

Resting in God  
"The freedom to be nothing"

Study 7

*John 21:15-17 (Amplified Bible)*

*When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these [others do--with reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion, as one loves the Father]? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You [that I have deep, instinctive, personal affection for You, as for a close friend]. He said to him, Feed My lambs.*

*16) Again He said to him the second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me [with reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion, as one loves the Father]? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You [that I have a deep, instinctive, personal affection for You, as for a close friend]. He said to him, Shepherd (tend) My sheep.*

*17) He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me [with a deep, instinctive, personal affection for Me, as for a close friend]? Peter was grieved (was saddened and hurt) that He should ask him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You [that I have a deep, instinctive, personal affection for You, as for a close friend]. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.*

Jesus knew what had taken place in the heart of His proud, self-powerful friend. Peter had witnessed his own crucifixion after he denied Jesus three times. Because of the awareness of his failure, had been given time to allow his own helplessness to live and love as Jesus did take root in his broken heart. Now he was humbled. He was a man who could probably, for the first time, be completely honest with Jesus, a time he and Jesus both longed for.

Although it grieved him to have to admit it because he so wanted to please the only one he now loved, Peter, was finally able to express out loud what had been done in his heart. He couldn't love as Jesus was asking him to love. He could only love in his limited, carnal way, not with a supernatural, God given love.

Without knowing it, Peter was finally expressing to Jesus, what Jesus wanted to hear all along. In saying that he was unable to be the kind of spiritual friend, and giant believer that he wanted to be, Peter had gained the trust of Jesus for his honesty. He had been humbled by his very visible failures. Because of his new humility, Jesus commissioned him to be a caretaker of those that meant everything to Him, those He died for. He asked Peter to take care of his children, those who would need to see the Kingdom of God in their midst.

Jesus can't trust anyone who feels that they are capable of following Him in their own strength. He knows that no one can walk in the Kingdom of heaven with Him and have any attachments to their carnal ways. Self confidence, the pride of life, the desire for personal recognition or self aggrandizement, cannot exist while being in full service to the Father.

In Peter, these all had to be put to death before Jesus could trust him with those He loved. Once Peter had said that they had been given a death blow in him, Jesus could live through him for the rest of his days. There was no more Peter, only room for all of Jesus, allowing the Kingdom of heaven to be Peter's home even though he was still alive.

*Matthew 11:12 (New International Version) From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.*

The followers of Jesus and His ways must fully acknowledge that they can do nothing of themselves if they truly want to walk with Him. We must aggressively pursue the death of all of our personal powers by the power of the Holy Spirit. Anything of the flesh cannot co-exist with the wealth of the Spirit and we need the power to acknowledge and submit to that fact. Jesus does not share His place with anything of this world. Doing so forcefully advances the kingdom of heaven in us.

The intermixing of our ways and the ways of Jesus is the most prominent reason that we are so weak. We are attempting to use the lowest form of creation, the flesh, to implement unimaginable Kingdom of heaven principles. We attempt to complete in the flesh, what has begun and can only

continue in the Spirit. It is impossible. Jesus died to put the life of the flesh to death so that the Spirit of God would regain its rightful place in all of mankind.

To enter the Kingdom of heaven, and to continue to walk in it into eternity, there can be nothing left of our old ways. We are to ask Jesus to rid us of anything that takes the place of His complete Lordship over our entire being. We must die to ourselves and allow Him to live through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter had been humbled. He had been shown his frailties and the inability to live as Jesus lived, so must we.

Peter couldn't receive more of God unless there was less of himself. God, in His infinite wisdom, allowed Peter to crumble for a short time. That crumbling process broke Peter and broke the hold the lower kingdoms had on Him. It may have appeared to Peter and those around him that he had failed God and there was no way back. Even that despair was part of the process of eliminating Peter so that Christ could be formed in him. While Peter had no strength or ability in himself, the Kingdom of God was aggressively advancing in him and would soon advance through him.

*Hebrews 4:9-10 (New International Version) There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10) for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.*

Never fear times when you will be shown how weak you are in any area. In fact, find rest in those times, understanding what they really are. These are actually very special times to God, and consequently, should be to you. He is providing an avenue for you to once more submit to Him and acknowledge your fears and inabilities so that Jesus can become all in all to you.

Your submissions to God in times of weakness are actually refueling stations on the road to living in the Kingdom of heaven on this earth. Your admission, and submission, eliminates more of you, and allows God to replace that emptiness with more of Himself. That is a very good thing to have happen. It can be a very wonderful time, if the pressures of God's work being done in you, drives you to His lap with your thumb in your mouth. Resting there, in that posture, allows God to be your very personal God, One Who loves on you, while a mighty work is being done in you.

For thought or discussion:

How real have you gotten with God

Where would Jesus need to take you so that you could begin an honest walk with Him in His kingdom life