

From Simon To Peter #1

Introduction. An old saying goes, "Big doors turn on small hinges." God often uses insignificant events to bring great, far-reaching changes in someone's life. When Jesus Christ entered Peter's life, he became a great apostle through a long series of events. Peter's life was not a long incline, but was punctuated by failures from which we can learn by careful study (cf. Hebrews 5:12-14). Tracing the victories and failures of Peter can give us great hope.

I. ***Simon, Meet Peter***

- A. When Simon Peter met Jesus Christ in John 1:40-43, he did not realize what the future held for him. He was just a laborer, a poor man who fished by night and mended his nets by day -- until the day he encountered Jesus. Simon the fisherman began a new life.
- B. God wants to change us from self-centered men and women into mature, Spirit-controlled vessels. He wants to free us from the tyranny of selfishness that tends to make us ego-centered, proud, haughty people who God cannot use to accomplish His will (cf. 1 Samuel 10:19; Acts 9:17-18). As we get to know Peter, we will find that he is just like every one of us. He possessed all the faults and frailties we wish did not exist in us.
- C. The Lord looked at Peter as the old man, unredeemed, and He called him by his old name, Simon. Simon was an interesting character. He was an aggressive, boastful, self-confident, loud-mouthed, impulsive man. However, Jesus could look at him and know that he would be molded into the kind of character and life that He needed (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). Peter was a long way from being a "rock" (indicative of firmness and steadiness of character), but Jesus knew there would come a time when Peter and a handful of others would turn "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

II. ***Start Walking On Water***

- A. God controls circumstances of life.
 - 1. In Luke 5:4-11, Peter takes a step toward maturity. In his second meeting with Christ, Peter saw something of his own heart. He realized that he was not worthy to meet Jesus as he now saw himself. His honest heart compelled him to submit.
 - 2. True Christians have faced their need for salvation and obeyed the gospel. However, many more people have not. They refuse to face the wickedness and evil of their own hearts, and resent it when told that they are sinners (Romans 3:9-10).

3. Peter not only saw something of his own heart in the second meeting with Christ, he also saw something of what God is going to do in him. The first time, Jesus gave Peter a promise. The second time, Jesus gave him a plan. That plan culminated in opening the kingdom of God to others (Acts 2:14; 10:34).

B. God directs in obedience of faith.

1. In Matthew 14:25-31, we learn that Jesus loves to teach His children lessons. He loves us and can teach us humility, faith, and trust in spite of our conceit and arrogance.
2. In this episode, Peter put his faith into action and obeyed. Obedience is faith in action. Sadly, too few Christians dare or bother to test their faith in any way at all. God wants us to step out in faith. A lack of courage results in a dull, unhappy, unfruitful, and discouraged life. Abraham did not walk on water, but he did walk on desert sand at God's command (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham's obedience was faith in action.
3. The exciting part about beginning to practice walking by faith is that God delights in giving us these experiences. What right did Peter have to expect to walk to water? Yet the Lord told him to come ahead and experience the exciting reward for his faith.

C. God claims complete authority.

1. Scripture divides and tests all those who come in contact with it. Christ often used controversial concepts to shake people up. This was the case in John 6:48-69.
2. In John 6, Jesus was talking to the Jews. Many people were following Him. But Jesus began to sift through and test His admirers. He used some very hard language and difficult concepts in speaking to them.
3. Jesus was testing to find out if His followers really believed He had the answers. Every one of us has to confront the same question. Children in college will eventually have to answer the question of who has the correct answers of life: Jesus Christ or their educated, self-sufficient professor. Until we determine who our authority is, we are a long way from spiritual maturity (Colossians 2:8-10).
4. It is amazing how many Christians turn to the world for advice (1 John 2:15-17). They listen to what the world says is right and wrong. So many of the people we listen to in the world have defeated personal lives because they neglect the most important dimension of reality -- the spiritual truths of scripture.
5. Those who have the audacity to question the wisdom of God are suggesting that they are more morally enlightened than God Himself.

D. God reveals Christ as His Son.

1. In Matthew 16:13-20, the disciples declare their belief in the truth that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. How excited Jesus must have been when these men finally began to understand His teaching of His divine nature (John 1:49-51; 5:19-23).
2. Someone can never be saved until they come to that place where they completely accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. With this realization, Peter stepped into a greater measure of maturity. Spiritual maturity begins for someone when the full impact of who Christ is becomes real.
3. When Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom, and then gave them to the rest of the apostles (Matthew 18:17-20), it implied privilege, authority, and responsibility. When Peter was given this commission of incredible authority, he had reached a beautiful and exhilarating high point in his life. But from here on the whole tone of his maturing process was going to change.

Conclusion. God does not want us to shipwreck our faith, shatter our homes, and disgrace our congregations. It was Peter who promised that if we work on ourselves and add the virtues of faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to our lives, we will not fail (2 Peter 1:10). Where are you in the light of God's promises and purposes for you? Is God still petitioning you, or have you resisted His voice so long and run so far away that you cannot hear it anymore?