

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 6:14

Code: 42-73

Well I don't know about you, but I'm loving every week in the gospel of Luke. You get an hour of it on Sunday morning, and I get about 15 or 18 hours of it during the week. And what a joy and pleasure it is to study in depth this tremendous gospel. I only wish I could share with you everything that I'm learning in the process. But I sort of distill it down and give you a small dose.

We're in chapter 6, Luke's gospel. We're here for the truth, holding forth the Word of life which is the Bible, the Scripture. And we proclaim the Word of God as it comes verse by verse.

We find ourselves in Luke 6:12 through 16, the ministry of Jesus is going on. He has many disciples following Him now. Disciple is the word mathetesin Greek, it means a learner. Many people following and learning. But at this juncture He decides to select twelve out of the learners and make them Apostles. Train them to be preachers, essentially. Their responsibility is going to be to take the gospel throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the outer most part of the earth.

They are identified in this passage, these twelve. Simon called Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon also, second Simon among the twelve, this one called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, there are two of them as well, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. Twelve Apostles.

And we've been saying in our introductory material to the study of these men that God always has to do His work through unworthy and incapable people because that's the only kind He has. You see, the reason for that is the work of God is spiritual. The work of God is divine. The work of God is supernatural. The work of God is miraculous. The work of God is eternal. And human beings have no natural capacity to do that kind of work. The best that we can do, our best intellectual service, our best social service, our best contribution to the arts, our best approach to the trades, the crafts, the professions of the world are always human and they never get beyond that. And so they have no impact on that which is eternal in and of themselves.

If God then is to use incapable natural people to do spiritual, miraculous, supernatural, eternal work, something dramatic has to happen to those people. There has to be a real transformation and there has to be an infusion of divine power. And so, God is in the transformation business.

Having determined to do His work through people, He has to transcend their natural limitations, their deficiencies and accomplish an eternal work through a temporal agent. And God has nobody to work with but human beings, that's by choice. And interestingly enough, of all the human beings that He might choose to work with, He generally chooses the lowest. First Corinthians 1 says, "Not many noble, not many mighty, but rather He chooses the base and the common and the weak in order in the end that He might get the glory and He might shame the wise."

In choosing those whom He calls to do His supernatural, divine, miraculous, spiritual, eternal work He has to deal with human beings. But He bypasses the upper echelons, the elite, the noble, the influential, the wealthy and He goes with the people at the bottom of the ladder. In that way, He puts to shame the wise and also brings glory to Himself because when you look at the people He uses, the only conclusion would be it was God and not them. It's always been God's way. He has nobody to use but imperfect and sinful men and women and He seems to choose those who are so unlikely that the power may clearly be of God and not of us.

I mean, just look at history. He chose Noah to be the father of the new humanity after the Flood. But soon after God had delivered Noah and his family from the Flood that came about as a divine judgment on sin, Noah became drunk and acted grossly and indecently. And then there was Abraham. God chose Abraham to be the father of Israel, to be the father of the race of people through whom the Redeemer would come and to whom the Word of God would be revealed. God chose Abraham to be the father of the faithful, but it was Abraham who doubted God, lied about His wife, committed adultery with her maid and brought conflict into the world which is still going on. You can read about it in every newspaper every day in the Middle East.

The son of promise was born to the family, his name was Isaac. Isaac was another flawed individual who told a similar lie about his wife he had learned from his father, I suppose. And then out of Isaac came Jacob and Jacob took advantage of his brother Esau's weakness, extorted the birthright from him. And then God chose a man through whom...or to whom He would reveal His law and through him to the people of God. The man's name was Moses and Moses was a murderer. And Moses was very proud. In fact, in an act of pride he struck the rock and the water came forth when God told him to speak to the rock. He was garnering for himself some prestige, rather than speaking as God had told him and letting the people know it was God who opened the rock and brought the water.

Then there was his brother Aaron whom God selected to be the first high priest. And it was Aaron who led the people of Israel into erecting a golden calf and idolatrous worship and attendant sin was going on so that Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the law of God and smashed the law in an act of anger against what his brother had generated down below. Moses was replaced as a leader by Joshua. Joshua disobeyed the Lord by making a treaty with the Gibeonites instead of destroying them which God had told him. Then even Gideon had so little confidence in himself and even less in God's plan and God's power and yet he's known as a great leader. And then there was Samson who

was a hero by almost every measure in the Old Testament and yet Samson was repeatedly beguiled by Delilah by his great lust for her to the degree that he was blinded.

David, the writer of the sweet songs of Israel, committed adultery and murder, was an almost total failure as a father. Was never allowed to build the temple of God because he was a man of blood. And then there was Elijah, the great prophet, some say the greatest prophet, who foolishly stood before Ahab and fifty false prophets of Baal, invincible but coward before one woman, Jezebel. Then there was Ezekiel who was brash and crusty and quick to speak his mind. And then there was Jonah, that reluctant prophet who defied God's call to preach to the Ninevites. And when he finally preached and they all repented, he was mad at God.

