

OT - 43/1-7
NT - Luke: - 22/54-61
MARK - 8/22-30

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PETER - THE MAGNIFICENT APOSTLE

From Sand to Rock

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord (Lk. 5:8). Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life (Jn. 6:68). Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee . . . (Jn. 21:16).

Peter

Anything you want to say about him, any word of praise, any descriptive adjective, any commendation will fit. Call him wonderful if you wish—superb—phenomenal—amazing—great — even Hollywood will run out of adjectives to describe him. It is all true for the foremost of the twelve for the big Galilean fisherman, for Peter, the magnificent. THE
Now we have said enough about other apostles to show that they were ordinary men. They had few talents. Some had little ability. Andrew, Peter's

AM

broader

LA FOLLOWER

had but one talent, but he learned to play SECOND
 fiddle well. Judas Thaddaeus hardly opened HIS MOUTH
~~at all~~. He just plodded along. James, the less, is COMPLETELY
~~very~~ obscure, totally unknown. But what THEY
 lacked, Peter had. For every talent they ~~had~~ POSSESSED
~~he~~ he had ten. He was that kind of a man. SOMEONE
~~had~~ had to be a leader among the twelve, AND HE
~~was~~ was the one. He had always been a leader. HE WAS
~~born~~ born that way. He probably went deepest INTO
 the caves, swam farthest in the Sea of Galilee, AND
 climbed the highest mountains. He dominated EVERY
 fishing expedition. He gave the orders. ~~AND~~ AND - SO
 as an apostle, he dominates the gospel NARRATIVES.
 He is the first to speak, the first to act. He is EXPLOSIVE, IMPULSIVE
~~and~~ and impetuous, tempestuous and TALENTED.
~~enthusiastic~~ enthusiastic, extreme, an extrovert. He is, as NAMED
~~by~~ by Jesus Christ, 'the Rock': "I tell you that YOU ARE
~~Peter~~ Peter, the rock" (Mt. 16:18, Phillips). ~~BUT~~ BUT
 that road to becoming 'the Rock'—the road THAT
 leads to stability, to firmness, to strength, to GRANITE.
 purpose is no easy road. It is the straight AND
 narrow, and it is beautifully etched for us in THE
 gospels. With this in mind let us look at Peter, THE
 magnificent apostle, and we shall see what MADE
 him so magnificent—what made him "the Rock".

DESPITE
 spite all his gifts, Peter was a humble man. WITH
 all his brash bravado, he was sensitive ~~and~~
~~He~~ He had a tender conscience. He knew his OWN
 heart! (THIS) ADULTERATE
 is what makes him great. He did not ~~adulterate~~
~~his~~ his gifts for himself. He knew his INADEQUACIES
~~and~~ and; he knew himself. In this light he appears

~~off~~

in Scripture right from the start.

They had been fishing all night. They had caught nothing. They came in tired. Jesus stood by the Sea of Galilee and said to Simon: "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch" (Lk. 5:4-10, NEB). Of course he objected: "Master, we were hard at work all night and caught nothing at all."

Out they went, after the night of failure, and what a catch! The fish filled the net so that it broke!

Peter, seeing the miracle, comes off the boat running, falls on his knees at Jesus' feet, and cries out: "Go, Lord, leave me, sinner that I am!" He cannot bear it! That impulsive, sudden penitence—that humility, that tender conscience marks Peter as the captain of the new fishing fleet, as the leader of the twelve: "Do not be afraid . . . from now on you will be catching men."

The Lord could reach Peter; He gives grace only to the humble. The difference between Peter and Judas is just here: both denied Jesus; but Peter has the humility that will save him from despair. Judas has no humility, hence his despair leads to his downfall.

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Toward the end of his life, Peter wrote a letter revealing his still tender conscience: "Add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness, love. The man who lacks them is short-sighted and blind; he has forgotten how he was cleansed from his former sins" (II Pet. 1:9, NEB). The man who remains humbled by his sins is on the way to stability. This is the road to 'the Rock.'

[REDACTED]

That was Peter, rash, unthinking, impulsive. Time and again he probably said to himself: "Me and my big mouth."

Take that time the disciples found themselves in the turbulence of a storm at sea. Suddenly it seemed as if they saw a ghost walking on the water toward them. Even Peter felt a turn in the pit of his stomach, and he cried out afraid!

A voice answered them (from the "ghost"): "Take heart! It is I; do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27-30, NEB). It was their Lord, Jesus Christ. Peter could not believe it. But now foolhardy, daring, he must do what Jesus is doing! If it is He, then Peter must walk on the water, too: "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you over the water." The Lord said, "Come," and Peter went over the side impulsively, blindly.

