THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN
WEEK 3 • DAILY BRIEFING 2 • PRUNED

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

James 1:2–4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3]for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4]And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "Purpose & Possibility in Pain." You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to embrace pruning as Your way of making me bear more fruit in this life. I confess that I get comfortable with where I already am in my spiritual growth and in making disciples. Keep me from settling there, and help me keep becoming more of who You made me to be and doing more of what You have called me to do. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we saw that God uses pain to place you, prune you, and perfect you. Today is about pruning. Jesus said His Father prunes the branches that are already bearing fruit, "that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2), and Paul's thorn in the flesh showed us how much that can hurt. Today we look at a man who was pruned through the worst failure of his life. God allowed Satan to test Peter, used Peter's own failure to cut away his self-confidence, and then put him back to work.

Most people know what it feels like to be good at something. After enough success, it is easy to believe the success came from you. Confidence slowly turns into self-reliance, and self-reliance does not pray much. A lot of people only find out how much they were leaning on themselves when something breaks that they cannot fix.

Peter was a fisherman who became one of Jesus' first followers and the most outspoken of His twelve disciples. He was already bearing fruit. When Jesus sent the disciples out, "they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere" (Luke 9:6). Today's first passage takes place the night before Jesus was crucified, during the last meal He shared with His disciples. Only moments earlier, they had been arguing about "which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

Later that night, Jesus was arrested and taken to the high priest's house to be put on trial. Peter followed and sat with the servants around a fire in the courtyard. Three different times, someone said he was one of Jesus' followers, and three times Peter denied even knowing Him. As the rooster crowed, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter," and Peter "went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61–62). Jesus was crucified the next day and rose from the dead on the third day. The second passage takes place after the resurrection, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus had just cooked breakfast for Peter and several other disciples.

READ & MEDITATE

Luke 22:31–34

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32]but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." [33]Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." [34]Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

John 21:15–17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” [16]He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” [17]He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

As you read, notice what Jesus does before Peter fails and what He does after.

REFLECT

Answer these honestly. This is between you and God, and nobody else needs to see what you write.

Jesus told Peter what was coming before it happened.

1. Fill in the blank from Luke 22:32: “but I have _____ for you that your faith may not fail.”

What does this tell you about Jesus?

In the original Greek, the “you” in verse 31 is plural, and the “you” in verse 32 is singular. Satan wanted all of the disciples, and Jesus prayed for Peter by name.

Peter answered the warning with a promise.

2. Look at verse 33 again. What was Peter trusting in when he made his bold declaration?

Peter was not lying. He meant every word, but he was trusting his own commitment, and the denial showed him how little it could hold. God did not make Peter deny Jesus. Satan did the sifting and Peter made the choices, but God used the failure to cut away what needed to go.

Most people have their own version of verse 33, an area where they are sure they could never fail.

3. Where are you most confident in your own strength right now?

How often do you pray about that area compared to the areas where you feel weak?

After the resurrection, Jesus asked Peter the same question three times.

4. Why do you think Jesus asked three times instead of once?

Peter denied Jesus three times, and Jesus gave him three chances to affirm his love. The Greek word for “charcoal fire” appears only twice in the New Testament. The first is the fire where Peter denied Jesus before the crucifixion (John 18:18), and the second is the fire where Jesus cooked breakfast for him after the resurrection (John 21:9). Jesus did not pretend the failure never happened. He walked Peter back through it as part of pruning him.

Every time Peter answered, Jesus gave him a job.

5. What does that tell you about how God treats someone He has pruned?

About seven weeks later, the man who denied Jesus to a servant girl preached in public, and “there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Years later, Peter wrote, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility,” and warned that “your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:5, 8). He wasn’t just speaking spiritual hype; he knew both from experience.

Some people carry an old failure like a permanent disqualification.

6. Is there a failure you have treated as the end of your usefulness to God instead of as part of His pruning?

What would change this week if you believed God wanted to put you back to work?

PRAYER

Bring what you just wrote to God. Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite James 1:2–4 from memory.