

Peter a Hindrance to Jesus

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[0 : 01] Now let's turn together this evening to the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 16. We've looked there a couple of weeks now in part of chapter 16, and tonight we're going to deal with verses 21 to 23.

That's Matthew chapter 16 and at verse 21. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan.

You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. You are aware that the Bible speaks about two Adams.

The first Adam, the first human being to be created, as we find in the book of Genesis at the beginning of the Bible, described as Adam, and then given the wife Eve.

[1 : 26] The other Adam is referred to in the New Testament as the last Adam, and that, of course, is Jesus Christ, the last Adam. And the Bible, in different ways, makes a comparison and a contrast between these two Adams.

Satan came to the first Adam in a serpent with great success. Satan came to the last Adam here in a disciple, and yet spectacularly failed.

As we're following the life of Peter in the Gospels, these are passages that tell us as much, indeed, if not more, about Jesus himself than about Peter.

It's important that we're looking at aspects of Peter's life, and looking at that in terms of his discipleship and extracting from that things which are relevant to our own lives as disciples, too.

But it's always the case, as you do that, that more and more you discover that actually these passages are more about Jesus himself than about the likes of Peter and other disciples and other people who are mentioned in the passages along with him.

[2 : 41] And that's true in this instance as well. Although we are going to look at something of what Peter said and did in these verses, we're also going to look at how Jesus responded to that and the significance of what you see in Christ's response.

So the two things that we're going to look at are, first of all, Peter's confident rebuke to Jesus, and secondly, Christ's counter-rebuke to Peter.

Because it's obvious from the passage that the word rebuke features, as far as Peter taking Jesus aside is concerned, he began to rebuke him and said, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you.

But Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. Although the word rebuke isn't actually used there, it's very obvious as you read it that that is in fact a rebuke.

It was a rebuke given, issued by the Lord in response to the rebuke that Peter had actually given to the Lord firstly. Now, Peter's confident rebuke to Jesus is significant from a number of points of view.

[3 : 57] First of all, think about the timing of this, because you can learn a lot from noticing the timing at which this took place. Because it follows his great confession, as we saw in the earlier part of the chapter, just in the verses before this, where he had said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And then immediately, in addition to that confession, Christ made the assertion, Blessed are you, Simon Bariona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And as we saw, he then added that he would be Peter, called Peter, the rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And he added some more words which we didn't look into that really refers basically to the authority that Christ gave the apostles to decide on important issues in the government of the church, which in principle still come to apply to those who have the position of eldership in the church.

They have what are usually called by theologians the keys, not that they are acting in any way magisterially, but ministerially under Christ's authority.

[5 : 13] He has given them that position of rule by which they are able to administer the government of Christ's church on earth. And in all of that, Peter was being addressed and given information by the Lord about himself, about Peter himself, about the Lord himself, about his position, about the church, about the future of the church, about Christ owning it as his church, about Christ building the church, about the powers of hell not prevailing against it.

And then in verse 21, Peter, Jesus went on to say to Peter and his disciples indeed, that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised again.

And it's at that point, after all of that, that you find Peter turning to the Lord and saying, Lord, this is not going to happen to you in rebuking the Lord indeed and saying, this is not going to happen to you.

In other words, following his confession, following the Lord, saying to him, Peter, you are blessed. This was a great blessing for Peter, a blessing from the lips of the Lord, having pronounced over him that he was blessed, that God the Father had revealed this to him, no less than God the Father, that he had been blessed by being given by the Lord the information that then followed.

And it's then, it's then that you find, in the timing of this incident, this rebuke given by Peter to the Lord, which the Lord had to respond to.

[6 : 50] In other words, we are being actually advised or warned indeed by that point itself, that it's not just when we have adversity and difficulties and trials to contend with that we need God's grace to handle them properly.

We need God's grace just as much in holding a cup of blessing as we do a cup of affliction. We need the grace of God to teach us and to enable us to hold that cup of blessing.

Somebody once put it this way, I think it was one of the old, one of the old principals in the college, and if I remember rightly, it was the late Reverend Alstrom Montgomery that told me this, that when he was in college, they used to listen to the prayers, of course, of the professors, one of whom was Principal Miller.

And frequently in his prayer, he would say this, Lord, teach us to hold a full cup with a steady hand.

Teach us to hold a full cup with a steady hand. In other words, when God places a cup filled with blessing in our lives, we are liable to spill it.

