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

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: Peter, Part 3
Scripture: Luke 6:14
Code: 42-74

Well, I confess to you that this morning we're going to get some of the crumbs that fall of the table with regard to a study that we've really done the last couple of weeks and we just had a little bit left over. But I think we'll be thrilled with what the Lord provides for us.

Let's open our Bibles to the sixth chapter of Luke. In the sixth chapter of Luke we are introduced to the twelve Apostles. It is here that Luke records for us Jesus selecting twelve out of all of the followers that He had. There were some of His followers that He Himself had called. There were some who just voluntarily attached themselves to Him so that it would be reasonable to assume there were hundreds of people following Him. And out of the large group of disciples, that is learners, the word mathetes means learners, He selected twelve to be Apostles. It tells us in Luke 6:12 He spent the whole night in prayer up in the mountain concerning Himself with this selection. The next day He called His disciples to Him, the whole group, and chose twelve among them to name as Apostles. To be an Apostle is to be a sent messenger. He had a large group of followers, a large group of learners, a large group of students, but He chose twelve to become the preachers who would carry the gospel through Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost ends of the earth.

And so, here we are in the sixth chapter of Luke at the time when the Lord Jesus begins the internship of the Twelve. It's interesting, I think, to note though we are only in chapter six of Luke's record of the life of Jesus, we are in the thirty-first year of Jesus' life. Only less than two years remain in His life to fill up the rest of this very long gospel record...24 chapters, some of them with many, many verses, long chapters. In fact, we have covered 31 years in rapid, rapid succession, looking at His birth and then you have nearly twelve years of silence, one incident at the age of twelve, then 18 years of silence and then the beginning of His ministry about the age of 30. But here in chapter 6 something a little less than two years left before His death, that two years will take up the rest of this gospel. We'll be looking not at the decades in the life of Jesus passing by rapidly, we'll be looking at months and weeks and days and hours and even moments as we look deeper into the detail of the remaining life of Jesus on the earth.

With just that little time left, it's really time now to choose successors who will carry the gospel ministry after the Lord is gone. And so here we meet them in verses 14 through 16. "Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and James and John and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon," distinguished from the earlier Simon by being called, "the Zealot, Judas...another common name...the son of James, distinguished

from Judas Iscariot," so called because he was from the town of Iscariot and to distinguish him from the other Judas...this Judas became a traitor.

There you have the Twelve. They had already believed in Him with the exception of Judas, who at this particular point appeared to believe in Him. Now they had been following Him and now He selects them for special training, as I told you in Mark 3:14 it says, "To be with Him." He pulled them out of the crowd into a 24-hour a day intimate association with Him in which He was mentoring them that they might become the apostles of the gospel who would after His resurrection and ascension go into all the world and proclaim His message. And I've been telling you they were common men. None of them is prominent, none of them is well-known, none of them has any place in history whatsoever, they have no social prominence, they have no religious prominence, they have no economic status, they are the commonest of the common.

Not only are they the commonest of the common, but they were obviously deficient in some pretty vital areas. As we get to know them through the rest of the story of Luke's gospel we will find out that they were deficient in spiritual insight, deficient in spiritual understanding, deficient in humility, deficient in faith, deficient in commitment and deficient in power. The Lord had a tremendous work to do to turn them into apostles who then turned the world upside down.

Now the leader of this group of twelve clearly is a man named Simon whom Jesus also named Peter. He is identified as the first, the protos, the prototype, the leading apostle in Matthew 10:2. It's clear that he's the leader. Four lists of the apostles, Matthew, Mark, Acts and Luke, and always his name is first. He is the leader. But he wasn't the leader the Lord wanted him to be yet and so there is a process that goes on in Peter's life, Simon Peter's life to shape him into the leader the Lord wants him to be. And we've been learning a little bit about that process.

I told you, for the Lord to make him into a leader there had to be three elements brought into our consideration. Number one was the right raw material. If he was going to be a leader, there were certain things that had to be sort of in the fabric of his DNA and his sort of genetic makeup. Leaders are initially born. And then, of course, they have to be properly shaped. There's always been that sort of raging debate about whether a person is what he is or is what she is on the basis of heredity or on the basis of environment. And there are people who weigh in on both sides of that. That heredity is critical in determining what a person's capabilities are and what they become but that heredity plays a very, very...that experience or environment plays a very, very important part certainly is true. The question, I guess, is...what's the percentage? I'm certainly not here to answer that. I am here to tell you, however, that no person will be what they can be in any sense without the appropriate training.

