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Holy Conversations. Part 1

With Peter

Text: **Matthew 26:31-35**; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38

I am inclined to be kind to Peter in this narrative. There is a part of me that wants to jump all over Peter, excoriate him, rake him over the coals, and ask him how he could be so dense. Then I saw myself in Peter. Let's look at this conversation Peter had with our Lord.

In verse 31, Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7.

In verse 32, Jesus foretells His victory.

**Overestimation (33)**

In verse 33, Peter answers our Lord. I don't know why Peter so often feels he needs to speak. In Matthew 16:15-16, Jesus asks who people He is. It is Peter who speaks first. In Matthew 17:1-5, Jesus is transfigured on a high mountain. It is Peter who says, "Lord, it is good for us to be here". The late Pastor George Gardiner said, "When we get to heaven, we'll know Peter. He will be the one with the foot-shaped mouth". Listen to Peter's overestimation of himself. "Even if all are made to stumble, I WILL NEVER..." Wow! Apparently, Pete has never heard the cliché, "Never say 'never' ". Peter is confident that even if others decide to turn back and rescind their statements of loyalty to Jesus, Peter will not. I wish I could share with Peter, Paul's admonition to the saints at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 10:12

*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

In this holy conversation, Peter presents himself as the one who will not fail, will not disappoint, will not cave.

**Response (34)**

Jesus has a response to this Petrine (of or relating to Peter) cockiness which is seen in all of us. Christ knows our limitations...even when we don't. Christ tells the same Peter who has said he will never stumble, that he *will* stumble. Not only will Peter stumble, but it will happen this night, before daybreak (34). Jesus knows Peter better than *Peter* knows Peter.

**Backtalk (35)**

Peter insists on his own fidelity and does not wish to even *entertain* the possibility that he might fail. In fact, he sounded soooo confident that the other disciples followed suit (35B). The disciples had already become sorrowful and examined themselves (v. 22). They were certain they would not fall.

This conversation has to do with presumption, self-congratulation, pride and smug superiority. Did you hear it in the text? "Even if everybody else stumbles, I won't. These other disciples are not as reliable as I am." Listen to Peter suggest his own superior nature.

Playwright, novelist, poet Oscar Wilde:

*Come over here and sit next to me, I'm dying to tell you all about myself*.

Listen to Peter as he can hardly imagine that any one of his colleagues could be as faithful as he. In Luke's recounting of this incident, Peter says he is willing to go with Jesus to prison and to death (Luke 22:33). Maybe the line between swagger and desire is thinner than we thought. Maybe that which Peter wants to avoid and that to which he aspires are so close together that his head is spinning. I don't think Peter is just flapping his jaws. I think he genuinely *wants* to be faithful to the end. Luke observes that when Jesus was arrested, Peter followed Jesus (Luke 22:54). Peter would soon deny even knowing Jesus, but Peter followed. Luke uses a specific word for *followed.* It is the Greek word, *akoloutheo, "*to follow as adisciple*".* That's positive, but Luke says that while Peter followed, he followed at a distance*.* So much for the one who was sure he'd never fail to support Jesus*.*

Listen to Peter's backtalk. I would like to think you and I would have enough sense not to talk back to Jesus after verse 34. When Jesus tells us about ourselves, Jesus is right. There is no need for us to come back to Him with a rebuttal. Do you hear the implied, "yeah, but..." in verse 35?

**Application**

As we engage our friends and family in holy conversation, we will come across some Peters. We will encounter men and women who are very sure they can please God. They are sure of themselves. In fact, they are not even sure they *need* the Christ of whom we speak. We must present Christ as the One who knows our friends and family members better than they know *themselves*. As Christ told *Peter* about *Peter*, we must introduce Jesus as the One who can tell our associates about *themselves*. In this conversation, Jesus drills down and dares *Peter* to come to terms with *Peter*. When Luke tells this story (Luke 22:31), he says that Jesus first addressed Peter as Simon. Jesus reminded Peter of who he was before he got renamed "Rock". (Simon means *hearing. Petros means rock).* This is a holy conversation between an all-knowing Jesus and a self-assured Peter. This is a chat about being careful with our words and our bragging. This is a holy conversation about what we call ourselves. It is about that journey from *Simon* to *Peter* and back again.

Amen