- [8 : 03] We are liable to misuse it. We are liable to stop being watchful. We are liable to let the influence of Satan or some other influence under Satan to infiltrate our thoughts and our lives so that we come to be, as Peter proved to be here, a stumbling block and a hindrance to Jesus and to the advance of his kingdom.
- If we know blessing, as we know blessing, be watchful over it. Be prayerful over it. Ask for grace as much as you ask for grace in the difficulties and trials of your life.
- Not just individually, but that's our responsibility and either privilege collectively as well. We've seen blessing. We are seeing blessing. We thank God for blessings.
- We have congregational blessing. We have many things to give thanks to God for by way of blessing us as a people. But there's always that dark power that wants to infiltrate a people who have been blessed so that they will cease to be watchful, so that they will think, well, I'm now blessed and I can relax.
- That's not what it's about. That's what happened with Peter at this very particular point after all that he had seen and all that he had heard and all that he had confessed.
- [9 : 31] It's now, not before that, but now after that, that Satan seeks to get at him and to get at Jesus through him. The timing is important in terms of following his confession and following Christ's teaching.
- He didn't really take the time to ponder what Jesus had said to him, to think it through. However much or however little time he had, it's obvious that he just rushed into this rebuke when he took the Lord aside immediately after the Lord had told him and the disciples what must happen in the future to him in Jerusalem, how he had to die, how he would rise again from the dead.
- Immediately Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Are we tonight just letting the word of God sit on the surface of our minds?
- Are we pondering it deeply rather than just letting it lie loosely on the surface of our hearts? Are we really thinking about it? Are we applying our minds to it in a way that takes it really seriously in everything it says to us?
- Are we treating the word of Jesus as it deserves to be treated with the utmost seriousness? Not with just saying, well, I enjoyed the sermon and I enjoyed the occasion and there was great fellowship there.
- [10 : 59] We have to leave every time we are confronted with the word of God. Whether it's speaking comfortably to us or challenging us. We have to go to our own minds and take the time to say, now what was that saying to me?
- And why was it put in those terms? What am I to make of that? And how am I to apply that to my life and to my circumstances in life? Otherwise, it won't last long in our minds and the effect of it will soon be gone.
- If tonight you know the power of the truth in your heart, don't let it just pass over you. Don't think it's just for this moment. Ponder it deeply.
- Study it afterwards. Think it through for yourself. Pray over it. Ask God to show you the meaning of it further. Otherwise, you and I are likely to rush into things without having pondered the truth deeply.
- The timing of it was very significant. But there's also, in his confident rebuke, there was, in Peter's rebuke, a failure in his understanding.
- [12 : 17] Jesus had spoken of his death, his sufferings, and his death, and then on the third day that he would be raised. And these are foundational to our redemption, to our salvation.
- There is no salvation for us except as it is based upon the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These have to be the central features of our salvation.

If we're going to be saved, we're going to be saved upon that or we won't be saved at all. And so there's a question arising from that too for you and for me too tonight.

And it's a crucial one. Where does the cross feature in my life? Where does the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus feature in my lifestyle?

How I live my life? Where does it feature in my thinking? Where does it feature in my prospects, in my hopes, in my looking towards the future as far as I'm able? Where does it feature as I reflect upon my past?

[13 : 20] Where does it feature as I think upon my sins? Where does it feature? Where do these things feature in relation to how I am in relation to God? Am I relying upon these?

Is my life now firmly, squarely built upon these? Or is it something else? You see, Peter had passed all too quickly from hearing about Christ's sufferings and death and resurrection to the rebuke that he issued to the Lord.

His confident rebuke doesn't really look good, does it? After all that he had seen and heard, yet this is what he did.

After all that Jesus had taught him, yet this is what he immediately turned to, to rebuke Jesus and tell him, this is not for you, Lord.

It's not going to happen. Secondly, let's look at Christ's counter-rebuke to Peter. And as we said at the beginning, there's so much in this that you see about Jesus that's important for our own understanding of who he is and what he must be in our lives and to us just as he was to Peter.

[14 : 36] But Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. The word hindrance we'll come back to in a moment.

For you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man. There are three things that are precious as you look into the response of Jesus, his counter-rebuke.

First of all, his infallible insight. His infallible insight because as Peter spoke these words, the Lord knew exactly what was happening.

He knew that Peter was wrong in his thinking. He knew that it was his fault. He knew where he was wrong but he knew something more than that. He knew what was behind that. He knew it was not just merely Peter that was saying this.

He knew there was a dark power working behind him and trying to work through him and trying to get to Jesus through him. He knew this was Satan's doing. He knew that Peter was allowing Satan, even if he didn't understand it properly, to actually seek to get to the Lord through him.