I read a couple of weeks ago an interesting comment. Somebody was doing a study of all of the young people who shoot up their schools and kill other students. A common denominator, according to this report, in each of those young people's case was Ritolin. They were on Ritolin as children.

Which meant that instead of being disciplined, instead of being trained, instead of letting whatever their natural personality was be brought under control, they were drugged into a stupor which suppressed any kind of real demonstration of their sinfulness. That never being dealt with, then they reach a point where you take them off the drugs and that which is inside explodes. Training is absolutely critical for anybody and everybody, and that's just to illustrate the point.

Even leaders, somebody can be born of all the necessary raw material for leadership, and Peter had that, but there had to be something more than that. He had the right raw material, inquisitiveness, initiative, involvement...we mentioned those things...but he also needed the right experiences. And last week we looked at how the Lord brought into his life the necessary environment, the necessary experiences...dragged him through the kind of things in life that shape you. And through a number of experiences, Peter learned absolutely critical lessons for his future leadership.

He learned, for example, through experience that God would speak through him, that he wasn't dependent upon a human message but that he would be given the message from God. He learned through experience that God would use him for supernatural influence. He would be given the keys, as it were, to the Kingdom, and all that means is that his life and message would have such an impact that he would be unlocking the Kingdom of God so that men and women could go in. The greatest possible influence on the planet is to be used by God to open the door to eternal life. He would have that influence. He would also learn by experience that he would be vulnerable to Satan, that Satan could fill his mouth just as soon as the Lord could. And he did. He learned when he tried to tell Jesus not to go to the cross and Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan," that his voice could be used for Satan's purposes if he didn't submit to the will of God. He had to learn that if you don't do the will of God and you don't do what the Lord wants done, then you're part and parcel to the plan of the enemy himself. He also fell victim to Satan at the time of his denial when Satan sifted him. He was vulnerable, he learned that. If he didn't fully submit to the Lord's plan and the Lord's purpose, he could be used by Satan.

He also learned by experience that he was humanly weak and he couldn't trust his own resolve and he couldn't trust his own strength and he couldn't trust his own determination because he had said, you remember, that he wouldn't deny the Lord. If everybody denied the Lord, he wouldn't deny the Lord, he wasn't like everybody else, he would never do that. He would die before he did that. And, of course, he went right out and denied the Lord and he learned how frail his flesh was and how watchful and careful and thoughtful and God-dependent he had to be.

But he also learned that in spite of his tendency toward overstating his strength, in spite of his own real weakness, in spite of his availability to Satan, the Lord wanted to use him. And even after all his foibles and all his failures and all his defections, it was the Lord Himself who met him there in John 21 by the shore of the Sea of Galilee and recommissioned him into the ministry and used him mightily from that point on. As I said last time, God has only such people to use because all of us are like

that. He has only the weak and vulnerable, only those who can be as useful to Satan as they are to God, only those who overestimate their ability and their strength and their character. All He has is the weakest of the weak and so He has to make something out of nothing...and that's what He did with Peter and that's what He does with us.

And so, you have to have the right raw material...we said...and you have to have the right experiences. The third element, you have to have the right character. This is, of course, absolutely critical. The simple truth is this, folks, character does matter. We've had a long dialogue in our country over the last ten years about character, precipitated by a President with no character. That has thrown it in the face of our nation and the world and brought up the discussion about whether character matters. Well it matters in leadership, it matters a lot.

Simply understood, character causes people to respect you and respect causes people to trust you and trust causes people to follow you. Character makes leadership possible. It makes consistent leadership possible. Where you have no character, you can't really be the leader, all you can do is make the other people who have no character feel better about themselves. And that's what we've just lived through...a man called leader who just made bad people feel better about being bad. True leadership in the purest sense has character and character produces respect and respect produces trust and trust produces followers.

