

## THE MAN CALLED SIMON PETER – PART 1

I'm **not going** to ask for a show of hands but answer this question in your mind: How many of you think preaching is **hard work**? Maybe you've never thought of the question. It **is hard work**—but maybe not **for the reasons** you might think!

First, thinking—and studying—**takes time**. It is “chewing” on God’s Word—meditating upon it—to **understand** the meaning of the text...and **convey** the meaning of the text...and **apply** the meaning of the text.

Second, there is the truth that I mentioned a month or so ago about the fact that even though our congregation is small, there is still a **wide range** of “stages” that people are in in their spiritual journey!

--For example, some of you need to **be saved!** Even though you **know the truth** because you have **heard** the truth, there are some here that are **not trusting in Jesus alone** for the forgiveness of your sins. Sadly, when the “saints go marching in”—some of you **will not be** in that number...

--Others of you **are saved**, but the “cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word” and you have become unfruitful.

--And then there are those who “hunger and thirst” after righteousness and are earnest about their relationship with the Lord. They **want to grow**—and become more Christlike—which is obviously what God wants too!

And so—with all those things rolling around in my mind and heart—it makes it challenging sometimes to know **what to preach** on! **Many** pastors in churches like ours—probably **most of them**—avoid having to search for a text **each week** by preaching through **a book** of the Bible. The preacher knows that the text for **next** Sunday will be the verses **after** the ones he is preaching on **this** Sunday!

Up until today, I have not done that—at least not for our **main service** on Sunday mornings! Instead, I have preached a series on a particular **topic**—like “God, Giving, and Gifts”—and have preached on various passages that teach on that particular theme.

Is **one method** better than the other? It depends on **who** you talk to! Some strong proponents of expository preaching—meaning going verse by through an entire book—have a motto that goes something like this: “Only preach a **topical sermon** once every 5 years and after you do, repent!” I think that is a bit extreme!

There are “pros” and “cons” to each method—and there is some overlap between the two. The most important thing for me to do is “Preach the Word” as God told Timothy through Paul in II Timothy 4:2. Next to preaching **what** God says, I need to do my best to **explain** what God’s Word **means**. **Nehemiah 8:8** “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

So—after that little glimpse into the thinking of a pastor—we are going to begin a study on the book of Second Peter. **Why** Second Peter? There's a couple of reasons.

**First**, Peter encourages believers to **grow in grace and in the knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know from previous sermons that my heartbeat is for you to **grow spiritually**. I don't want you to sit in the canoe and let “the river of life” take you where you might not want to go! I want **all of us** to work on our growth in godliness because that is God’s will for us. Second Peter certainly has that as a theme.

**Second**, Peter not only encouraged his readers to grow spiritually—he also warned them about **false teachers** and how we **ought to live** in light of the return of Jesus!

**Third**, there is **a practical** reason I picked **Second** Peter (as opposed to **First** Peter). What reason is that? Because **it's shorter!** It will only take us **three years** to get through II Peter instead of **the five** it will probably take for I Peter! On a more serious note, there will be times that this series will be interrupted for holidays—or when the Lord really impresses something different on my heart or mind.

Before we jump into II Peter, though, I want to make two last comments about **giving**.

I meant to share this last week and simply forgot. **First**, I really have no idea **who gives**—and **who doesn't**—and **how much** people give—unless you decide to tell me! Ninety-nine % of the time I **don't know**—and really don't **want to know**!

**Second**, last Sunday I mentioned that **giving 10% of your income** is a good place **to start** when it comes to giving to the Lord! It is certainly possible that some of you have **never heard much** about giving—until I started preaching that series, anyway—and that 10% would be a very **scary number** for you to all of a sudden start giving—especially if you are not **in the habit** of consistently giving!

If that's you, can I make a suggestion? If 10% seems **too high** of a number, **start smaller**! Give 5% instead and see first-hand how God provides for your needs when you honor Him with your substance.

Above all else, though, **pray about** what God would have you give—and then do what He impresses on your heart!

With that as a rather lengthy introduction, take your bibles and turn to II Peter, chapter one. Please follow along as I read vs 1-11. Notice now on your outline the quote I have from **Warren Wiersbe** about the book as a whole: “When he wrote 2 Peter, the apostle was conscious that death was near (1:13-14) and that the church was in danger, for false teachers were creeping in. He urged the believers to hold to the precious Word and grow spiritually (chapter 1), to identify and shun false teachers (chapter 2), and to keep the promise of Christ's return uppermost in their hearts (chapter 3).” (Chapter-By-Chapter Bible Commentary, pg 834).

It is good to keep in mind **those themes** as we go through the various paragraphs and chapters in the book. Another good thing to keep in mind as we study II Peter is this—**the man Peter** who God used to write the book! That is what we are going to focus our attention on today and next Sunday.

We will learn much about Peter as we go through **this book**, but I believe it is important to be reminded of some things we **already know about** him. So...after reading the first two words—“Simon Peter”—we are already **leaving** Second Peter—and an **expositional style** of preaching—to look at some **different events** in the life of Peter! Now you know why I said it **might take 3 years** to get through these **3 chapters**!