[15 : 46] He had that infallible understanding and not only that but the Lord had an infallible understanding of where this dude in relation to his own progress onwards towards his destiny at Jerusalem and the cross and the resurrection that would follow it there.

because the purpose and the strategy is actually known to him as a purpose and strategy that was really in a sense, in a very real sense, a temptation to the Lord.

Similar, as we'll see, to what happened as you find in chapter 4. But just think for the moment of not only the fact that Jesus penetrates to who really is behind this and what the purpose of Satan is in this.

Christ's infallible insight extends to his management of such things. We spoke this morning about, briefly, about his management of our grief and of things associated with our grief.

And here he's managing this situation where Peter is really, in a sense, providing a temptation to Jesus to deflect him from the path that he's on in giving obedience to the Father in finishing the work that he came to do, to die on the cross, to rise from the dead.

[17 : 10] And he knows how to control that and how even to direct this towards Peter's better understanding and Peter's progress as a disciple and Peter's usefulness as he will be in the future.

That's the great thing about that point, isn't it? That Jesus, in his infallible insight, doesn't leave it at just telling us and assuring us, I see into your circumstances, I see into all your mistakes as well as the things that you do that are actually good and beneficial.

He's not just telling us that, he is telling us that, but he's saying, what I'm assuring you also is that I am able to take all of that and make you a better person through it.

He doesn't excuse our lapses, our sins, our faults, our wrongdoings, but Jesus is assuring us that he is guiding the life of his people even through such times as these, through their own mistakes, through their yielding at times to Satan's influences.

promises. The Lord is going to use this and teach Peter and teach Peter through it in such a way that Peter from now on will understand better that there is a dark power that wants to use him against his Lord and to be more careful in the future.

[18 : 42] And isn't that such an assurance for yourself and for myself tonight? There are so many things that come into our lives on a daily basis or from time to time that we ourselves simply cannot manage in our own strength, in our own wisdom, in our own ability.

We don't have it. We need something greater. We need this Jesus to look after us, to manage these things for us, to make us better people through them.

Yes, you can follow a lot of other philosophies that will have some benefit, that will help maybe apply your mind in a certain way and give you a concentration of mind on certain things, but there is no other person, there is no other source of real help and management of your life in all its entirety, in all its detail, in all the difficulties of that life.

There is no one else that can take your suffering and make that beneficial to you. Ultimately, there is no one else that can take the temptations you face and help you to learn from them and through them, but he can and he does.

His infallible insight. Look at your life tonight. Let's look at our lives individually. I have to look at mine. You have to look at yours, each of us, individually, responsible for how we live, what we are in relation to God.

[20 : 10] Who is managing your life? Who is managing the details of it? Whose formulae are being applied? How are we going to benefit other than through the control, the lordship, the infallible insight and ability of this Lord?

His infallible insight in his counter-rebuke. Secondly, you see in his counter-rebuke his unfailing grace. We can make allowances for Peter.

We can make allowances for him because in this situation you and I would be pretty much the same. They had not yet experienced what afterwards they experienced in the cross and in the resurrection of Jesus followed by the coming of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost which came to fill the church and to add so much to their knowledge and understanding and open their minds to the reality of Jesus and what he had done.

That's not yet taking place. You can make certain allowances for him but you can tell from the rebuke of the Lord that Peter was at fault. Peter was wrong. He ought not to have taken the Lord aside and then begin to rebuke him and to say to him with such confident self-assurance this is not going to happen to you Lord.

He was wrong in doing that. And you can imagine his expression when Jesus turned and said get behind me Satan.

[21 : 48] If you look at the text very carefully you'll see that Jesus turned and said to Peter get behind me Satan. He didn't just turn around and say get behind me Satan.

He said it directly to Peter and you can imagine maybe the shock on his face when he realized the power and the significance of these words.

This unfailing grace of God this grace of Jesus as it issues this rebuke to him is actually for his good. We can allow ourselves as Peter here we can allow ourselves to be used against the Lord, against his cause, against the progress of his church, against the benefits that we should be bringing to others.

As Peter here was allowing himself to be used by the dark power of Satan, we too can be exposed and allow ourselves just by lapsing into sin, by allowing that to go on, by backsliding, by turning away from the Lord, by stopping to read our Bibles, by ceasing to pray meaningfully, by just letting the truth wash over our minds.

So many ways by which we can expose ourselves so that Satan will find a foothold and before we know it, we'll be working against the Lord, against his cause, against his name, against his church, against his gospel.

[23 : 37] And so Christ is very forceful. He does speak to Peter, because it's Peter that's at fault, but as he takes him aside, he turns and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

And you can see unfailing grace in that, because what the Lord is doing is actually dissecting the issue in such a way that he separates Peter himself from Satan.