If you look at what just makes up natural, just human leadership, you're going to hear words like "trustworthy, respectable, unselfish, humble, consistent, self-disciplined, self-controlled, courageous." And those are virtues that society recognizes belong to real leaders, and certainly they are a reflection of the amagio deo, they are a reflection of the image of God in man for all of those things are attributes of God and Christ. Christ is perfectly trustworthy, perfectly respectable, perfectly unselfish, perfectly humble in His amazing humiliation He demonstrated, that perfectly consistent, perfectly self-disciplined, self-controlled, perfectly courageous and has perfect integrity...that is to say absolute consistency with Himself so that all the truest and purest and highest and noblest attributes of mankind are simply reflections of the attributes of God demonstrated in Christ.

So if one is to be a leader spiritually, then the objective is to bring people to Christ's likeness. In order to bring people to Christ's likeness, that is to manifest the same virtues that characterize Christ, one must therefore set an example for what those virtues are. That's why the standard for leadership in the church is so high, whether you're reading about the standard for an elder or a deacon or any other leader in the church, or whether you're reading in 1 Timothy 6 about the characteristics of a man a God, the standards are high because the goal is high. The spiritual goal of all spiritual leadership is Christ's likeness. If we want to lead people to be like Christ who was trustworthy, respectable, unselfish, humble, loving, self-disciplined, self-controlled, courageous, holy and all of that, if you want to lead people to be like that you have to set the pattern, the example of that like Paul who said, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." And that's why the standard for virtue in leadership is so high

because the goal is that.

And it goes beyond natural leadership. We applaud great natural leadership of character. I was reading a book this week it said, "If you want to know the difference in what's happened in British society, ask yourself how a society goes from having as its hero Winston Churchill to having as its hero Princess Diana." I mean, we applaud human leadership, virtue, character. We're talking about something beyond that. Let me make a contrast for you. Natural leadership is characterized by self-confidence, spiritual leadership is characterized by confidence in God and no confidence in oneself. Really antithetical.

Natural leadership, we look for somebody who knows people. Spiritual leadership, we look for somebody who knows God. Natural leadership, we want somebody who makes his own decisions. Spiritual leadership, we want somebody who seeks to know the will of God. In natural leadership we want somebody who is ambitious, who's driven. In spiritual leadership we want somebody whose only desire in life is that God be glorified. In natural leadership we want somebody who originates his own plans and methods, an original thinker. In spiritual leadership we want somebody who understands the Word of God and obeys it. In natural leadership we want somebody who enjoys commanding others. In spiritual leadership we want somebody who enjoys...fill in the blank...serving others. In natural leadership we want somebody motivated by personal considerations, motivated by success. Spiritual leadership, we want somebody motivated by the love of God. In natural leadership we want somebody who is independent. In spiritual leadership we want somebody who is totally dependent on God.

Quite a difference. So what I'm talking to you here is not natural leadership. To be a leader for the Lord requires some natural raw material. Peter had that but there's a very serious work to do to shape that into spiritual leadership and it comes through experience and it comes through development of character. Character is more critical in spiritual leadership than anywhere. It's critical any way but it's more critical in spiritual leadership because the goal of all spiritual leadership is Christ's likeness and if you're going to move people toward being like Christ you have to pattern for them what that is. As a Christian this is really all you want to live for is to be like Christ, right? And so the leaders of the church must have that as their objective and that must be the standard by which they live their lives.

J.R. Miller wrote, "The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners and refuses to be buried is the character of a man. What a man is survives him, it can never be buried." That is a true sentiment. And I suppose we should be concerned about what people think of you after you're dead, but I'm much more concerned about what they think about you while you're alive. I know that contributes to what they think about you after you're dead, but the issue is not to try to preserve a good reputation after you're dead, the issue is to try to make an impact while you're here. God had plans for Peter. Peter wanted to be used by the Lord but there was an awful lot of work to be done to

make him into the man he needed to be, and that involved the development of right character, the right virtues.

Let's look at just some of them. We don't have time for all of them and I'm going to cut you short on a lot of this but we'll at least cover some ground. Number one, a spiritual leader requires submission...a spiritual leader requires submission. You have to be submissive, that's contrary to the world's definition, a natural leader needs to be dominant, predominant, dominating. In the spiritual realm we need to learn submission because everything we do as spiritual leaders is a submission to God to His Word, His plan, His Spirit, His purpose. Leaders tend to be confident. They tend to be overt. They tend to be eager. They tend to be aggressive. They tend to dominate. And Peter had that in him. He was just fast talking, fast acting. He was the guy, he was the man, he was in charge, he could grab the bull by the horns, right, wrong or indifferent. And Jesus had to teach him the lesson of submission.

