

## God's Way

Understanding never comes simply and nor does it come easily. It has associated with it many trials and tribulations which can completely knock us sideways with an unforeseen and unexpected reversal. The last thing that Peter felt coming his way was this severe rebuke from Jesus. What he said to Jesus must have been heartfelt and completely genuine yet it produces such a harsh and withering reply that you can imagine how hurt and confused he must have been.

In our dealings with each other we are often reluctant to get involved too deeply. We feel people have their own space which is personal and off limits and not negotiable. We hope that our lives are lived without the need to have to delve too deeply into the profound questions that lurk below the surface. These questions which are myriad and many faceted, can perhaps be summed up with one phrase – the cross. The harsh lesson which is dealt out to Peter is because he hasn't yet associated what is happening with that reality. Jesus has acknowledged the insight Peter has received into his identity. Jesus lauds him for the faith which he displays in witnessing to the truth of who he is, but such witness if it is unable to apply itself to the harsh realities of what living this truth entails, is no witness at all. In fact it is a denial of it as Jesus shows by his calling Peter Satan. This denial is made apparent when on that fateful Thursday evening in the courtyard of the house of the High Priest, Peter just can't comprehend what Jesus is about and so denies that he knows him. Here is the stumbling block of personal reticence that enters our thoughts when the image of the cross confronts our experience. How often have we failed to comprehend the meaning of the cross as we live out our lives amongst the dark and difficult times of personal disappointment and regret?

When Jesus spoke to Peter of thinking as man and not as God, I don't think that he was saying that the one is not mutually exclusive of the other, nor that Peter was incapable of comprehending his own fallibility. I think Jesus was telling him and through him us, to open our eyes to the fact that our self image, our fixation with our own status with all that surrounds our egos, can take us into areas of great danger and damage if all we are doing is living lives that are self centred. The cross can come at any moment and knock the stuffing out of you and if your perspective is so narrowed down and so attuned towards personal inclinations and desires then you'd better beware.

Being made aware of our own propensity to laud ourselves and to extol our own ambitions comes as a rude awakening and it isn't until such flaws are pointed out to us that we can begin to see a bigger picture being set out before us. This picture is painted on a canvass that has an entirely different perspective. It is one which encompasses the whole gamut of the human condition as it explores all aspects of our potential for good and for bad, and it is the way that God thinks. What will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Jesus puts it so succinctly such that we can apply his words to much of what is happening in the world today. What is taking place in those war torn areas needs to be set against his words, and those driving forward their own personal agendas thereby need to take note.