As we go through these characteristics, try to keep these two things in mind: 1) Peter was a “work in progress”—just like we are; and 2) If God can change and grow **Peter**; He can change and grow **us**!

### **1. Peter was the reactive one**

Peter was impulsive, wasn't he? He was the epitome of a man who “flies by the seat of his pants.” He often spoke without thinking—and often “put his foot in his mouth.” There are a number of examples of this; we'll look at just 2. Please turn to Mt 14, beginning with vs 24.

Here we see Peter... A. Walking on water (Mt 14:24-33)

--Vs 24. They were in a storm. The ship was being “tossed with waves.”

--Vs 25. “And in the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night”—between 3 and 6 am—Jesus walks out to them on the sea.

--Vs 26. “And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled...”

--**All the disciples** saw Jesus—and **all of them were afraid**. They thought they were seeing a ghost!

--In vs 27, Jesus reassures them that it is Him and tells them not to be afraid.

--Now Peter's words in vs 28. “Lord, if it is you, bid me come unto thee on the water.”

--Imagine being one of the disciples in the boat. Not sure about you, but what Peter said was probably one of the last things **I would** have said.

--‘Lord, if it is you, **stop the storm!**’ or ‘Lord, if it is you, **join us in the ship.**’

Not Peter, though! “Lord, if it be thou, bid me **come unto thee** on the water.”

--What was Peter thinking? We don't really know—but it is pretty safe to say that the other disciples **weren't thinking** the same thing!

--What did **Jesus say**? Vs 29 “Come.” What did Peter **do**? Vs 29 again.

He **got out** of the ship—and “walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” But in vs 30, we see that he began to sink because he took his eyes off Jesus—and looked at “the wind being boisterous.”

And from this we learn a very valuable lesson: Jesus wants us to keep our eyes **on Him**—not on **the storm!** And God **wants us** to do the same, doesn't He? Such an easy thing to understand—and yet so difficult **to do!**

We can't be too hard on Peter, then, can we? Peter was impulsive—and often acted on those impulses—but let's not forget that he did something none of the other disciples did—he walked on water!

Let's turn now to John 18. Here we see Peter... B. Whacking off someone's ear!

Please follow along as I read verses 3-11. Is Peter being impulsive again? Yes, he is! How do we know?

Notice on your outline **Luke 22:49-50** "When they which **were about Him** [the disciples] saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, **shall we smite with the sword?** And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear." Did you catch that? They ask Jesus if they should use their swords to protect Him, but Peter doesn't even wait for the answer! Instead, he just pulls out his sword and whacks the guy's ear off! Jesus intervened, though, and we know from Lk 22:51 that Jesus touched his ear and healed him.

Jesus intervened in another way that we often overlook—He protected **Peter's life!** Vs 12 "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus..." That same band of men—according to vs 3—also had weapons. And they could have—and should have—**gone after Peter** for what he did! But they didn't! Why? Because I believe Jesus protected him. God had **a plan for Peter's life**—and it wasn't to die in the garden at the hands of some soldiers!

Not only was Peter the **reactive** one... **2. Peter was the rebuking one**

I love this quote from **Alexander Whyte**: "No disciple is so pointedly **reproved by our Lord** as Peter, and no disciple ventures **to reprove his Master** but Peter." (Bible Characters From the New Testament; Vol 1; pg 46). On at least two occasions, Peter **rebuked** Jesus. We're in John; let's turn back to Mt 16.

A. Peter thought he knew **God's plan** better than Jesus did! (Mt 16:21-22)

--Vs 21. That is why Jesus came, wasn't it? He came for the purpose of dying! The disciples were slow to grasp that, though. They were expecting Jesus to deliver them **from Rome**—not deliver them from **their sins!** A number of the disciples were fisherman—and it is certainly possible that they did **not know much** about the Old Testament. I say that for a couple of reasons.

1) If they were familiar with the OT, they would have known verses like **Isaiah 53:3-7** "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him **stricken, smitten of God**, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was **wounded** for our transgressions, He was **bruised** for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His **stripes** we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord **hath laid on Him** the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was **oppressed, and He was afflicted**, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

2) They rarely **asked Jesus questions** that they had from the OT. They did ask Him one found in Mt 17:10 "And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that **Elias** must first come?" Even here, though, it was something they **heard the scribes say**—not something they were familiar with from the OT!

It is quite likely that this lack of familiarity with the OT led to Peter "rebuking" Jesus. Look at vs 22. Peter's intentions were obviously good—"We won't let this happen to you" is the thought, I'm guessing, behind it—but Jesus certainly knew the plan of God—and why He came—way better than Peter did!

Let's turn now to Mt 26, beginning with verse 31.

Here we are going to see that... B. Peter thought he **knew himself** better than Jesus did! (Mt 26:31-35)

--Vs 31-32. Jesus—as the All-Knowing One—knows both what **the Bible says**—and what the disciples **will do**—before they do it! "**All ye** shall be offended of me this night..."

--Did Peter **hear** what Jesus said? He certainly did! How do we know? Because in vs 33, Peter pretty much **quotes what Jesus said!** But...instead of **agreeing** with the All-knowing One, he **argues** with Him!