He does it in an interesting way, I think. Go to Matthew 17, there are a number of ways in which Peter learned submission but here is quite an interesting one. At the end of the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, we're going to have to move quickly to get through these, verse 24 of Matthew 17, Matthew 17:24, "When they came to Capernaum," that's the headquarters of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, also the hometown of Peter and Andrew, "those who collected the two drachma tax," that's two days work, a substantial tax... "they came to Capernaum," that was Peter's hometown as well as the Lord's hometown, "so they ran into the tax collector and those who collected the two drachma of tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the two drachma tax?'" They're referring to Jesus, "Does your teacher pay the tax?"

"And he said, 'Yes, yeah, He pays it.'" Which I think was a bit of a problem for Peter. "When he came into the house there in Capernaum, Jesus spoke to him first saying, 'What are you thinking, Simon?'" He called him Simon because his thoughts were not good. "What are you thinking, Simon? I know what you're thinking. You just got back from a conversation with the tax guy and what you're thinking is why should I be paying taxes? Why should Jesus be paying taxes? Why should I be paying taxes?"

And so, Jesus picks up on his mental state and says to him, "What do you think, Simon?" Rhetorically He knew exactly what he was thinking because the question indicates He knew what he was thinking. "For whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll tax, from the sons or from strangers? And upon his saying from strangers, Jesus said to him, 'Consequently the sons are exempt.'" But, Verse 27, "Lest we give them offense." We don't want to be offensive. You go down to the sea, the Sea of Galilee, and throw in a hook, take the first fish that comes up and when you open its mouth you'll find a stater, that's four drachmas, enough for both of them. Take that and give it to them for you and Me." Go pay the tax. We shouldn't have to pay this tax, but we need to submit...we need to submit." Peter learned his lesson.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter 2, this is his epistle. You know, it's so much fun to read Peter's epistles with Peter in mind. Don't read the epistle just following the flow of the argument, read the epistle with Peter in your mind because his letters are so much unlike him. The Peter of the gospels can hardly be the Peter of the epistles. The only explanation for that is that a tremendous metamorphosis went on in this man's life. First Peter 2 and verse 11, he admits that the people whom he's writing are aliens and strangers, back in verse 1 of chapter 1 he's writing to aliens...this is believers scattered all over the Roman Empire. You're all strangers, you're all aliens, you don't really belong, strangers and aliens you are. But verse 12, "You have to keep your behavior excellent among the pagans so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers they may on account of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation."

In other words, what you want to do is make sure you live your life so men can't scandalize you and the gospel. They can't really honestly slander you. How do you do that? Verse 13, here it comes, here's Peter, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers in the praise of those who do right." Submit to everybody in authority from the king down to the governor, to everybody who represents him...submit, submit. Pay your tax, do what's right. And we conclude that Peter learned submission. And when you do this, verse 15, "Such is the will of God that by doing right you will silence the ignorant of foolish men," you'll shut the mouths of the critics. You are free men in one sense, verse 16, but don't use that freedom as a covering for evil. Use it as bondslaves of God. You are free. You're free from human laws and human kingdoms in one sense, but don't use that as a way to cover up your greed. You don't want to pay your taxes because you don't want to part with the money. Do what's right to honor God.

Honor all men, verse 17. Love the brotherhood, sure. Fear God, yes. But also honor the king. It even says in verse 18, "Servants are to be submissive to their masters." Hard for a leader naturally dominant, naturally forceful, naturally aggressive, naturally out front, on top, calling the shots to submit himself...that is very hard to do, particularly to government. I can even identify with that. I can tell you how weary it is to deal with zoning issues and sometimes you just want to steamroll the process and say, "I don't think you get the picture here, we're moving, folks." But sometimes you can't and you submit and you know God affects His purposes in that submission.

But a true leader is one who has learned to submit, even to the most likely authority and that is the pagan secular authority. If you can learn to submit there, you can learn to submit to that which is from God.

