



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR FEBRUARY 8, 2013

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:22, NIV)

THE GUT-WRENCHING PART OF WATCHING A TOUR PROFESSIONAL miss a short putt in the heat of tournament-closing competition is that we know just how it feels. We have done it so many times. And this is the very reason we don't want to see our golf heroes make this sort of error. Please, please, aren't they better than this?

Such desire for excellence and such disappointment at its lapse may be just what we feel when we read of the failures of the Bible's great players. And maybe the worst of these disappointments comes when we read of the failings of Peter. Otherwise, he is so earthy, so open, so likeable.

Although we can't put a finger on the time that passed between the events, Matthew's account of Peter's attempt to waylay Jesus' trip to the cross immediately follows his account of Peter's bold pronouncement: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." In fact, you can't help but wonder if it was Jesus' affirmation of Peter's faith-filled revelation that emboldened the disciple to speak up again. But this time he said the last thing Jesus was willing to hear.

Theologian John Sailhamer suggests that the sin of Adam and Eve was not a great transgression but a great folly. They grabbed for wisdom not meant to be theirs.

Peter's error here was much the same. He did not set out to sin. He simply attempted to prophesy without revelation. He spoke from the heart, no doubt. Neither he nor any of the other disciples wanted Jesus to die. But he spoke like he knew what was best when he did not.

The pain in reading this account is again this: we have all been there. We have all spoken out of turn, however well-meaning. And we have walked away in a fool's shame when all the facts were unveiled.

When will we learn? Now's a good time. Say what you know is true in the Lord. Be exceedingly careful to say much else.

Opening questions: Failure and folly

What was the context of the biggest little mishap you've ever had on the golf course? Now consider a time off the course when you thought your words or actions were fitting but turned out to be all wrong.

The things of God

Read Matthew 16:21-23. According to Jesus, what was wrong with Peter's way of thinking? How might we avoid falling into this same trap?

Staying the course

Now read Matthew 16:24. By turning aside Peter's favorable words, Jesus was choosing to "take up his cross"—the hard calling that God had placed on his life. Now Jesus was telling the disciples that the same would be expected of them. What distractions do you have to repel in order to stay the course with God?

What sense do you have of what God has for you to do? Where do you get this leading? What part does prayer play in ascertaining God's will for you?

Further reading

Read Acts 5:17-32, 1 Corinthians 2:11-16, and Philippians 3:12-4:1. How do these passages contribute to your thinking about today's topics?