Peter wasn't the only one who felt like this, though. Look at vs 34-35. The other disciples felt the same way! They all wanted to **be faithful**...they all wanted Jesus to know that they **would stand with Him**—even if it meant their death!

--But...they **didn't know** the weakness of their flesh—or the deceitfulness of their heart!

Good intentions **are needed** for good actions—but good intentions don't always **lead to** good actions!

So...instead of **considering** what Jesus was saying...and asking Him for help to remain true and faithful to Him—they went on in their own self-confidence.

A lot like us, isn't it? We often trust in our resolve and strength—and underestimate **the weakness of our flesh** and the deceitfulness of **our hearts**!

Lastly...for today, anyway... **3. Peter was the repentant one**

A. Understanding his sinfulness early in Jesus's ministry (Lk 5:1-11)

Please turn now to Luke 5; follow along as I read verses 1-4.

--Jesus tells Peter to let down his nets for a draught—meaning a catch.

Peter was reluctant to do that. Why? Because in vs 5, Peter informs Jesus that they had “toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.” Did Jesus know that? Of course, He did—but that didn't matter!

--Now vs 6-7. Peter did what Jesus said—even though he was skeptical—and they caught so many fish that their nets began to break—and their boats began to sink!

--What was Peter's response?

--Did Peter say, ‘Thank you, Jesus—you really are a better fisherman than me?’

--Did Peter say, ‘I'm sorry, Jesus—I should not have doubted you?’

--vs 8. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” James was there...and so was John...and so was Peter's brother, Andrew. They were sinners, too—we all are—and yet Peter is the only one who acknowledges his sinfulness!

Much more could be said, but we need to move on. We're in Luke 5; let's turn now to Lk 22.

Here we see Peter... B. Understanding his sinfulness late in Jesus' ministry (Lk 22:59-62)

Follow along as I read vs 59-62. I really hate to bring this one up—but only because time does not permit me to **do justice to how much** is here! But it certainly demonstrates the humility—and repentance of Peter.

1) First, the look. Vs 61 “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.” Spurgeon pointed out something that I hadn't thought of before: In order for Peter **to see Jesus** looking at him, Peter had to be **looking at Jesus**! That's a good reminder to us that no matter how **miserably we fail**, we need to look to the only One who can forgive and restore us!

With no words being exchanged, **the look** said a lot. It certainly was **convicting** because it reminded Peter of his great failure. I don't know that we can truly grasp how devastated and heart-broken Peter was! Peter was the leader of the 12. There was a **group of 3** that Jesus spent extra time with—Peter, James, and John—and whenever the disciples' names are listed in the Bible, Peter's name always **appears first**.

It was also a look of **sadness and pity**—not one of anger and hatred. Jesus' heart went out to Peter. Because “the Lord knoweth them that are His,” Jesus knew that Peter was a genuine believer—not an impostor like Judas!

I also believe it was a **forgiving** look. Why do I say that? Because Jesus did not “write Peter off.” The one who asked Jesus: “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him” was forgiven more than seven times—and more than “seventy times seven” (Mt 18:21-21).

2) Lessons learned from the look. There are many; here are two. **First**, there is mercy—and forgiveness—in Jesus! Jesus longs to forgive and restore His erring children. How do we know Jesus forgave Peter? Because Peter became a very prominent leader in the early church—until he was replaced by Paul. We also know from **Luke 24:34** “...The Lord is risen indeed, and **hath appeared** to Simon.” **When** did that happen? **We don't know**—other than it was the day that Jesus came back to life again! **What** was said? Again, we are not told, but I tend to think it was a very **personal conversation** where Jesus assured Peter of His love and forgiveness. In my opinion, the moment was too private—it was too sacred—for God to record in His Word.

Another lesson from that look is this: God ***delights in humility***. In fact, I believe Peter's failure impacted the rest of his life! He certainly understood God's delight in humility because God had him write these very familiar words found in **I Peter 5:5b-6** "... and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and **giveth grace to the humble**. <sup>6</sup> **Humble yourselves therefore** under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

God hasn't changed; those verses hold true for today. You can be proud—and have God's ***resistance***; or you can be humble—and have God's ***assistance***.

One more thought before I close in prayer. This is not from the Bible, but is one of those interesting things to think about. A different Whyte—last name the same, but first name is different—wrote this: "There is a story told in the Early Church how, if the cock crowed when Peter was preaching and the echoes came into the Church, he could go no further. The sermon was cut short; but when he began again there would be an unction and tenderness in it which would satisfy the most broken sinner in the congregation (J Whyte, Bible Hub).

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. Be ***encouraged!*** God forgave Peter...and transformed Peter...and used Peter—and He can do the same for you!
2. Be ***humble!*** We need to be reminded that God did not "score big" when He saved us because we're "Only a Sinner, saved by Grace!" Don't wallow in past failures—but let them remind you of how grateful we should be for God's amazing grace!
3. Don't avoid God when you fail Him—flee to Him! There's mercy—and forgiveness—with the Lord!
4. Be saved! Are you heaven-bound? Are you forgiven? Do you have Christ?