

SIMON OR PETER

Over the past few years I have written many essays. I have also done some expository teachings on the parables of Jesus, many other teachings and I had the privilege to speak at many churches and ministries. I wanted to write to you all to say, thank you for putting up with me. I know that there were some writings that you may not have agreed with or did not even care that I wrote on. However, I wanted to say thank you to all of you who have stuck by me and have not asked to be taken off the mailing list - yet.

I simply wanted to share what I felt the Lord was teaching and saying to me. I never professed nor did I ever think or say that I knew everything or that I had it all down pat. On the contrary, the main reason for my writing was, and still is, to be a learning time and teaching time primarily for me. As I mentioned, I simply wrote what I felt the Lord was teaching me through His Word. So... I simply wanted to say thank you to all of you who have read and “stuck with it all.”

The main thing that I am learning as I study and ask the Lord for His understanding is that God is a God of love. He is not simply a God of grace, although He is that. He is not simply a God of mercy, although He is that. God is also not only a God of peace, although He is that. No, I have seen through His word that God is truly wrapped up in His grace, mercy and peace which all reflect and are parts of His unconditional love towards me and anyone else who chooses to accept His free gift of total and pure love – Jesus.

As I read the Gospel accounts, I am so amazed at who and what Jesus is. We all know that He is God. However, when He walked this earth there were really very few people that even thought that way. Even His disciples did not truly “get it” until after His resurrection and the time He spent with them until His ascension 40 day later. The disciple whom we all know and love, Peter, was the biggest one of the disciples who thought he was getting it right but he continually messed up.

We see that Jesus, however, did not give up on Peter. We know that Peter’s real name was Simon. Jesus was the one who gave him the “nickname” or new name of “Peter.” However, it was not to be a “nickname” but rather it was to be who he would ultimately become. However, as we know Simon, really did not truly become Peter until Jesus had confronted Him after His death and resurrection. He saw something in Simon Peter that Simon Peter did not even see in himself.

We know that when Jesus was arrested all the disciples had fled. All that is accept Peter and John. We see in the Gospel of John that John actually went into the house of the High Priest. He had known someone from past acquaintances and was allowed to go in and watch the proceedings of Jesus’ “trial” with the religious leaders. We also know that Peter had waited outside in the courtyard.

We read that while Peter was in the courtyard he was asked three times whether he either knew Jesus or was outright one of His disciples. We know that in all four Gospel accounts we read of Peter’s denial and rejection of even knowing Jesus. This all happened by the time the “cock” crowed just as Jesus had told him he would. We see that when Peter realized this and happened to look at Jesus and saw Jesus looking at him, that he left weeping bitterly.

Yes, Peter was finally confronted with himself. He realized what Jesus was telling him for the past 3½ years – he was not the man that he thought he was. Yes, He was truly still Simon. Simon rejected – three times – Jesus who had loved him but most importantly the man who Simon told time after time that he would never desert or leave. Yet, there he was...

We see in the scriptures that one of the first people Jesus went to see after His resurrection and fulfilling the final aspect of the Feast of Bikkurum on that Resurrection Day was Simon Peter. We see this in Luke 24:34, “*Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*” The ones who shared this with the disciples were the two who Jesus met on the road to Emmaus. They had been, unknowingly with Jesus, and we read that they declared that Simon (Peter) had seen Him as well.

We know that Simon and John were most likely not with the other nine disciples on the morning of the resurrection. They were alone when told about the empty tomb as we read in John 20:2-10. They went to see that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. After all, wouldn't the other disciples go to see if Jesus was in the tomb or not if they had heard from these women that Jesus was not in the tomb? I think they would have. Therefore, Peter and John were alone and separated from the other disciples. The two of them went to the tomb, as we read in John 20 - alone.

After they had left the tomb early that morning, Peter and John somehow became separated. I believe that was a "divine" thing because Jesus was going to have a "divine appointment" with Simon Peter. I believe this is when Jesus came and revealed Himself to Simon Peter. It was a time that Simon Peter needed to have. It was a time when all of Simon Peter's thoughts were going amok. It was the perfect time for Jesus to reveal Himself to Simon Peter to give Simon Peter the opportunity to know that he was not given up on by Jesus. This was **the** moment for Simon Peter. As we know, Simon Peter did ultimately believe in Jesus.

However, there was one more thing that Jesus needed to do to truly get Simon to become Peter, the man who He knew Simon was to become. Simon needed to be confronted with his sin of denying Jesus three times. It was one thing to believe in Jesus but it was another thing if Simon was to actually become and do what he would ultimately be called to do. Simon needed to first make right for his past errors. Those "errors" were his rejection of Jesus three times at the home of the High Priest.