And he's saying, yes, I'm rebuking you, Peter. You should not have done this, you should not have said this, Peter, but I want you to understand that this is the power that was using you and trying to get to me through you, and I want you to understand it so that you'll be more guarded in the future.

Get behind me, Satan. You see, he didn't say, get behind me, Peter. Because he's not dismissing this disciple as if he were going to say, well, if that's what you're going to be like, Peter, after all you've heard and after all you've said, there's no place for you in my kingdom.

That's not what he said. He rebukes him in a way that really shows him what's been happening in his life. He's redirecting Peter.

[24 : 44] He's separating him from Satan in his thinking, in his understanding, in his memory of this event. that's so important to us, isn't it?

That when we find ourselves having yet again failed in our own life as disciples, having once again lapsed, having once again turned away from the Lord, having been disobedient, having not been what we should have been, the Lord does not dismiss us.

The Lord's rebuke is corrective grace. The Lord's interest in us is that we will be won back to himself as he is with Peter.

That's unfailing grace, the grace that doesn't give up on us, the grace that saves, the grace that extricates us from our sin, from our faults, the grace that trains us, because that's effectively what sanctification is.

We think of it as being made increasingly holy, and that's what it is, but it's really a training of us, a training of us for godliness, as Paul puts it in one of his letters.

[26 : 12] grace, and that grace, that unfailing grace, is the grace that uses us effectively as his servants, as his people, as his witnesses, and it is that grace, as the great hymn Amazing Grace says, tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will bring me home.

All the way through, it's the grace of Christ, the unfailing grace of Christ, the grace of Christ applied to your situation exactly as he sees your need, and instead of dismissing us altogether, how many times in life can you as disciples of Jesus, can you tonight here who are saved, how many times in your life already can you reflect, even if you're not very old yet, how many times can you reflect as you reflect on your life, how many times can you say, well, the Lord really should have dismissed me then for the thoughts that I had, for the actions that I took, for the failure that I know was in my life, but he didn't.

He showed me where I was wrong. He set me back on the right path. He did as the psalmist says in Psalm 23, he restored my soul.

He restored my soul. Christ's infallible inside, Christ's unfailing grace, and finally, Christ's irresistible authority.

Get behind me, Satan, you are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. And of course, he's addressing Peter in that as well, because at that moment, Peter's mind is not actually being set on the things of God, but on the things of man.

[28 : 05] He's looking at it from a human understanding. He's looking at it as he sees it himself, as he himself has applied his own mind to it. But actually, Peter is not only just being addressed to Satan as well, get behind me, Satan.

him. And the word hindrance is a word that we came across in John chapter 6, where Jesus, as he turned to those who were leaving him, to those who turned back and would not follow him anymore, they found his word a stumbling block, an offense.

Sometimes it's translated offense, but this word here is translated hindrance. You might have a margin where you find a equivalent stumbling block as another possible translation. In other words, what the Lord was saying to Peter is, Peter, this is a temptation very similar to the temptations I had when I was in the desert.

And if you go back to chapter 4 and you read again how Christ was tempted in the desert there by the devil, it's precisely the same purpose he had then as he has now through Peter.

He came to him then on his own. He came to him then through hunger. He came to him then working upon Christ's own innate and perfect sense of service to the Father.

[29 : 28] What's leaving you here hungry as the Son of God? What business is this? Why are you here? What's this? What is this? What's it about? Would it not be better for you to turn this stone into bread and feed yourself?

All the time, you see, he was seeking to displace Jesus from the path he was on, from working out the Father's will, from being obedient to the will of his Father, from finishing the work he gave him to do.

That's what's at stake here. Satan is trying now to get at him through this disciple. And he sees it, Jesus sees it, as exactly the same kind of temptation, the same kind of purpose as he had met with in the desert.

Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. You're a stumbling block. This is a temptation to me, which I'm not going to actually yield to. And so he dismisses him, as he dismissed him in chapter 4 in the desert.

Get behind me, or there it was, get thee hence. Get away from here, Satan. Isn't it interesting that all the way through as you read Jesus and his, the way that he deals with demons and here with Satan himself?

[30 : 48] He never bargains with them. He never discusses anything with them. He never debates anything with them. He simply orders them. He simply dismisses them or orders them. He commands them, and they obey his command.

There's a whole unseen world of evil that we cannot see ourselves, but that we know is there, and that has influence in regard to our lives, to our thoughts, that has access to our minds, access to our actions, access to the way that we do things, the way we think about things.