Then there was the Apostle Paul in the New Testament who even at the end of his life said he was the chief of sinners. And then there was Peter who will be our subject this morning, the leader of the Twelve who was so strongly influenced by Satan that Jesus called him Satan. And it was Peter who denied Jesus in the most blatant and outrageous denial recorded in the New Testament.

But so it is in the Kingdom. Do you feel at home there? This is how it is in the Kingdom. These are only humans. And like all the rest of us, they have all of the elements of fallenness. Apart from the brief history of the Son of God on earth, God has only worked through unworthy and incapable sinners.

To bring that all down to one particularly interesting individual, John the Baptist. Jesus said in Matthew 11:11 that John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived. But as a peak, he rose above all the towering peaks that I've just recorded for you in the Old Testament. The greatest man who ever lived was John the Baptist. No money, no political power, no social status, no religious position, no wardrobe, no house, he wandered around in the deserts like a homeless nomad, clothed in camel skin eating locusts and wild honey. And Jesus said he was the greatest man who ever lived.

The Bible doesn't say anything about his intellect. It doesn't say anything about his methodology. It doesn't say anything about his techniques. He was the greatest man who ever lived simply because he was given the greatest ministry that any man ever had, and that was to announce the arrival of Messiah.

You see, the definition of greatness has to do with the message that one proclaims. The greatest man would be the one who proclaimed the greatest message. It has little to do with the man and everything to do with his message. It has little to do with the man's ability and talents, and everything to do with the way God used him. It was the way God used Noah that made him great. It was the way God used Abraham that made him great, and Isaac and Jacob. It was the way God used Moses and Aaron that made them great. It was the way God used Joshua, Gideon and Samson and David and Elijah and Ezekiel and Jonah and Paul and Peter and most of the Apostles. It was the way God

used them that made them remarkable men remembered in history. It isn't the man himself, it is the way God uses the man.

And the New Testament, just as a footnote, doesn't teach Christian leaders to follow the methods or the styles of the Apostles. It doesn't say that. It doesn't even give any details about their strategies for evangelism, or for other kinds of ministries. As would be true of all those that God uses through the Scriptures is also true of the Apostles, the issue is never methodology, the issue is never strategy, the issue is always power--power and the power always comes from the Lord.

What made the Apostles powerful is the same thing that made the rest of those heroes of faith powerful, all of those that would be listed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. What made them all heroes, what made them all memorable, what made them the peaks, as it were, of redemptive history was not what they were in themselves but what God made them into. And it comes down to two things...they had tremendous spiritual power, and they were the agents of the truth. And that is essentially what ministry is all about. It's all about divine truth empowered by the Spirit. It's all about the Word and the Spirit for us. It's all about the Word of God, the Bible, Spirit empowered through the agent, the instrument.

Emphasizing methods, emphasizing technique, emphasizing strategy in the books are ad infinitum, ad nauseam on that in the Christian bookstores. Emphasizing all of that inevitably weakens the church. You can see books on how to strengthen your church, they will immediately weaken it. Discussions of methods and strategies and practices of famous and visible pastors and Christian leaders inevitably weakens the church and at no time in history has this misguided emphasis been more dominant than it is in the church today. Consequently the church is as weak as its ever been. When the methods of men are elevated, the Word of God is diminished. When the power of men is elevated, the power of Christ is lowered. And when men and their technique become the patterns to follow, the church is weakened, the work of Christ is hindered severely. It is when men are nothing that Christ is everything. It is when men have no strategy and no method that the truth prevails. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, he rejoiced in his weaknesses because in his own weakness, Christ's strength was effective. The Lord always seemed to be content to choose the weakest and the lowliest because they would be the most disposable to Him so that His power and His truth would prevail.

So when we look at the Twelve here in the sixth chapter of Luke, we meet twelve very common men...very common men, with no political stature, no economic stature. The only one who had money probably was Matthew and he had gained it by extortion through his tax collecting franchise with Rome. The rest of them are very common men, very common. In fact we don't know very much about them at all. But we do know this, none of them was a Pharisee, none of them was a Sadducee, none of them was a priest, a chief priest, a scribe. They had no religious stature whatsoever. They were very common men.

They were not prominent in society. They were not prominent in religion. They were not prominent in politics. They were not prominent in education. We know amazingly little about them and it's really not important. We don't have any sort of curriculum vita on the Twelve. We don't have any kind of stuff about where they were born and how they were trained and where they were educated and where they worked and their employment record and what qualifies them to this job. We don't have any of that information whatsoever because qualifying for this job was pretty simple. You just needed to be a person who was available to speak the truth of God in the power of the Spirit of God. The truth is in the...the power, I should say, is in the truth and in the Spirit.