Suddenly he woke up to what he was doing. Walking on the water? Ridiculous! Unheard of! That does not make sense. In his fear he started to sink:

"Save me, Lord." Jesus was right there, lifted him up and took him back aboard ship.

Peter with his impetuous speech did make that great confession. Jesus had asked them a vital question: "And you, who do you say I am?" (Mt. 16:15-23, NEB). Explosive, quick to reply, Peter was the one to speak up: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

_____ : "You did not learn that from mortal man; it was revealed to you by my heavenly Father." And then he added: "You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock I will build my church, and the forces of death shall never overpower it."

No sooner had He said it and 'the Rock' disintegrated. Jesus began to show the apostles (for the first time) how He must suffer, be persecuted, and killed. Peter could not believe it. He took Him aside: "No, Lord, this shall never happen to you." And the Lord rebuked him severely: "Away with you, Satan; you are a stumbling-block to me. You think as men think, not as God thinks." One moment inspired by God; the next the tool of the devil. Many a failure and many a stumble before Peter could become granite rock!

Of course he really put his foot in it after the Lord's Supper. He had been in the presence of Jesus for three years, and he has begun to think of himself as 'the Rock'—sure, strong, steady, faithful. Nothing can ever move him again. He is the leader of the twelve.

So Peter is deeply shocked when Jesus starts

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quoting Scripture: "You will all fall from your faith; for it stands written: 'I will smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered abroad'" (Mk. 14:27-31, Phillips).

Peter challenges Him. "Everyone else may fall away, but I will not." He will never deny Jesus. Whatever else he may be, he is not a deserter.

Jesus turned to Peter and said quietly, but firmly: "I tell you this: today, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times." That infuriated him. He meant what he said, and now he would say it again: "Even if I must die with you, I will never disown you." The rock would not fail.

That night after they took Jesus, his followers forsook Him. Peter followed into the court-square. Afterwards he wished that he had not gone in. But he did go. He ventured further than his courage would carry him. And so he was caught off guard by a sudden question. Then he started down that fatal slope, unable to stop himself, going down faster and faster—until finally, too late, came that terrible awakening and that bitter sense of shame!

He warmed himself by the fire. It was cold that night. He was already excited, nervous, upset, and it felt good to warm himself.

A servant girl in the group—she may have seen him somewhere before—looked at him strangely and asked: "You were there too, with this man from Nazareth, this Jesus" (Mk. 14:67-72, NEB). He muttered in his beard, so hardly anyone could hear: "I

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know nothing. I do not understand what you mean. And the sweat stood out on his forehead. He realized what he was saying.

They were talking about him, and he knew it. He kept his eyes down--into the fire. But another girl came around to where he stood and turned to him: "He is one of them," she said to her companions. Peter talked a little louder than before. They could all hear now, as he denied again!

Then that soldier joined the group. Perhaps one of the soldiers who had taken Jesus in the garden. He looks at Peter, and Peter feels the blood rush to his head. Then he says it: "He is one of them." And someone else says: "Surely you are one of them. You must be; you are a Galilean."

Then he swears and curses, using language he has not used in years, and they all stand quiet before his vehemence: "I do not know this man you speak of." And then, in that moment of quiet, he can hear it, loud and clear--like a bugle call--the crowing of the cock! "Before the cock crows twice, you will disown me three times."

[Redacted text block]

And he rushed out of the court-square, out ~~of~~ OF

the gate, out . . . his heart pounding. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He had collapsed like rotten timber.

the Rock had turned to sand. . . !

Something happened to Peter that night, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] something that became for him a

turning point, a conversion if you like. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Could he ever be forgiven for this? He remembered how Jesus had said that a man should forgive seventy times seven. But could he ever forgive himself? He could not sleep. He could not eat. He **TOOK** his failure hard.

Then broke that glorious news of Easter. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Still Peter nursed his terrible shame.

Finally came that morning by the Sea of Galilee. Peter had led them back to their fishing. Back to the familiar, the old ways, the old life, to forget the recent regrets and the failures. That night they caught nothing.

A Man stood on the shore, and He told them to cast their nets on the right side. They did so, and caught a great school of fish. John cried out: "It is the Lord" (Jn. 21:7-17, *Phillips*). That was enough for Peter. Impetuously he threw himself into the water and swam ashore. The Lord had built a little fire, cooked some fish, and breakfast was ready. There in the early dawn they ate together quietly.

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Peter did not dare to speak.

After breakfast Jesus broke the silence. With a searching look He turned to Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others?" (He had called him by his given name, not by his new name, Peter "the Rock.")

"Yes, Lord, you know that I am your friend."

Jesus turned again to Peter with the same question: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I am your friend."