We can't handle that ourselves. We read in Ephesians chapter 6, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, as not just human powers we're facing, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Jesus. That's what Jesus is confronting here through this disciple, in this disciple. These forces are actually seeking to get at Jesus and to stop him in his tracks.

And how thankful you and I should be tonight that we have a Lord who dismisses authoritatively and finally, and in the exercise of his Lordship, the powers that seek to infiltrate our lives and minds too.

[32 : 10] And you can make that an element of your prayers too, to ask the Lord, to dismiss the powers of darkness when you find thoughts coming into your mind or suggestions of things you know are wrong and would be a hindrance to the cause of Christ.

Plead to the Lord for help. Help him help give you his strength and to dismiss those powers from the moment that you know them.

And not only that, but the authority with which he dismisses Satan and dismisses demons, he exercises even in terms of our forgiveness. It's very interesting that as we deal with the expertise and the authority of Jesus, this savior that we need, that he shows us in chapter nine, an incident where he actually has an incident of healing, but it's related to the forgiveness of sin as well.

Beginning of chapter nine, they brought him this paralytic, he was lying on a bed, and Jesus saw their faith and encouraged him and said, your sins are forgiven, my son.

And the scribes, some of them, said, this man is blaspheming. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, why do you think evil in your hearts? Which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise and walk?

[33 : 44] But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He then said to the paralytic, rise up, pick up your bed and go home.

And he arose and went. What is that saying to us? It's saying to us that the very authority with which Jesus healed that man, and instantly there was a response from that man, is the same authority that speaks to us and our sins, and speaks to our sins, if you like, and says, you're forgiven.

In other words, when you have Christ's forgiveness, you have it authoritatively. There is no question of how your guilt may come back to you.

It won't. He has spoken into our situation, and his word is a word of power. And that's why we need this Savior, not just to look after us in our daily needs, but more especially our spiritual ones, to deal with the problem of our sins, the plight we have in our guilt, in our relationship to God, the need to have our sins covered, forgiven.

And that's how he does it. Authoritatively, he dismisses the guilt, and it never comes back again to be on our record.

[35 : 19] God, isn't that the Savior your heart craves tonight? Even if you haven't yet come to know him, the Bible tells you to believe.

The Bible tells you to repent, to turn to God, to place your trust in Christ, to give yourself into his hand.

command. And these are all imperatives. They're commands. An imperative is a word that we use in grammar to describe a particular type of word, which is really the same thing as saying it's a command.

And an imperative does not have a future. It's for the moment. It's for the moment. God says, today, do it.

Satan says, leave it till tomorrow. He wants you to dismiss the imperative as if tomorrow was all right and as if tomorrow was certain.

[36 : 37] But you know that that's not true, that's not so. for God says, today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart.

Yield to him. Receive him. Give your life to him. He will look after you as no one else can. He will manage you, your griefs, as we saw this morning, your daily life.

your mistakes, everything in your life, and no one else can do that for you.

He alone can do it. And he alone will do it when you give yourself to his lordly management of your life.

let's pray. Once again, O Lord, we come to you with thankfulness, and we express our thankfulness to you in the light of your word.

[37 : 48] We thank you for the authority that you exercise over your creation, and for the way that that authority is used over our lives, too. We bless you for your ability and your authority to dismiss even the highest evil, so that it does not do other than your bidding.

O Lord, you are so great, you are so compassionate, so patient with us. We thank you that your infallible insight into our lives, your unfailing grace, and your irresistible authority is to the advantage of your people and not used against them.

And help us, we pray, to realize that as we come tonight to once again learn from your word these precious things, O help us, we pray, that our life may be dispensed into your hand.

We ask these things, seeking the pardon of our sins, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we're going to conclude our service singing in Psalm 31.

Psalm number 31, that's on page 36, singing to the tune Heron Gate, and we'll sing the verses marked 3 to 8.

[39 : 10] On page 36, verses 3 to 8, you are my fortress and my rock, for your name's sake be my sure guide, preserve me from the trap that's set, you are the refuge where I hide.

Page 36, verses 3 to 8 to the tune Heron Gate, you are my fortress and my rock. You are my fortress and my rock, for you will say be my sure guide, preserve me from the trap that's set, to arm the refuge where I hide.

Redeem me, Lord, O God of truth. My spirit, my spirit, I love it to you.

I hate all those who trust false souls. I trust the Lord, for he is true.

I will rejoice and take delight in all the love that you have shown, for my affliction you have seen, seen.

[41 : 13] To you, my soul's distress is known. You have not led me to my fold, forgiven me into his hand, but you have set my feet within a spacious place where I may stand.

I'll go to the main door this evening. Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be your portion now and always.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.