Second, Peter had to learn restraint. There's an element of leadership that leaders have anger. I don't know if you read anything about leadership, from time to time I read that. One of the big problems among leaders in America today is anger. There is a very, very wide and far-reaching

movement today called "Anger Management." Anger Management, what a whacky phrase that is. But that's what they're doing, going around dealing mostly with CEOs and people in high positions of leadership because they're angry all the time. And what makes them angry is bureaucracies, government intervention, government laws, taxation, OCEA, zoning regulations, human resource problems, political correctness. And leaders tend to be pioneer types, they tend to be...this is my vision, this is my dream and here I go...and they just hit wall after wall after wall after wall with all the complexities of modern life and it generates a tremendous amount of anger. You can't fire anybody. You can't tell the truth about anybody. You can't tell anybody about anything that's wrong with anybody. You've got all these other things to deal with. And in the middle of all of this melee you can't get where you want to go and the frustration gets higher and higher and higher and so you've got some guy coming in to teach you about anger management, everybody in the room is mad. And when the seminar is over, they're now mad at the guy who taught anger management. Never have him back again, he doesn't understand the issues.

That's why marriages break up. They go home and they're just as mad when they talk to their wife as they are at the office. It kinds of go with being a leader that you just are not easily thwarted. You're not easily restrained until you get to the goal. Anger plays a part.

That was true of Peter in John 18. Here comes the say 500 people, including the Roman soldiers, to take Jesus. Remember we covered that last time. They come into the garden, as John records it, and they're going to take Jesus captive and Peter gets angry at the thought of that. Pulls out his sword and starts into the crowd. The first guy in line is named Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, he takes a swing at his head, misses his head, he ducks, he loses an ear. He's just one ear into the crowd. This is not rational. This is 500 people and many of them are Roman soldiers armed to the teeth, they were skilled fighters. The Lord reaches over and gives Malchus an ear. You would think that would have created some conversation among the people. Apparently it didn't, they were so resolute. And the Lord says, "Put your sword away, Peter," this is not how you deal with these things. "You live by the sword, you'll die by it, put it away, this is not the plan."

Peter lost his temper at that point, he was so angry at what was going to happen that he went into an irrational conduct. He needed to learn to restrain himself. He did. First Peter 2 again, verse 21, "Christ suffered," he's looking at the cross and Christ's suffering, in the middle of the verse, "Christ suffered for you leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." Sometimes we have to suffer. Sometimes we have to be taken captive. Sometimes we have to be put in prison. Sometimes we have to be executed. And he says in the case of Christ, He set an example because He was suffering though, verse 22, He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth...and he's borrowing words from Isaiah 53. He was innocent.

Sometimes you're not guilty of anything but you're being vilified and you're being thwarted or you're being hindered and maybe you're being imprisoned and maybe you're being tortured, persecuted.

And so was Jesus. And verse 23, "And while being reviled, ridiculed, mocked, He did not revile in return, while suffering He uttered no threats, He didn't pull out a sword, He didn't call a legion from heaven, He didn't do anything He just kept entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously," that's God. He just committed Himself to God. You know the situation, it's not fair, it's not right, it's not just...I don't deserve it, I didn't do anything to get this. This is how it is, Father, I will not revile, I will not threaten them, I will just entrust my soul to You. That's the attitude. That is sometimes very difficult for a leader to develop. You want to grab your sword and whack your way through the opposition.

I can remember that attitude welling up when I was playing football. I can remember going back in the huddle and saying, "Give me the ball...give me the ball!" We were being thwarted and I wanted the ball and sometimes I got it and accomplished nothing. But that kind of an attitude needs to be broken to one that says, "I will not lash back, I will just commit myself to God who is in charge of everything." Peter learned submission and he learned restraint.

Thirdly, he had to learn humility. It is just kind of natural for leaders to be proud because they're followed, because they're praised, because they're lauded, because people look up to them, because they're admired. And Peter also, and this is true of leaders too, had a tremendous amount of self-confidence, very confident. And we went last time in to Matthew 26 and I won't take you back, I'll just comment...Matthew 26:33 Peter says, "If everybody else denies You, I won't do it...if everybody else denies You, I won't do it, I 'm not like the other people, I won't do that. In fact...he says in two verses later...I'll die before I do that." Tremendous pride, self-confidence.

Jesus said to him, "Yeah, you'll do it, you'll deny Me on three occasions." Many, many denials but on three occasions, three different locations he made these denials right after he said he wouldn't do it. He had to learn not to trust in himself. He had to learn not to be proud. And when he wrote his epistle, same epistle, look at 1 Peter 5, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time." Isn't this great coming from Peter? He's writing and he's saying, "You have to learn, you elders, you pastors," he's writing to them in this chapter, "You have to learn how to humble yourselves." "Can't be...verse 3...lording it over your flock." You have to be submitting to your elders, humbling yourselves before one another, humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God. He learned submission, he learned restraint, he learned humility.

