

The Kingdom and the Church

Ch. 3 – Falling and Growing

Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:5-8; Rom. 9:14-16; Luke 22:31-34

The Christian Life Being Like Waves—Sometimes High and Sometimes Low

Most Christians want to love and follow the Lord fervently all their life after being saved. But they experience both falls and revivals. After experiencing a revival, they hope to never fall again, to remain standing, and to move forward according to a certain standard. However, in reality, no Christian has this kind of experience. There has never been a Christian whose spiritual condition has been steadfast to the end, nor has there ever been a Christian who has always advanced and who has never fallen or become cold.

According to practical experience, the life of a Christian is like the waves of the sea that are sometimes high and sometimes low. Sometimes we feel that we are on the mountaintop, and sometimes we feel that we are in a low valley. Sometimes we feel very happy, and the more we pray, the sweeter we feel. There seems to be an inward power pushing us so that we cannot help but pray. However, after a few days, the situation changes, and we feel no different whether or not we pray. Consequently, we gradually stop praying. Sometimes reading the Bible is sweeter than honey to our mouth (Psa. 119:103), and we cannot wait to read the Bible or muse upon the Lord's word in the morning. However, after some days our reading becomes tasteless, and the words seem to be like dead wood and dry grass. Sometimes we dread keeping morning watch and feel that it is a heavy burden, but after a while we feel that it is enjoyable and satisfying. It is the same with other things such as preaching the gospel, attending meetings, and fellowshiping with the brothers and sisters. It seems as if the Christian life is always going up and down. Does the Lord want His children to be this way? Is the Lord's power insufficient to uphold us? Does the Lord's life not have the strength to sustain us? The answer to all these questions is no. The Lord can. The Holy Spirit can. The Lord's life can. If this is the case, why does the Lord allow these situations to occur?

Peter's Experience Being a Portrait of All Christians

The Bible has a principle: the experience of the first person is often a portrait of those coming after. In the New Testament Peter was the first one called by the Lord. Thus, he is our representative, and his experience is a portrait of all Christians. The Gospels show that Peter truly had a heart to love the Lord, but he loved the Lord in his natural life. This can be proved by the Lord calling him "Simon," referring to his natural man by birth (John 1:42 ; Matt. 16:17-18). In Luke 22 the Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has asked to have you all to sift you as wheat. But I have made petition concerning you that your faith would not fail; and you, once you have turned again, establish your brothers" (vv. 31-32). Peter, however, responded, "Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death" (v. 33). He also said, "If all will be stumbled because of You, I will never be stumbled" (Matt. 26:33). Then the Lord replied, "I tell you, Peter, a rooster will not crow today until you deny three

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times that you know Me” (Luke 22:34). Peter did not believe this word, and he even promised, “Even if I must die with You, I will by no means deny You” (Matt. 26:35).

When the Lord Jesus was seized, Peter was seated in the courtyard of the high priest. A servant girl said that Peter was with Jesus, and he instantly denied it (Luke 22:56-57). After a short time another person saw him and said, “You also are one of them,” and Peter again denied it (v. 58). After about one hour another one insisted that surely he was with Jesus, but Peter denied it even more. Then, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed (vv. 59-60). When the Lord turned and looked at Peter, he remembered the Lord’s word, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times” (v. 61). Then he went outside and wept bitterly (v. 62).

Peter truly is our representative, and his experience is also our experience. Even our falls have been calculated and measured by the Lord. He will not casually or randomly cause us to fall. Furthermore, even the extent to which we fall is under His sovereignty. We truly do not know ourselves. However, the Lord knows that we are just like Peter—self-righteous, proud, and even boastful. The Lord also knows that if we do not fall, we will have no way to grow. In order to grow, we must fall; there is no other way.

Failures and Falls Causing Man to Know, Experience, and Gain God

We have been chosen, called, and saved by God, and we have been placed in the Lord’s hand. The Lord knows our real need. He knows how to perfect us and how to cause us to have genuine growth. If we see this, our heart can be at rest, and no matter how many afflictions and trials we face, we will be able to submit to the Lord. Furthermore, no matter the condition of the church or the problems we face, we can praise, thank, and worship the Lord. We can say to the Lord, “You know each one of us, and You know everything that happens to us. Lord, only You can care for and lead us, and only You can keep us.”