And a third time Jesus turned, and He changed His question: "Simon, son of John, are you my friend?" "Lord, you know everything. You know that I am your friend." Three times he had denied. Three times the opportunity was given to reaffirm. No condemnation, only the chance to be reinstated as Jesus' friend. This is the grace of God for the humble.

So the command was given: "Feed my sheep." Peter is sent back to Jerusalem, back to the place where he had failed. And Peter is humble enough now, subdued enough now, not to object. He goes and preaches. He uses his gifts to bring thousands into the Kingdom. He faces persecution. He had quailed before the question of a servant girl; he can face a mob unafraid now.

The Rock was beginning to form.

the name the Master had given him would come into reality. His

[Handwritten scribble]

X

humility, his devotion, his shattered self-assurance,
his experience of the Lord's forgiveness, kept bring-
ing him back in love to Jesus Christ.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

• Edmund Schlinck, *The Victor Speaks*, p. 95, Concordia Pub. House, St. Louis, 1958.

[Handwritten mark]

The Acts of the Apostles turns the spotlight on Peter. He preaches the first Christian sermon. He endures persecution, and withstands the authorities. He is the strength of the early Jewish-Christian community and then is led by God's Spirit to reach the Gentiles; he brings the good news to Cornelius, a Roman.

However, during the first Church Council at Jerusalem (recorded in Acts 15), Peter acknowledges the leadership of James. Subsequently he leaves Jerusalem in James' hands and the conversion of the Gentile world to Paul. He appears at Antioch (Gal. 2:11) and Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12) but little is told of his travels and labors.

Only through the letters which he wrote do we receive insight into his development and his understanding of the Christian faith. Peter's letters reveal his warmth and sincerity, his faith in times of testing, his reliance upon Christ in suffering and his unfading hope of glory.

According to tradition he died in Rome.

[REDACTED]

He was crucified, but whether he was crucified upside down, as tradition tells us, is also debatable.

Perhaps the legend which recounts Peter's arrival in Rome has some truth behind it: He arrived at Rome during heavy persecution. He witnessed Christians being martyred, and he fled. Outside the city he met a man headed for Rome, carrying a cross.

Peter asked him: "Quo Vadis?" (Where are you going?)

The man replied: "To Rome, to be crucified again."

Peter had made his last retreat. He returned to the city—and martyrdom. The Rock was still being formed!

LET US PRAY.

FATHER GOD. YOU HAVE CREATED US IN YOUR IMAGE. BUT, SOMETIMES WE ARE LIKE PETER — WE WAVER IN OUR FAITH IN TIMES OF TRIAL. GRANT THAT WE WILL REMEMBER PETER — THE ROCK — AND DO WHAT ~~HE DID~~ HE DID. REALIZE OUR WEAKNESSES AND CONTINUE ^{TO} FOLLOW YOU IN FAITH AND TRUST AS WE WORK TO BUILD YOUR KINGDOM HERE AND AROUND THE WORLD. IN JESUS NAME WE PRAY.
— AMEN.

MARK 8/27-29

AND JESUS WENT OUT, ALONG WITH HIS DISCIPLES, TO THE VILLAGES OF CAESAREA PHILIPPI; AND ON THE WAY HE QUESTIONED HIS DISCIPLES, SAYING TO THEM "WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?"

AND THEY ANSWERED HIM, SAYING, "JOHN THE BAPTIST; AND OTHERS SAY ELIJAH; BUT STILL OTHERS SAY ONE OF THE PROPHETS."

AND HE CONTINUED BY QUESTIONING THEM, SAYING, "BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"

PETER ANSWERED AND SAID TO HIM "THOU ART THE CHRIST."

LUKE 22/54-61

AND HAVING ARRESTED HIM, THEY LED HIM AWAY AND BROUGHT HIM TO THE HOUSE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, BUT PETER FOLLOWED AT A DISTANCE. AND, AFTER THEY HAD KINDLED A FIRE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COURTYARD AND HAD SAT DOWN TOGETHER, PETER WAS SITTING AMONG THEM AND A CERTAIN SERVANT-GIRL, SEEING HIM AS HE SAT IN THE FIRE LIGHT, AND LOOKING INTENTLY AT PETER, SAID, "THIS MAN WAS WITH HIM TOO, BUT PETER DENIED IT, SAYING, "WOMAN, I DO NOT KNOW HIM!" AND A LITTLE LATER, ANOTHER SAW PETER AND SAID, "YOU ARE ONE OF THEM TOO. BUT, PETER SAID "MAN, I AM NOT!" AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR HAD PASSED, ANOTHER MAN BEGAN TO INSIST, SAYING, CERTAINLY THIS MAN WAS ALSO WITH HIM, FOR HE IS A GALILEAN TOO. BUT, PETER SAID, "MAN, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. AND WHILE HE WAS SPEAKING A COCK CROWED,