

Moments *for* You

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Theme: Peter



PETER'S PASSION

In the Scriptures, we see great variety in the Apostles who are gathered around the Lord Jesus. There is the impulsive Peter, and the reasoning Thomas. There are some like Simon Zelotes who are never prominent, while others like James and John are always in the foreground.

Peter is singled out as a leader from the beginning, and so continues throughout. He is notable for making mistakes, and consequently in suffering rebukes. He possessed a passionate nature that was ready to act—and often fail. But such a nature would also be quick to express affection, and would receive affection in return. This course of events reached a pinnacle when Peter denied the Lord and was then brought back into fellowship with Him. His repeated failures brought Peter from a condition of weak, ignorant, self-confidence to a better understanding of himself, and a closer, more dependent walk with his Savior.

In the book of Acts he is the stirring, leading one still. He instructs the rest in the mystery of Judas' lost apostleship and the taking of his office by another. He preaches on the day of Pentecost, and again on the occasion of the healing of the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple. He answers the challenges of the rulers. He is put into prison. He maintains the purity of the house of God by the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira.

He travels extensively, and in the distant parts of Lydda and Saron he comforts the saints by the raising of Tabitha. He then goes to Caesarea, to gather the first converts among the

Gentiles. After this, he establishes the hearts of his brethren in Jerusalem by recounting the hand of God on his ministry.

At last, he is cast into prison a second time, but brought forth through the sovereign intervention of God. Other incidents mark the special place which this dear man held among the Apostles. Each of them might well afford a distinct meditation for the profit of our souls: his walking for a little moment on the water, his word to the collector of the tribute-money, his cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant in the garden, and others. But I trust these few will give us an appreciation for the character of this remarkable man, Peter.

—Adapted from *Girdle of Truth*.

PETER'S CONVERSION

“And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:42).

For the earliest notice of Simon Peter, we must turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of John. “John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.... One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:35-37,40,41).

HIS INTRODUCTION TO CHRIST

It does the heart good to note the simple, earnest, forcible words of Si-

mon Peter's brother, Andrew. He lost no time. Saved and blessed himself, he desired immediately to lead his brother into the same blessing.

It is the best thing in the world to be able to say, "I have found Christ." Reader, can you say it? Have you followed that blessed One? If so, you will long to find someone else you can bring to Jesus. Begin where you are. Start with your brother or your sister, your roommate, your fellow-student, your co-worker—tell them, "I have found Jesus," and explain what He has done for you. Remember this is the way that the great Apostle Peter was first called.

HIS CONVICTION OF SIN

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (Luke 5:1-3). Witness the grace that shines here. Though Lord of all creation—Possessor of Heaven and earth—He nevertheless, as the lowly, gracious Man, courteously asks a favor: that Peter would sail out a little from the shore.

"Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they

should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink" (Luke 5:4-7).

Neither their nets nor their ships were able to sustain the fruit of divine power and goodness. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

Here, then, we have the great practical effect produced in Peter's soul by the combined action of grace and power. He is brought to see himself in the light of the divine presence, where alone self can be truly seen and judged. Simon had heard the word of Jesus addressed to the multitude on the shore. He had felt the sweet grace and moral beauty of Jesus' dealings with him. He had seen the display of divine power in the astonishing catch of fish. All this pressed powerfully upon his heart and conscience, and brought him on his face before the Lord.

Now this is what we may call a genuine work of conviction. It is a very serious thing indeed to be brought to see ourselves in the light of God's presence, to have our eyes opened to the truth of our past history, our present condition, and our future destiny. Simon Peter found it so in his day, and so have all those who have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

HIS CONVERSION

Peter felt and owned that he was a man full of sin. He felt he had no right to be near Jesus, but Jesus could never depart from a poor broken-hearted sinner. It is His richest, deepest, joy to pour the healing balm of His love and grace into a wounded soul. It is His delight to heal the broken heart.

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10). Here was the divine

response to the cry of a contrite heart. The wound was deep, but the grace was deeper still. The soothing hand of a Savior-God applied the precious remedy. Simon was not only convicted, but converted. He saw himself to be a man full of sin, but he saw the Savior full of grace. There is grace in the heart of Jesus, as there is power in His blood, to meet the very worst of sinners.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Have you met Jesus? Have you owned your sinfulness to Him and received the gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ? Peter said of Him, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Peter also says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19) and "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

—Condensed from *Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons* by C.H. Mackintosh.

PETER'S WALK OF FAITH

"Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matthew 14:28,29).

How did Peter walk on water? The secret is in the Lord's command: "Come." For Peter, it was one word from the Omnipotent Christ—the Master of wind and wave and circumstance—which bolstered his faith. It reminds us of George Müller, who trusted God to care for thousands of orphan children for more than fifty years, without making any appeal for funds. It also brings to mind the host of missionaries and other servants of

the Lord who, at God's command, stepped out into the seeming void and found the Rock beneath.

But seeing the wind and waves, fear gripped Peter and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus, having already put out His hand, caught him and said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Peter had his eye on the surroundings instead of on the Lord. Sometimes God allows His servant to reach the last penny or the last crust, and the agonizing brief prayer, but then the miracle of deliverance comes.

