

## **Simon Peter** *By James Moriello*

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at Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI*

*“Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter” (Mark 3:16)*

There are four lists of the Apostles in the Bible, and our text is the beginning of Mark’s list (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Simon Peter, being the leader and spokesman among the group, is listed first in all four lists. He is the biological son of Jonah (Matthew 16:17). Simon Peter was married, and his wife sometimes accompanied him in his ministry (Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:5). Peter was a fisherman by trade and resided in Capernaum (Mark 1:16-29). He was known by three names. We have two of them in our text and the third is Cephas, which is the Aramaic equivalent of Peter, meaning rock or stone (John 1:42). Although Simon was his birth name, God the Son gave him a new name to denote the kind of spiritual man that Peter would become. This was not an unusual thing for God to do; other examples in Scripture include Abram being given the name Abraham and Saul being given the name Paul. You cannot become the man or woman of God that you were created to be without learning the lessons that the Lord has for you. It is my hope and prayer that you will see something of yourself in the life of Peter, and prayerfully step forward in your Christian journey. We will have two lines of application; ***Peter the man of the flesh***, and ***Peter the man of the spirit***.

First, ***Peter the man of the flesh***. This is Peter when he is weak, in a state of sin, and responding according to the old (unredeemed) nature.

- 1) *“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but*

*the things of men*” (Matthew 16:21-23). God’s perfect plan of the ages to reconcile men unto Himself could not be accomplished any other way than by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ His Son. Because of his spiritual blindness, Peter was actually furthering Satan’s agenda in putting His Lord to the test by calling into question the necessity of Christ’s mission being accomplished according to the divine will and plan. Many times we reject God’s revealed truth because we do not like it or cannot understand it, and this text serves as a warning against doing so.

- 2) *“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’ But He said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’”* (Luke 22:31-34). Just like everything God predicts, it happened just that way (Luke 22:54-62). Despite the best of intentions, Simon Peter still fell short. Perhaps you have pledged to follow and serve God faithfully no matter what, but have given in to temptation or fear in an area of your life and have fallen short. Jesus Christ prayed for Peter, and if you are a Christian you also have Him as your Advocate (1 John 2:1). Do the footwork and return to God, relying upon His power and not your own.
- 3) *“Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’”* (Mark 14:37-38). Peter gave in to the flesh, and let down his guard. He was asleep at the switch when he should have been praying. The Apostles Peter and Paul struggled daily to stay strong spiritually (Romans 7:14-25). This is because spiritual striving goes against the sin nature that all men and women are born with. Peter may have been thinking of this episode when he wrote: *“Be sober, be vigilant...”* (1 Peter 5:8). The man after the heart of Christ learns from his mistakes and shares his experiences to help others.

- 4) *“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?’”* (John 18:10-11). Peter, ‘Mr. Impulsive’, was trying to fight a spiritual battle with worldly weapons. It is tempting to revert back to our old ways when we are faced with stressful and uncomfortable situations. Perhaps it was in light of experiences such as these that Peter points us to Christ as our example, *“who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return...”* (1 Peter 2:23).
- 5) *“Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing’...they caught nothing”* (John 21:3). Peter was supposed to be out fishing for men, having seen and been commissioned by the Resurrected Lord (John 20:21). However, he was down and discouraged. There was no true happiness in his life when he was apart from God’s plan for him. The fact that he caught nothing on his own illustrates the fruitlessness of doing anything without Christ (John 15:5). The ever graceful Son of God, however, provides a miracle to remind Peter of the days when he first fell in love with Jesus. Peter is given another chance to pick himself up and follow Christ (John 21:15-19). Many Christians find their love for God waxing cold; perhaps this describes you today. Let me tell you that our God is the God of the second chance.

Second, ***Peter the man of the spirit***. This is Peter when he is in communion with God and therefore receptive to spiritual truth divinely revealed.

- 1) *“But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’”* (John 6:68-69). Peter realized that there is no hope in any other. He was absolutely certain of that truth, and he had no problem saying so, even as many others who had been disciples of Jesus walked away (John 6:66-67).
- 2) *“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’ Jesus answered*

*and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'"*

(Matthew 16:15-19). The question posed to the disciples that day is one that all men must answer, for one's eternal home (heaven or hell) is determined by the answer. Peter answers it according to divine revelation. We too can answer it according to the divine revelation given in the Bible. Peter did not naturally accept this truth but he accepted it supernaturally. When we look at another Scripture, light is shed upon why Simon was given the name Peter by Jesus. We read that the church has "been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). As Christ's delegates, the apostles and prophets (Peter being preeminent among them) were to exercise authority over the church until the New Testament canon was complete, at which point there would be no further need for apostles and prophets. The rock (Greek: *petra*) upon which the church is built is not Peter, but the Christ of whom he began to preach boldly at Pentecost (1 Corinthians 3:11; Acts 2:14-40).

Although Peter had learned many things from experience, and became a fearless Christian soldier, he was always one step away from a fall (Acts 4:18-20). Peter even had to be rebuked by the Apostle Paul because he favored Jews over Gentiles for fear of men (Galatians 2:9-21). As we looked at Peter's life, I hope you took an inventory of your own life, and are prepared to make a change through God's power. I urge you, friend, to be eager in pursuit of spiritual things, and allow Jesus Christ to change you from a man or woman of the flesh into a man or woman of the spirit.