So here's a common collection of men. And yet there never was a group so critical to the history of the world as these twelve. I mean, they're going to carry the gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the ends of the earth. They're critical to the purposes of God, critical to the extension of gospel truth. And they served their purpose very well. So well that in the millennial Kingdom, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth to come in the future, it says they will reign on twelve thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel. They're going to go from being commoners to being, as it were, kings in the millennial kingdom when they reign over the tribes of Israel. And beyond that, they are memorialized eternally because in the new Jerusalem, the capital city of the eternal heavens, there are twelve gates and at the foot of each gate is a foundation stone and engraved in those twelve foundation stones of the twelve gates of the holy city are the twelve names of the Apostles. And yet to start with, they were the commonest of common people to illustrate how God uses common people for uncommon callings.

Now as common as any of them was a man named Simon. Let's look at Simon again. He's the first one. And we're taking a little longer with him because he really is the most dominant in the Twelve and in the New Testament. And so we're going to spend a little bit of time getting to know him.

Verse 14, "Simon, whom He also named Peter." Simon, a very common name. There's another man named Simon listed at the bottom of verse 15 who was a Zealot and we'll say more about him when we get there. But this Simon Jesus also named Peter so he had two names. And I told you last time, that gave Jesus immediate access into his heart. He called him Simon when he was acting like his old self. He called him Peter when he was acting like the way the Lord wanted him to act. Peter is the word petrosin the Greek and it means rock. Jesus named him rock. He was Rock Bar-Jona, son of John, son of Jonah, son of Jonas, you can transliterate that a number of ways.

He was a fisherman from the Sea of Galilee who was born in the village of Bethsaida along with his brother Andrew, Andrew Bar-Jona, they were brothers. They grew up in the fishing business. They moved eventually to Capernaum which was the major city on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus had called him to follow Him sometime before this, along with calling Andrew and along with calling others. Jesus was gathering disciples. Some came at their own will, some He called to follow Him. And Jesus gave him a name that Jesus could use to help him grow and develop into the man He wanted him to be. As Simon he was brash and bold and mouthy and vacillating and weak and shifting. And that was no good for the leadership responsibility the Lord wanted him to have. So He wanted him to be firm and strong and resolute and unbending and unwavering and He needed to sort of move him in that direction so He gave him a name that might work as a sort of a subliminal reminder of what he should be, named him rock, even though at the beginning he wasn't. At the middle of his training he wasn't. And frankly, at the end of his training he wasn't. But eventually he became a rock. He needed to be rock and so Jesus named him Rock.

When Jesus called him Simon, He was usually speaking to him in a sinful situation. When he was sinful, when he was acting like his old self, He called him Simon. When he was doing what he ought to have done, when he was doing the right thing, or in process toward the right thing, Jesus called him Peter, Rock. So his name became a way in which the Lord could manage his attitudes.

Now some of you asked me about a couple of passages in the Scripture where when Peter was obviously in a sinful situation he is called Peter and you asked me...is that inconsistent? Keep this in mind, there are too many of them to cover, I'm not saying he was called Simon when he was sinful and Peter when he was obedient by the Bible writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But by Jesus...Jesus used those words to make those identifications. There are times when the Bible writer say Matthew, for example, calls him Peter in Matthew 16 when Jesus calls him Satan. Mark calls him Peter again when Jesus calls him Satan. So what Mark calls him, what Matthew calls him, what Luke calls him, what John calls him is not consistent with that pattern. But when Jesus spoke to him and called him Simon, there was a sin issue, and called him Peter, there was a time of obedience or a process of obedience. And so, Jesus is moving him to become what his name implies, a rock.

Now Peter, according to Matthew chapter 10, was the leader, the protos, the chief one. Every group has to have a leader. Remember I told you there were three groups of four disciples...group one, group two, and group three and all four lists are always the same. And each has its own leader. But the leader at the top, the first name all the time is Peter because the group of Twelve had to have a leader and their leader was this man Peter. He is the main preacher, really the only preacher among the Apostles in the first twelve chapters. He is the one who proclaims and preaches. His sermons are recorded in the first twelve chapters of Acts. He is the great preacher among the Apostles. He was the dominating one, the leader.

So, the Lord took this man, vacillating, brash, bold, impulsive, self-confident, at the same time weak, and He shaped him into this great leader. This was the Lord's task, this was His goal...take a common man, make him the great foundation of the church, the great apostolic leader of the church. This is incredible work of transformation. And in looking at Peter, because he's the leader among the

Twelve, we find out how God makes a leader...how God builds a leader. This is very, very insightful material in Scripture on him. This is how God builds a leader.

The last time I told you there were three necessary components, or elements, or features within a leader. One is the right raw material. Remember that? Two, the right experience. And three, the right character or virtue. I believe leaders are born. I don't think you can take somebody and make them into a leader, unless they have the right raw material. I think the Lord has to weave that in the fabric of their being, that's genetic stuff. Leaders are born, to a degree. But after having been born with the material, they have to be shaped and what shapes them is essentially two things. One is experience, experience. And two is character development. And they go together, we'll show you that.