He also learned love. Typically natural leaders don't love. People are a means to their end. They use people. They set people up in a structure that gets them to their goal. It can even be true in church that people are simply pawns on the chess board, a means to an end. Leaders tend to be task oriented rather than people oriented. They tend to plow over people to achieve their goals. Peter needed to learn love and the Lord taught him that. Back to John 13, this is one of the most

beautiful scenes between Jesus and the Apostles in the upper room the night of His betrayal, and we'll just look ever so briefly at it cause I have a couple of more I want to give you before we stop.

But John 13, they had come to dinner in this upper room they had rented for the night to hold the Passover. They were in Jerusalem, Jesus would be betrayed that night by Judas. He would then be arrested and you know the rest. But they were gathered for the supper and supper was a long event. I mean, hours and hours and hours and hours and it was a drawn-out affair and you reclined, you sat on sort of a reclining couch so that your head was near somebody's feet. And in those days the roads were either muddy or dusty so feet were dirty. And the common custom was that when you went into a house for a meal like this there was a servant who was the lowest servant of all servants who washed the feet. The least desirable of all jobs. But there wasn't a servant, apparently, there. It was a rented room and nobody was there to do that and so they were prepared for supper, there hadn't been any foot washing which was very appropriate in that setting. It hadn't been done. So Jesus Himself, verse 4, rose from supper, laid aside his outer garment, took a towel, wrapped it around Himself, poured water into a basin, began to wash the disciples feet and wiped them with a towel in which He was girded.

Now this is Jesus taking on the role of the lowest of the low of slaves. He's washing the dirty feet of these guys. You know what they were doing, by the way? If you compare the other accounts they were arguing about which of them was the greatest. That's right. And in a time when they're arguing about who is the greatest, nobody is going to become the servant and wash feet. They're all trying to convince each other that they should be elevated, not humiliated. So in the midst of their self-pride and self-exaltation, Jesus does what none of them would do. So He comes to Simon Peter, and you can imagine that it was pretty quiet until they got to Peter. They were stunned by what He was doing, he said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" What do You think You're doing? This is again the brash and bold Peter.

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now but you shall understand hereafter." You don't get it, Peter, you don't get My humiliation. You think this is too lowly for Me, you think this is too humble for Me, this is a task that is beneath Me, you haven't seen anything, wait till you see Me arrested, wait till you see Me mocked and spit on and crowned and crucified. If you think this is low, you haven't seen low.

You don't yet understand the humiliation.

Peter said to Him, "I don't know about that...in effect...never shall You wash my feet." This is...Peter is the master of the absolute statement, "I will NEVER deny You...I will die first...You'll NEVER wash my feet." There's no gray in Peter's life, everything is absolutely black and absolutely white, not going to happen.

Jesus said to him, "Well, if I don't wash you, you don't have a part with Me." Jesus said, "If I don't do this, our relationship is over."

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head." This again...there's no middle ground with Peter. He's the first guy out and the first guy in...all out, all in...no gray. "I want a relationship with You." He was showing him if you can't accept My humiliation, if you can't accept that I'm coming down as a servant all the way down, all the way down, all the way down, all the way...if you can't accept that, we can't have a relationship. And so He washed his feet. And He said, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean and you're clean but not all of you." He says...You know, this is sort of a spiritual symbol here. You've taken your bath for the day, I'm just cleaning your feet so we can eat. The same is true spiritually. You've been washed, you've been converted, saved, but you need this daily foot washing that I'm going to give to you.

Now to show the application here, go to verse 34 and 35. So Jesus washed all their feet, including Peter's. And He says this, in the meantime Judas has been revealed, Jesus has identified Judas, Judas has left, filled with Satan, gone out to betray Jesus. Verse 34, Jesus says to the Twelve, now eleven, "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you that you also love one another." What were they doing? What were they arguing about? Which of them was the greatest. They were arguing about who was the best, who was the top. Selfish, selfish, selfish. He says, "Look, you've got to stop this and love each other, even as I have loved you that you also love one another."

