God in our own strength, and we’ll demand that others try harder to do the same thing. We must hear and believe when Jesus says, “...apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). A victorious life begins the moment we realize we are helpless apart from Him.
- 2) We need to see the power of the cross and resurrection. This is the source that makes our new life possible. By repenting and placing our faith in Jesus, not only are our sins washed away but the “heart of stone” is removed and a “heart of flesh” put in its place. Our desires and attitudes are miraculously transformed as God comes to dwell inside us. Then we begin the process of learning to draw on His power and walk in the Spirit. We step into a new dimension; we are able to see and hear in the spiritual realm. At last we are able to keep the promises we make to God.
- 3) We need to see the depth of His love for us. He is deeply committed to us. He will always be with us whether we are aware of His presence or not. He wants a relationship with us as close as the relationship He has with His Father. Whatever we face, we won’t face it alone. And when we see others struggle we can be sure He hasn’t left them either.
- 4) We need to see ourselves walking in victory and doing the wonders of God. As soon as Pentecost arrived, those disciples began to minister boldly. Pentecost didn’t turn them into perfect people; it released them to be growing people. Together, as a community, as the Body of Christ, they started listening to the Holy Spirit and then doing what He showed them to do. Very soon they began to do “greater works” than Jesus did (in number) because now there were so many more people doing those works. Jesus’ ministry expanded exponentially. He had told them they could ask for anything in His name, and He would do it (Jn 14:14). And they discovered it was true. We need that same attitude. We need to take our eyes off our failures and see the high calling He’s placed in front of us.

Letting people grow

Discipleship is a process. It takes time. People don’t automatically know how to walk in the Spirit the moment they receive the Spirit. Most of us, like Peter, don’t realize how weak we are until we’ve tried and failed many times. And not everyone has someone to teach them how to walk in the Spirit once they’re ready to learn, which helps explain why some genuine believers can struggle for many years. Actually, I think all of us do in certain areas.

But we aren’t alone in that struggle. Jesus is with us and will not abandon us. At times we may feel dry and distant from God, but we’re not. The apostle Paul assures us of this:

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it (bring it to full maturity) until the day of Jesus Christ” (Php 1:6).

The author of Hebrews assures us of this:

“He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you’” (Heb 13:5).

And above all, Jesus assures us of this:

“...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Questions

- 1) Can you think of a time when you were going through a trial, and you suddenly became aware that Jesus was there with you? Tell us what happened.
- 2) Have you ever tried to resist temptation or a spiritual assault using your willpower alone? How did it work? Have you learned how to overcome by the Spirit? Tell us what you learned.
- 3) When did you realize the Holy Spirit was really living inside of you? How did that change the way you think about God?