Last time we looked at the raw material. Long before Peter was ever born, way back in the councils of eternity, God had determined that the whole redemptive plan was going to come to pass, that the Lord would come to earth and be incarnate, that He would have Apostles, their names were well-known to God, they were written down. And Peter was planned into the program. And so whatever genetics had to be done to get Peter the raw material, it was there. Peter had all that leadership raw material. And I said essentially it boils down to three things, inquisitiveness, initiative and involvement. Leaders are inquisitive. They have an immense curiosity because leaders, if you want another definition of a leader, a leader is a problem solver. Leaders solve problems and the way you solve problems is with further information. And so, leaders are marked by inquisitiveness, curiosity.

Secondly, they have initiative. Not just curious, not just solving problems, but they take the initiative in leading the surge, or leading the thrust into the next great adventure.

They also have involvement. They don't lead from a distance. They aren't in the back, they're in the front. They live their lives in a cloud of dust. That was Peter...inquisitive, initiating constantly, and we see that all through the New Testament, as we pointed out last time, and very, very involved. And therein is the right raw material. When you look for a leader, that's what you look for, somebody who is involved, somebody who is inquisitive, and somebody who has initiative, who comes and says...this is the problem, I think I've figured out how to solve it, this is what I'm going to do.

I've said this for years. I don't need people in leadership positions who come and say, "I think we have a problem." I need somebody to come and say, "We had a problem, this is how I solved it." That's leadership. And you get involved in that if you have that right raw material.

All right, let's look secondly at the right experiences. This in itself is a tremendous, tremendous study. The Lord takes the right raw material and obviously it's raw material, very raw and it has to be refined. And the Lord is going to refine it by shaping his life through experiences, critical experiences that Peter needed to have for Peter to become the man he needed to be. Leaders are born with the raw

material, but shaped by experience, shaped by experience.

Peter faced many dramatic, earth-shattering, life-changing experiences. Let me break them into some little categories, little outline. Peter was going to be given a tremendous responsibility to proclaim the gospel. Jesus--die, rise again, 40 days later go back to heaven and the whole future of the gospel is in the hands of the Twelve and predominantly in the hands of Peter who was the leading preacher. He's going to have this tremendous immense responsibility. It's going to take dedication. It's going to take resolution. It's going to take endurance. It's going to take clarity of thought, self-discipline. It's going to take a tremendous work ethic to do this and to keep doing it against all hostility and odds, right on down to death. It's going to take a lot to do what Peter's going to be asked to do, and the rest as well. So the Lord has to put him through experiences that shape and mold the man.

First experience that I want you to notice is in John 6...in John 6. This is...and there's a lot that can be said about John 6 because it is a critical chapter in the ministry of Jesus, but it starts out with the feeding of what we know as the five thousand...five thousand men, probably another ten thousand women and children, at the least...maybe twenty thousand. It's hard to know but perhaps 20-25 thousand people in that feeding, a huge crowd. He feeds them, He makes the little boy's lunch of loaves and fish multiply and feed the whole crowd and have enough left to feed the Apostles as well. And after that He teaches them...this is bread that perishes, this is physical food, but I'm the bread of life. You eat this bread, you never hunger again. And He turns the whole thing toward Himself and He's talking about you have to eat My flesh and drink My blood. And what He means by that is you have to take Me in totally, you have to receive Me totally if you want to have eternal life.

Well, some of the people who were following Him weren't ready for that. They weren't ready to buy into Him totally and completely. And so down in verse 66 we read this, "As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew, were not walking with Him anymore." He had a split in His congregation. The message got too serious, it got too complete, too demanding, too exacting, too singular and they said, "We're not interested in that," and they were gone. No more. Jesus said therefore to the Twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Or you could word it, "Do you also want to go away? Are you ready to leave Me because of the stringency of what I've said, because of the demands of what I've said, because of the total commitment that I've asked for, do you want to leave?"

"Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go, you have words of eternal life and we have believed and come to know that You are the holy one of God.'" Wow! What an incredible statement. "You...where we going to go? Where are we going to go? You alone have the words of eternal life and we already believe in You and we know that You are the holy one of God." What a statement. It's my own feeling that Peter probably when he said that grabbed his mouth and said, "Where did that come from?" I mean, that is a profound theological crystallogical statement. Whoa... That was a revelatory experience and that's the first experience, his great revelation...his great revelation.