How had He loved them? Washed their feet. You love by going all the way down and humbling yourselves, sacrificing yourself to meet a need at the lowest level. You've got to love each other, you can't be fighting each other for prominence. You have to love each other. It's hard for leaders to wash the feet of those who are perceivably below them. But He said in verse 35, "If you do this people will know you're my disciples, if you have this kind of love for one another."

Did Peter learn to love? He did. In 1 Peter 4:8 he wrote, "And above all things have fervent love among yourselves for love covers a multitude of sins." Here he is commanding his readers to love each other fervently, ektenes in the Greek, stretched to the limit, love to the maximum of your capacity. It's not about emotions. It's not about feeling. It's not about being lovable. Jesus was loving men who were unlovable, fleshly, selfish, and He loved them anyway. And He's saying that's the way you need to love, to love those with dirty feet and go right down and clean them. Peter learned that and he told the aliens when he wrote the letter, the believers in the Roman world, to love each other.

Another marvelous attribute that Peter needed to learn was compassion...compassion. At the time of his denial, the Lord said to him, according to Luke 22:31 and 32, the Lord said, "You're going to deny Me," and all of this, but He said...He said it in interesting terms, as Luke records it, "Satan desires to have you that he may sift you like wheat." What's going to happen is, you're making all these claims and you're faithful and you'll die before you deny Me, well I'm telling you, you'll deny Me, Satan will get a hold of you and he'll shake you just like wheat is shaken to be purified to have the chaff blow away and the kernel fall to the bottom. You're going to get shaken. But I'm going to let it happen...He says...so that you when you come out of that, Luke 22:32, can strengthen others...strengthen the brothers.

What was this about? Well, leaders tend to be short on compassion, short on being comforters. They tend to be driven by the goals and driven by the objectives and driven through the process. They don't stop very long to care for the wounded as they go. Peter needed to learn something. The Lord could have said, "I'm not going to let Satan do this to you, Peter, you're going to stay strong." But He didn't, He said, "I'm going to let him do it, I'm going to let Satan shake you to the foundations of your life, sift you like wheat down to the nub. I'm going to let him shake you until there's nothing left but the reality of your faith. Your faith will not fail." He said, "I promise you that because faith can't fail, it's a gift of God for eternity, saving faith, it won't fail. But I tell you, you're going to be shaken down to the nub."

Why? "So that when it's over you can strengthen the brethren." What does that mean? "That means for the rest of your life you will have compassion on people who struggle, you'll have compassion on people who think they're stronger spiritually than they really are. You'll have compassion on people who struggle with temptation and fall into doubt and sin." Leaders need that. They need to be compassionate, tender-hearted, gracious, kind, comforting to those who struggle with sin. I hate to see self-righteous people brutalize somebody who falls into sin, as if they themselves had no sin. Peter, you need to learn that even the best and the noblest can be crushed cause you're going to be crushed. This is going to give you compassion, a leader with compassion.

He learned it. He learned it well. First Peter 5, "Casting all your anxiety, or all your care, upon Him...verse 7...because He cares for you." He says your enemy, your adversary, verse 8, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. He says...I understand it, I've been there...been there, I've been consumed, as it were, by that prowling lion, I've been there and I can only tell you I understand that I'm just telling you that when you get there pass all your care on Him because He cares for you and resist that enemy firm in your faith. And I know something else that after you've gone through this temptation, after you've gone through this failure, after you've gone through this struggle, after you've suffered through this, I'll tell you what will happen, the Lord Himself, verse 10, will perfect, confirm and strengthen and establish you.

How does he know that? He's been there...been there. This is a leader who understands human weakness. This is a leader who has been to the bottom. This is a leader whose weaknesses have been thrown in his face and he understands what men and women go through. He's like our good High Priest, he's been touched with the feelings of our infirmities, he knows what it is to be human.

A spiritual leader like Peter had to be submissive, restrained, humble, loving, compassionate, and one more...courageous. In the end you must have courage to be a spiritual leader because you're going to have opposition, true? The kingdom of darkness is set against the kingdom of light, lies are set against the truth, Satan is set against God, the demons are set against the holy purposes of Christ. And so there's going to be difficulty when you go...Jesus said to Peter, "When you go now and feed My sheep," in John 21, "you go and shepherd My sheep and feed My lambs, I just want to tell you this, you're going to die. You've done what you've wanted, you put your own coat on, you went were you wanted but...in John 21 He says to him...you're going to go and somebody is going to tie you up, take you where you don't want to go and you're going to die. This is the death you're going to die to glorify Me."