—Condensed from *Men of the Mountains* by T. Ernest Wilson.

ON THIS ROCK

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ... upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:16,18).

Over the centuries, many artists, sculptors, authors, and others have created magnificent portraits of Jesus Christ. Yet no one has ever drawn a more compelling or accurate picture of Jesus than the portrait the Apostle Peter drew with just ten simple words.

The words Peter uttered revealed that the disciples had been wrestling with the question Jesus had asked them: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). This was an all-important question, especially in light of the authority that Jesus would confer on the disciples and the knowledge He would reveal about His approaching death. If the disciples were going to minister in Jesus' name and follow Him to the cross, they must be convinced of His identity.

Other people had various ideas about who Jesus was. But He wanted to know where the disciples stood on the issue. Peter rose to the occasion

with his great confession. Jesus responded with a blessing for Peter and a promise that the church would be built on the rock of Peter's confession.

Then came the tremendous promise of kingdom authority to the Twelve, symbolized by the keys Jesus would give them. The book of Acts tells how Peter himself used the keys to open the kingdom of heaven to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10).

Clearly, the Apostles had authority we do not possess—an authority that ended when the last of the Twelve died. But in one important sense, we as Jesus' disciples can open the kingdom of heaven to people when we tell them about the Son of God. When we know in whom we believe, we have a message to tell!

—From *Today in the Word*.

THE THREEFOLD DENIAL

If anyone had told Peter on the day of his enthusiastic confession of his Master as “Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69) that the moment would come when he would deny Him with oaths and curses, he would have never believed it. But he did deny the Lord, and all four Gospels record the humiliating story.

It was first a simple denial, in answer to the challenge of the girl who kept the High Priest's door (Matthew 26:69,70). In answer to the questions of several in the porch, he added an oath to his second denial. Then, being identified by a relative of the man whose ear he cut off in the garden (John 18:26), he broke out into a string of oaths and curses. “I know not this Man of whom ye speak” (Mark 14:71).

Peter's miserable fall is an abiding

warning against self-sufficiency in any of us. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). What Peter did yesterday, both reader and writer may do tomorrow, unless upheld by infinite grace. The absolute unreliability of flesh (human nature) stands out vividly in the story of Peter's denial of his Lord. In all that he vowed beforehand, his spirit was indeed willing, as the Lord Himself acknowledged (Luke 22:33, Matthew 26:41). Yet, when the test came, he failed miserably.

What infinite mercy that salvation is not by works! How could any of us possibly stand? “It is of faith, that it might be by grace” (Romans 4:16). The basis of blessing for sinful men is the Savior's atoning blood. To this no merit can be added, and from it nothing can detract—not even the failure of one so eminent as Simon Peter.

—Condensed from *Simon Peter: Apostle and Living Stone* by W.W. Fereday.

PETER'S RESTORATION

“Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee” (Mark 16:7).

After the resurrection, an angelic message assures Peter of his place among the disciples. This message was in preparation for a meeting with the Master Himself. Peter is the object of special care and love at this time, and the Lord appeared to him individually: “He was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5). We have no account of what occurred at that meeting, but the fact is there to impress upon our hearts the love of the Lord for Peter, even after his denial.

Soon we see Peter again, in his old foremost place among the disciples. They follow him fishing, and all night

catch nothing. In the morning, Jesus stands upon the shore, but they know not that it is Him. When they are told to cast the net on the right side of the ship, they “cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (John 21:6).

How it must have recalled a similar catch of fish which was instrumental in Peter’s conversion. As John declares, “It is the Lord,” Peter’s love is again manifested as he leaps from the boat to swim to shore. “As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread” (John 21:9). A striking thing was on the shore—a fire of coals! The only other place we find it in the Gospels is in that other well-remembered scene in the High Priest’s palace when Peter’s denial occurred. How it must have spoken to Peter! As Peter dines with his Lord, in the presence of this reminder of his sins, his heart must have been filled with a more tender love and gladness for this time of fellowship with Jesus.

After they eat, Jesus turns to Peter and asks, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?” Peter replies, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee” (John 21:15). Three times the question is repeated and answered, connecting Peter’s affirmations of love with his threefold denial.

Step by step, Peter understands his weakness and is now fit to “strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Jesus, the faithful Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, could now give those sheep, so dear to Him, into the hands of Peter. When we are brought to nothing, He can use us in our nothingness. Blessed Lord! May we be sustained by His grace, as sufficient for us as for Simon Peter.

—Adapted from *Peter’s “Conversion”* by F.W. Grant.

FOLLOW THOU ME

“Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.... Jesus saith unto him ... follow thou Me” (John 13:36; 21:22).

What is it to follow Christ? It is not to live a Middle-Eastern life, nor wear a robe, nor speak in the Hebrew tongue. A man might do all these, and in addition wander like Him, homeless and outcast, and yet not follow in His steps. Following Jesus means being identified with the principles that marked His life: devotion and prayer, absolute compliance with God’s will, constant service to mankind, and the sweetness, gentleness, and strength of His personal character.