You know what the Lord wanted Peter to know? That he was going to get his message from God. That he was going to get his message from God. He wasn't going to have to think it up, dream it up, scheme it up, make it up. He's going to have material provided for him, revelation from God. In Matthew 16 Jesus asked the disciples in verse 15, "Who do you say that I am?" And immediately in verse 16 what does Peter say, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And I'm sure he had the same experience. Whoooo, where did that come from? Whoa... "And Jesus said to him, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed that to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"

See, at the outset of his training Peter needed to know that he would be given a divine message. You see, that's essentially what ministry is. We just pass on a divine message. We don't think this stuff up and if you do, you've prostituted your calling.

Peter needed to know that he could do this, that he could go out and do this job of preaching. Being an Apostle is really being one sent to preach. You can do it, Peter. Peter might have said, "I'm not educated, I'm not trained, I haven't been to school, I haven't been to seminary, I don't very much."

"Don't worry about it, you're going to get it from God." His great revelation. What an incredible promise.

God wants to use your mouth, Peter. And God can speak through you. And so the Lord gave him the experience of revelation. And then that great day came when he stood up on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, the Day of Pentecost, starting in verse 14, I think, clear to verse 40, he preaches that great message on the Day of Pentecost, three thousand people are converted. He preaches again and thousands more and thousands more and thousands more are converted through those opening chapters of Acts. He didn't have to worry about what he was going to say.

Some people say that the greatest fear that some people have is the fear of public speaking. I'll tell you why it's especially fearful because you don't know what you're going to say. I don't have that fear because I don't have to make up the message. And I can preach it with authority because it comes from God. I don't get it into my brain the way Peter did, I get it from the pages of Scripture because what came to Peter and the rest of the Apostles is now written down here.

Peter needed to know that if he was going to be a leader and he's going to represent Jesus Christ, that he's going to preach the gospel of the Kingdom and all of this kind of thing, there was a natural fear built in... "Well...I don't...I'm a fisherman, what are You going to do with me? I can give a few fishing illustrations and then I'm done."

You don't have to worry about it. You're going to get revelation. Now this is noble stuff, I mean, what an amazing calling, take this common, blustering fisherman and put the revelation of God in him. And

he did and he preached it and he wrote it when he wrote First Peter and Second Peter and most likely assisted Mark with the material in his gospel.

Second, back to Matthew 16 again, his great reward. This too is pretty astounding stuff. This is a very common fisherman now. This isn't some high priest. This isn't some Pharisee, some scholar, some great rabbi in Israel. Very common man, but I want you to notice this, Matthew 16:18, "I also say to you, you are rock, you're rock, petros, rock, and on this rock I will build My church." A little play on words here. You are rock, petros, on this rock, petra, different word, I'll build My church. You are rock but on this rock I'll build My church.

What's the difference? Peter is a stone, but this rock, petra means rock bed, it means a massive bedrock. You're a stone, but on this bedrock I'll build My church, the bedrock of...what?...I think it's Peter's confession in verse 16, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," that's the bedrock of the church, isn't it? The church is built on Christ as the Son of the living God. And that the Father has revealed to you, and it's that bedrock truth that you've articulated on which I'm going to build My church. You're a stone and you're going to be a firm and strong stone and I'm glad for that, but it's on the confession that you've just made I'm going to build My church.

And then He says, "And the gates of Hades shall not overpower it and I'll give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven and you're going to bind and you're going to loose." This is incredible. Listen to what the Lord is...this is his great reward. His first lesson was about his great revelation, then his great reward. This common, plain, ole fisherman with no training and no stature and no status is told here the message that came out of your mouth when you preached that message is going to bar the gates to hell and open the gates to heaven.

Do you think...do you think you know what being important means? That's important. People talk about ministry being the highest calling. Why? Because the truth of Jesus Christ shuts the gates of hell and opens the doors to heaven, doesn't it? Can a man have a greater influence than that? Who has influence? What is real influence? Nobody who doesn't preach the gospel has any eternal influence.

Here's an incredible thing the Lord says to Peter. "Peter, through the message that you're going to preach as a stone, the gates of hell are going to be barred in the sense they're not going to prevail, and the doors of heaven are going to be flung open through you. This is your great reward."

I mean, it must have been satisfying to pull in a pile of fish, but that sure pales compared to this. And Peter did unlock the doors to heaven for the Jews. On the Day of Pentecost he preached that great sermon, three thousand Jews believed and thousands more and thousands more and thousands more in the next couple of chapters under his preaching. And then in chapter 10 he preached to the first Gentile, what was his name? Cornelius, and he believed. He threw open the gates of heaven,

he opened the Kingdom to the Jews and he opened the Kingdom to the Gentiles. This plain, common man, it had nothing to do with his technique, it had nothing to do with his education, it had to do with the power of the Spirit of God and the truth.

While you're there in Matthew 16, this is his great remission, or transgression, if you will. So amazing, boy, I think Peter was feeling pretty good after this. "I have the keys to the Kingdom." Pretty exciting stuff.