This is where we see the encounter between Jesus and Simon on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We read of it in John 21:15-17 – *"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agape) thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.¹⁶ He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agapeo) thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.¹⁷ He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (phileo) thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."*

Now I know that much has been made about the two uses of the words "agapeo" and "phileo" in this passage of scripture and all the various teachings and thoughts on it. However, I believe that by getting caught up in these linguistic words we miss the main aspect of what Jesus was saying and doing with Simon Peter. The main emphasis was getting Simon Peter to "own up" to his past. Notice, that Jesus refers to Him as Simon. That is interesting to take note of. He specifically uses the name "Simon" when He is talking to him. I believe because Simon could never have truly fulfilled his ultimate mission as Peter in the future until he truly "owned up" to his failures in his past.

The time had come for Simon to truly make the decision – not to be saved because he already was – but to be what God truly had called him to be – Peter. We see that Jesus questions Simon three times. Simon was to say "I love you" three times to Jesus. The third time we see that Simon was grieved because Jesus had asked him a third time. I do not know if Simon understood exactly what was happening. We know that Jesus did. Simon was grieved that Jesus asked him the same question three times. Did Simon realize that third time what Jesus was doing and that was why he was grieved? We do see that after Simon answered Jesus the third time we hear Jesus say to him for the **third time**, "Feed my sheep."

We read in this section of scripture, as it was referring back to this time, that the writer, John, does refer to Simon as Peter. This was because, as we mentioned, this is a retelling of the events that had already taken place by John. It was only at the time of the writing of the Gospel (some 30 -40 years later) that Simon was well known as "Peter" – the small rock who would proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the Jewish people and be the first one to proclaim to the Gentiles the Good News of salvation in and through Jesus.

We all know that when we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior that we become joint heirs with Jesus to all that is within the Kingdom of God. All of God's promises are now ours. Everything of His Kingdom is now ours, we have a born again spirit and we have eternal life waiting for us when we pass on from this life. However, I believe, that there is more in this life for each of us to do unto the Lord if we truly allow ourselves to be fully given over to Him.

What I mean by this is that, as we have seen, Simon was saved. However, we see that Jesus wanted Simon to serve Him even in a greater way and become who he was truly meant to be. We have a tendency to believe that now that we are saved we have everything of the Kingdom of God – and this is absolutely true. However, there is much more that each of us are still called to do **while we are still on this earth**. We are to be as Simon Peter was to be when Jesus met with him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee that day.

Simon was saved. He was to be a child of God and he would enter one day into God's Kingdom. That was settled. However, would Simon be a Peter? Would Simon truly become the man that God wanted and knew he could be? That choice was left to Simon. He was confronted with the deeds of his past – yes, even after he was saved. He was confronted by God so that He could become what God truly had intended for him to become. God wanted, not simply Simon, but He knew that Simon could become a Peter, the man that God had called and knew him to be.

However, Simon needed to step up and face the facts of what he had done so that he could be, not only a child of God and have eternal life (which is fantastic) but most importantly to be what God needed for him to be while he was still on this earth. Simon needed to take the leap and truly become Peter. He could only do this if he confronted one of the most compelling things that had happened in his life. Jesus knew this and Jesus confronted Simon with it.

We know that Simon realized his errors and confronted them head on with a great deal of assistance from Jesus. Simon, only then became whom we all know today as, Peter. So where does that leave you and I? Is it possible that we each could still be "Simons?" Yes, we are saved. Yes, we are going to have eternal life and live with God on that day. Yes, we may be a child of God. However, is that all God may be calling each of us to be and to do while we are still here upon this earth?

Unfortunately, in the Body of Christ today, we have many, many "Simons" whom Jesus desires to become "Peters." Unfortunately, the tide of many believers today is that it has become "all about me." The Kingdom of God is all about me and what I want and desire. Many believers believe that God must now work for us. It is in no way that we are to be His workers in the field of this earth desiring to seek out and bring people into the Kingdom. No, the Kingdom of God is all about me, me, ME!!!

Well, I don't think so!!! It always was, is and always will be about God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is all about His people here on this earth telling others about salvation in and through Jesus. It should and must be all about bringing His Kingdom to those who are lost in this world – which is everyone who does not know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. It is about living our lives as He would want us to.

It may be that Jesus is calling out to many of us today just as He did with Simon on that day on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Will we be like Simon Peter and hear what Jesus is trying to tell us? Will we confront some things that are still holding on to us from our past – even though we are now a child of God? It may be that there are many whom God is calling out to in these final days and hours. Will we hear Him? Will we listen? Or will we stay in our own ways and thoughts because these things are comfortable to us.

The choice is ours. Will we be a "Simon" or will we truly grow and mature into being a "Peter?"
Yes, the choice is ours.