We tend to think we have strength to work and suffer for Christ long before He has truly prepared us. We rush impetuously forward, and are overwhelmed. Then our Master has to take us around by another and longer route, train us by toils and tears and teachings, until we no longer trust in our own strength, and are confident in His. There is no path into which the Lord calls us where He does not precede. When He sends out His own sheep, He goes before them, and His sheep follow (John 10:4).

If the old legend is true, Peter was crucified with his head downwards, because he felt unworthy to be so like his Lord—following Him with humility and reverence. Whatever experiences befall us in life or death, let it be our one aim to glorify God. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

—F.B. Meyer

PETER'S ADVICE

When the time came for Simon Peter to write his letters to believers (1 & 2 Peter), the Holy Spirit of God brought to his remembrance what he had seen and heard in his own experience. He had been one of the Lord's chief companions for more than three years, and instructs us in what God had taught him. Let us look at six lessons from the letters of Peter.

FOLLOW CHRIST

Peter knew that the redeemed of the Lord would need an example and a leader in whose steps they would follow. He sets before them Christ Himself, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). If they were called upon by God to suffer, Christ Himself had suffered before them. This statement cannot be too often quoted: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ also suffered at the hands of men. He was despised and rejected by them. They reviled Him, but He did not threaten them—He wept over them, and prayed for them, and died that they might be saved. He suffered like this so that He might leave us an example—that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). He tells us we must not be surprised when called upon to suffer. Peter would remember the Lord's own words: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). We are to expect the suffering, and to rejoice in it, for we are to be made glad with exceeding joy when Christ's glory shall be revealed (Luke 6:22,23; 1 Peter 4:13).

WALK IN OBEDIENCE

Peter had also observed that it was in subjection to the will of God that the sinless One trod the path of suffer-

ing until He could say, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Nothing could turn Him out of the path of God's will. Sinners could not do it, the subtlety and the power of the devil could not do it, nor could His friends do it. Peter on one occasion, with the boldness of ignorance, had attempted to do it, only to be sternly rebuked. Jesus set His face as a flint. Peter never forgot that.

Peter addresses his Epistle to those who had been elected and sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ and he calls them to be "obedient children" (1 Peter 1:14). He presses God's will upon us: submission is to be a defining character of our lives. We are to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6), to be subject one to another (1 Peter 5:5), and to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake (1 Peter 2:13).

LIVE IN HOPE

The transfiguration of our Lord had made an indelible impression on the soul of Peter. It was the sure pledge to him of the glory to come. "We ... were eyewitnesses of His majesty," he says, "when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18). That future glory is our living hope to which God, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us (1 Peter 1:3).

Our faith may be tried, but our trials are investments into God's treasury and will be found more precious than gold that perishes. Such faith will be "unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). We look on to that day of manifestation, when everything will be seen and appraised at its true value. Hope must be active as well as faith.

BE HUMBLE

Peter had suffered for his self-

confidence, and he desired to save the beloved saints to whom he wrote, and us, from this folly. “Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). I am sure that Peter had in his memory the unforgettable act of the Lord when, on the night on which He was betrayed, He rose from the supper table and began to wash His disciples’ feet. Peter had resented the Lord’s taking that place of lowly service to him, because he did not yet understand that Divine love must serve.

“I have given you an example,” said the Lord, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Luke tells us that at that same supper He said to them, “I am among you as He that serveth” (Luke 22:27). God looks for the reproduction of the features of His Son in us, and if our hearts are affected by the love of the Lord we shall gladly serve one another with humility of heart. Grace from above and humility within are needed for such service.

BE SOBER

Three times Peter exhorts his readers to be sober-minded. Perhaps this is because three times he had denied the Lord. He had not been attentive then and he did not watch unto prayer: therefore the devil found him an easy prey, and would have devoured and destroyed him had it not been for the intercession and restoring grace of the Lord.

But how sobered he must have been as he thought of his foolish pride, but more so as he contemplated the sufferings of his sinless Savior for his fleshly self-confidence and the sins which were the fruit of it. We can only get a right estimate of our sins as we view them in the light of the cross.

Peter had been kept so that his

faith did not fail. How deep must have been his feelings as he remembered it all and wrote to us, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). The devil as a roaring lion may seek to devour those who belong to Christ, but his devilish hatred of them will not avail him, nor all his subtlety and strength. For not even he can pluck them out of the Shepherd’s hands, and the Father who gave them to Him is greater than all and no one can pluck them out of the Father’s hand.

Yet with his own experience in mind Peter warns us to be sober, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end” (1 Peter 1:13). “The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Peter 4:7).

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Peter urges us to love other believers. “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Peter 1:22). “Above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves: for [love] shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Peter had learned from the Lord’s own words that the way by which all men would know that they were His disciples would be if they had love one for another (John 13:35).

He would remember the Lord’s resurrection message, “Go to My brethren” (John 20:17), and he did not forget that three times over He had given them a commandment. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). “This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:17).

—Adapted from “The Witness of Simon Peter” by J.T. Mawson.