Go down to verse 21, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, scribes, be killed and raised up on the third day." Huh? This isn't the plan...nah, this isn't the plan, not in the minds of the disciples, any way. "Hey, the Messiah's here and it's just going to get better and better. He's going to knock off the Romans and He's going to purge the people and we're going to have the Kingdom and all of that. And what Jesus is talking about, that's not going to happen."

The apostate form of Judaism is going to collect itself, the elders, the chief priests, the scribes are going to come and they're going to kill Me and I'm going to rise from the dead on the third day. What is Peter's response? Verse 22, "Peter took Him aside, 'Lord, can I talk to You for a minute?'" He didn't want to discredit Him publicly. "Just come over here, you know, behind the tent. Bad idea. No. Can't let it happen, Lord, sorry, and I'm the leader. Can't let it happen. Sorry. God forbid, it's not going to happen. It will never happen to You, I wouldn't allow it." You give a guy a little bit of leadership and it goes to his head, doesn't it? I mean, he's talking to the creator of the universe. He's talking to the Messiah, the redeemer, the Savior, God in flesh.

Unbelievable. It's a real danger in leadership, you don't know where your limits are. You get the feeling you're a bit invincible. And then you wind up overstepping your bounds. You're never going to lead effectively with God till you understand that your plan doesn't matter, His alone matters. God doesn't want your strategy, your better plan. Peter says, "As long as I'm in charge, nothing is going to happen to You, I'll promise you that, read my lips, it will never happen."

You just don't know your boundaries, do you, Peter? You don't have a better plan than God. How can people go into the ministry and think they do? Just do the plan and this is the plan. Well the answer that Peter got must have rung in his ears until he died. "He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me...what?...Satan.'" Pow! See, Peter was just as available to Satan as he was to the Lord. We all are, aren't we? Don't ever estimate your abilities, he was just as available to the devil as he was to God. The greater your potential to be used by God, the greater your potential to be used by the devil. "Don't want your plan, Peter. Just want you to follow Mine. If you try to thwart My plan, then you're on the devil's side."

He said further, "You are a stumbling block to Me, for you're not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." That's the whole point. You're looking at this thing from the human viewpoint. "Oh, you've got a better plan, do you? That's the human view, you are hindering My work. And the great hinderer of My work is Satan, so get thee behind Me, Satan." Brash self-confidence. He had to really be knocked down some notches, hadn't he? Go revelation, Peter, God's going to speak through you, you're going to speak the Word of God, you won't have to worry about the material, it's going to be divine revelation. Great reward, you're going to have so much power that you're going to be able to bar the gates of hell, as it were, to defeat the gates of hell and throw open the doors of heaven. This is going to be the influence of your preaching and your life, it's going to be powerful in the truth and in the Spirit.

Peter starts to feel good about that and then oversteps his bounds and the Lord has to cut his legs out from under him and saying, there's something you've got to watch for, you're just as likely to be used by the devil as you are by Me. This ought to put fear in his heart.

But that apparently wasn't enough. There's a fourth experience that came into his life. Turn to Matthew 26, we'll call this his great rejection...not the Lord's rejection of him, but his rejection of the Lord. Twenty-six, thirty-one, this is on the night of the Passover, the night of the betrayal of Jesus. They sang a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Verse 30, 31, "Jesus said to them, 'You'll all fall away because of Me this night, for it's written I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep and the flocks will be scattered,'" that's a prophecy from Zechariah, that when the Messiah was taken captive, all the disciples would flee. And He says, "You're all going to fall away, you're going to be run, scared to death and you'll come back and I'll lead you to Galilee," in verse 32.

Verse 33, "But Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.'" I'm not like all men. I'm a cut above the rest. I don't know about these other eleven, I wouldn't do that. Never would I do that. Jesus said, "Yes you will, I'm telling you right now, this very night you'll do it. You'll do it before the cock crows and you'll do it three times. You'll deny Me."

Peter said to Him, "Wrong again, Lord. Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You, and all the disciples said the same thing, too." Do you think he was the leader? Sure, they all quacked right after him the same way. I would do it, great confidence.

You know, overestimating your spiritual strength is deadly. The Lord says, "No, Peter, you've got to learn not to trust yourself. I've already tried to teach you that your plans don't supersede Mine, don't offer Me your plans, follow Mine. You've got to stick with My plans. Don't trust your plans. Now I'm going to have to teach you, don't trust your resolutions, don't trust your own strength. You will deny Me and you'll do it on three occasions." And Peter says, "No." He denies that he will deny. "I'll die first," he says, "I'll die first."

Go over to verse 69. Jesus was in the area being tried in a mock trial before Annas and Caiaphas and there was a courtyard in that area of the high priest's home. And Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a certain servant girl, this isn't some tribunal, these aren't people who have come to arrest Him, it's just a girl and she said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." She recognizes him. "He denied it before them all saying, 'I do not know what you're talking about.'" That's sad. And so he slipped away to the gate. Another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And he again denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them for the way you talk gives you away." He had that funny Galilean accent. This is really sad, verse 74, "Then he began to curse and swear, 'Oh come on, I don't even know the man.'" And immediately a cock crowed and Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and he wept bitterly.