The price of preaching will be death for you, Peter, martyrdom. Promises him that, John 21. So you're going to have to have courage.

Well Peter hadn't exhibited a lot of courage, had he? He denies Jesus in front of various groups of people, no courage there. But when you get in to the book of Acts, something different has happened seriously. Acts 4, Peter and John come before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling counsel. The Sanhedrin says you're not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus. I think some of their grandchildren run the school system in America. You're not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, it's forbidden, Acts 4:18. Peter said, along with John, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Peter says it's a very simple decision, you tell me, shall we obey you or God? And he went ahead and preached.

In Acts 5, one chapter later, they were again brought before the Sanhedrin for not obeying their order to stop preaching. And again they told them the same thing. You're not supposed to be doing this. To which they replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Courage. Spiritual leader has to have that kind of courage. He's not a compromiser, he doesn't vacillate. He's characterized by courage.

These are the character components that were necessary to make Peter the man God wanted him to be, to turn him from Simon into Rock. Peter learned submission, restraint, humility, love, compassion, and courage from the Lord Himself and from the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. And he did become a great leader. He was the one who made the move to replace Judas with Matthias in Acts 1. He was the spokesman of the church at Pentecost, as I told you last time. He along with

John healed a lame man. He along with John, as I said, defied the Sanhedrin. He dealt with the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira in the church. He dealt with the problem of Simon the magician, healed Aeneas, raised Dorcas from the dead, took the gospel to the Jews, took the gospel to the Gentiles, wrote the two marvelous epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, in which he repeated, as we've seen, the lessons that he had learned from the Lord about character.

What a man he was. Perfect? No. Read Galatians 2. You know what he did in Galatians 2, he did a terrible thing, he acted like a hypocrite. I won't tell you the whole story. He acted hypocritically. He was eating with the Gentiles, having a big time up in Antioch eating with the Gentiles and some Judaizers showed up, some of the circumcision. And he stopped eating with the Gentiles to try to please the Judaizers. And Paul says in Galatians, "I withstood him to the face." That's wrong, Peter. Peter was confronted by Paul himself. What was interesting about that text in Galatians 2:11 to 13 is it says that when Peter did it, everybody else did it too because he's a leader. So crucial that leaders do what is right because they have followers. He wasn't perfect, but he responded to Paul's correction.

We don't know why he did that, whether he was trying to be inoffensive, which was novel for him. But he wasn't perfect and I'm glad that's there in Galatians 2 because if from then on all we have is perfection, we can't identify as well.

But how did it end for him? Well unanimous tradition of the early church tells us that Peter was crucified as the Lord predicted he would be in John 21. But according to Eusebius in ecclesiastical history, Eusebius wrote, the early church father, "Before Peter was crucified he was forced to watch the crucifixion of his beloved wife and he had to stand at the foot of her cross till she died." Eusebius writes that Peter stood at the foot of his wife's cross and kept repeating to her, "Remember the Lord, remember the Lord, remember the Lord." After she died it is said that he pleaded to be crucified upside-down because he wasn't worthy to die as his Lord had died. And he was crucified upside-down because he wouldn't deny the faith.

Peter's life could be summed up in the last words of the last epistle he wrote, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." And that's what he did and he became rock, the great leader of the church. Join me in prayer.

Father, Peter could sing the hymn "O cross that lifteth up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee, I lay in dust, life's glory dead. And from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be." That's so true of Peter. He's dead and yet flowing out of his death has come life to millions who have read the record of his life and his epistles. When we meet him, Lord, in Your presence, he will be perfect. We thank You that You made him the man he was that the first time he ever preached 3,000 people were saved. That the next time we hear him preaching, thousands more are being converted. And his story in the gospels and the epistles continue to bear fruit for eternity even today. We thank

You that we can see in this man a pattern by which You build a leader, You built Your own leader to lead the Twelve to the most formidable, humanly impossible and divinely critical task that men have ever been given. We thank You that You have shown us how You can take the commonest of the common and turn them upside down so that they can turn the world upside down. Use us mightily, our Father, as You see fit, in the Savior's name. Amen.

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