He should have, shouldn't he? Did the Lord let this happen? Sure. Did the Lord make this happen? No. Why did He let it happen? Because no man is ultimately useful to the Lord until he has absolutely no trust in himself. He rose to the highest pinnacle of his own self-confidence...I will never deny You, I will die first, everybody else may deny You, I will never deny You. And that very night, that's exactly what he did repeatedly, repeatedly, over and over and over again...so much for self-confidence.

This is called the breaking of the man. This is the crushing of Peter. And no man ultimately is useful to God until he has been so crushed. Peter's failure was necessary.

Now before you're too hard on Peter, at least Peter was hanging around the trial. At least he had the courage to be there. But the Lord allowed for Peter to be in that position because this crushing of Peter's self-confidence was critical. He was a broken man at this point, he was never the same after this. He wasn't the bold, self-confident, brash man anymore. This crushed...and that's absolutely critical, his great rejection was part of the experience the Lord used to shape him. The Lord needed a man who received revelation. The Lord needed a man who by the message he preached could bar the gates of hell and throw open the gates of heaven. The Lord needed a man who recognized his own sinfulness but the Lord also needed a man who was crushed and had absolutely no trust in his self-confidence.

You have to get to that point in ministry where you literally don't trust yourself, your ideas, your thoughts and you lean hard and heavy on the Lord. You had to have a man that followed the plan, His plan, not Peter's plan, and He had to have a man who had no confidence in his flesh.

Paul was useful because he thought he was the chief of...what?...sinners. So it made him so useful. Peter never got over this. Blatant, "I will never deny you, Everybody may deny you, I'm not like

everybody else, I'll never do it. I'll die before I do it." And he went right out and did it and he made this bold, brash claim in front of everybody.

I think he spent the rest of his life kind of a sheepish broken guy who probably said, "I only know what the Lord tells me, I can only function in the power of the Lord, I can only do the plan as God has laid it out." He was broken.

You know, at this point you could understand if the Lord said, "You know, I've had enough of this guy, I'm knocking him off the top and bumping up John one notch. Really, this is getting old, Peter." But that wasn't the Lord. Go to John 21, here's his great recommissioning, last chapter in John. His great recommissioning, Jesus says to the disciples, prior to this, "Go to Galilee," He has died, risen again, the Lord is alive now from the grave, 40 days and He's meeting with the disciples and speaking to them of things pertaining to the Kingdom. But He sends them to Galilee. He says, "Go up there and wait for Me."

So they're up there in Galilee and they're just hanging around waiting for the risen Lord to come. Simon Peter's there, verse 2, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, Philip and Andrew. Peter says, "I'm going fishing." What is this? It's not recreational. "I'm going back to my fishing," that's the intent of the Greek. You know, I think he's a broken man, I think he's saying, "I can't do this." I don't think he's the brash man that he always was, I think he's...I've got to go fishing. But he's the leader so they all said, "We will also come with you." He's the leader and they follow, they all go fishing.

They got in the boat, probably his own boat, but they couldn't catch fish anymore cause the Lord wouldn't let them. I don't think Peter had any confidence in himself anymore. I mean, he just probably thought, "I'm not up to this, I'm just going back to my old life."

They had breakfast. Verse 15 picks up the story. Jesus showed up, you remember, confronted them. They had breakfast. Jesus says to Peter...He could have said, "Peter, you know, you're just absolutely hopeless. I tell you to come up here and do nothing and you can't even do that. I tell you to just come up here and wait and you can't do that." He doesn't, He says, "Peter...Simon, actually, verse 15, son of Jonah, calls him by his old name cause he's acting like his old self. Do you love Me more than these? More than these other disciples that you said you loved Me more than and you wouldn't ever deny Me even though all of them did, or maybe He meant more than these nets and these boats and all the stuff that goes with fishing, do you love Me more than these? 'Yes, Lord, You know I love you,' he said to Him. 'Feed, or tend My lambs.'" This is commissioning, this is the ordination of Peter right here and it's really wonderful because the Lord had every reason to give up on him, and He said to him a second time...why do you think He does this three times? Because there were how many denials? Three. He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love you." He said, "Then shepherd My sheep. Do what I told you. Shepherd My sheep, tend My lambs."

He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John," continue to call him by his old name, "do you love Me?" And this time Peter was grieved because he said to Him the third time do you love Me, he's getting tired of answering the same question because it indicates a certain amount of doubt on the Lord's part. And he says, "Look, Lord, what can I tell You? You know everything, You know I love You. Look at my heart." Jesus said, "Tend My sheep. Do what I told you, Peter." This is a recommissioning of a man who from all intents and purposes was once too strong for ministry and is now self-proclaimed too weak for ministry, but because he's too weak for ministry, he's exactly what the Lord wants. When he was strong, he was useless. Now that he's crushed, he's useful. So the Lord picks him up to use him. But he's still Peter.

He says to him in verse 18, "Okay, Peter, I'm telling you, when you were young you used to gird yourself and walk where you wished." This is sort of a little characterization of Peter. You know, you used to do whatever you wanted. Put your clothes on, go where you want, do your own thing, that was you. "But the day is coming, you're going to grow old, you're going to stretch out your hands," that's an expression referring to crucifixion, "and somebody is going to tie you up and take you where you don't want to go." He said this, John writes, "Signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God." He told him he was going to die, he was going to stretch his hands, be crucified. Jesus told him that.

Peter...you know what He was telling Peter. "Peter, you are going to be faithful, you are going to be faithful to the very end, you're going to go all the way down to the end and you're going to be crucified, you're going to be faithful to the end, Peter, I'm telling you, you can do this. You can tend My lambs, you can shepherd My sheep, you can feed My sheep, you can do this and you will do it all the way to a martyr's death, Peter. You are finally become the man that I wanted you to be because you're a man who doesn't have any confidence in himself."

And then He says at the end of verse 19, "Just the kind of man I want, follow Me." He's where Paul was in 2 Corinthians 12, when he's weak, he's strong. "Follow Me." Triumphant moment, well kind of, you have to know Peter. Peter takes about two steps and turns around. He sees the disciple whom Jesus loved, that's John, he'd rather call himself that than John, following Him, the one who leaned back on His breast at the supper. John, calling himself by those words, and the one who said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" John's referring to himself in that verse. Peter sees John, says to Jesus. "Lord, what about this guy? Well You just told me I'm going to be killed, what about him?"

Oh Peter, you are just relentless. You can't seem to go in one direction for any length of...he takes a couple of...I know...I know, what's going to happen to him? Jesus said to him, this is really humorous, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow Me." What He's saying is, if he lives till the Second Coming, it's none of your business. And so a ridiculous rumor went around, verse 23

says, that John would live to the Second Coming, which wasn't true.

This is Peter. The Lord's taking him through his ordination and his recommissioning and he's broken and crushed and the last shattering experience, caught in another act of disobedience, he's fishing, he's gone back to his old life because he's a broken man, doesn't feel he's capable. But the Lord restores him. He takes a couple of steps and he already gets off track. And the Lord says...I'm sure in exasperation...what does it matter to you if he lives till the Second Coming, just follow Me?

And he did, you know. He did. He became the man the Lord wanted him to be. Look at 2 Peter 1, just brief look, 2 Peter 1 verse 12, Peter writing says, "I always shall be ready to remind you of these things, the things concerning the gospel, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you, I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me, and I will also be diligent that at any time after my death or departure you may be able to call these things to mind."

Peter says...I'm going to give you the truth and give you the truth, even though you know it. I'm going to keep giving it to you because I'm going to die and my death is very near because Jesus told me I was going to die...back in John 21...but until I die I'm going to tell you the truth and tell you the truth so that after I'm gone you'll always remember it.

He became the man the Lord wanted him to be. He was the leader of the church in the first twelve chapters of Acts. He was the one who moved to replace Judas with Matthias. He was the spokesman for the church on the Day of Pentecost. He with John healed the lame man at the temple. He defied the Sanhedrin. He dealt with the problem of Simon, satanic false healer in Samaria. He dealt with the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. He healed Aeneas and raised Dorcas from the dead. He took the gospel to the Gentiles. And he wrote two epistles, 1 and 2 Peter. He was the leader God wanted him to be.

He became the leader because there was the right raw material God planted in him naturally and in the right experiences by which God shaped that raw material to make him into the man God wanted him to be. His great revelation, his great reward, his great remission, his great rejection, his great recommissioning all led to the great realization that Peter became Rock Bar-Jona...or better, Rock Bar-Christ...or, Rock was the son of the Lord Himself.

Now to make a leader, there's one other element. You not only have to be broken and crushed, and no where your power comes from and where your message comes from but you have to have the right character. I'm going to take you back through the life of Peter with another sweep and show you how the Lord developed the right character, the right virtues. We'll do that next time. And then we'll have the leader, and the rest we'll take less time with.

It's so encouraging and instructive for us, Lord, to see this man among so many through the history of redemption that You've used so mightily and to understand his humanness and his weakness and his frailty and yet to know how profoundly and mightily You used him and still use him through the example of his life and testimony on the pages of the gospels, the book of Acts and through his own epistles. We thank You for the confidence and that what You're looking for are those people who understand that their usefulness comes through divine power, divine truth, human brokenness, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-trust, being crushed with one's own weakness and sinfulness, total yielding to Your plan and not ours. May You raise up many such leaders to the glory of Your name and the advancement of Your church, we pray. Amen.

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