

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

The Man Who Was a Rock

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1

Code: 60-1

As you know, tonight we begin a series in the wonderful epistle called 1 Peter. You might want to open to it, although we will not look extensively at the text itself, we will at least introduce it to you by looking at the first verse and then dealing with the author himself, namely Peter.

The epistle begins, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood, may grace and peace be yours in fullest measure."

To begin our study of this wonderful epistle, we need to do a little bit of looking at the background. Let me give you a date, an infamous date in history, July 19, 64 A.D., that was the day that Rome burned while Nero fiddled. The great city of Rome was consumed by a holocaust of fire. Rome, you see, was a city of narrow streets. It was a city of dense population. On both sides of those narrow streets were high wooden tenements where the people lived. And once the fire hit Rome, it consumed the place. It could leap easily across the narrow streets and consume the wooden buildings like kindling.

The first three days and nights the fire spread rapidly. It was somewhat checked but not totally put out, it broke out again even worse. Before it was done it had consumed most of the homes of most of the people. The Roman people believed that their emperor, Nero, who was by all definition some kind of a maniac had himself set their city on fire. They believed that he did it because he had this incredible lust for building. And for him the great challenge of life was to build and in order to build he had to destroy what already existed so that he could build it again.

He found a front row seat in the Tower of Maccenas, and watched the raging inferno consume the city of Rome. Historians tell us that he was rather charmed by the flames. In fact, considered them quite lovely. People who tried to put out the flames were eventually hindered and where the fire was stopped a new fire was purposely started. The people were totally devastated. Their culture, in a sense, went down with their city. The Temple of Luna, the Ara Maxima, the great altar, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the Shrine of Vesta, all the religious elements of their life was destroyed, their very household gods were even burned up. So it was not just an economic loss and a social loss but it was some kind of religious chaos and confusion to realize that their own deities had been unable to deal with this conflagration and were in many cases, in fact in most cases, victims of it. The people

were homeless. They had not only lost their homes but they had lost one another in death. And they had lost their gods in a very real sense.

So their resentment was bitter and it was deep and it was deadly. And Nero realized that he had to redirect the hostility. He had to have a scapegoat to blame for this and so he chose a group that were known as Christians. And he spread the word as fast as he could that they were the ones who set the fires.

Now, frankly, his choice was a rather ingenious one. You see, Christians were already hated. They were already slandered. First of all because they were associated with Jews and there was a very virulent anti-semitism in Rome. In the second place, Christians were seen as those who would not fully cooperate in emperor worship and those who rejected all the other gods of the Romans and so they were hated for all of those reasons.

Furthermore, the Lord's Supper was closed to pagans. I have been in the catacombs of Rome where the church met for many centuries and held their services and held communion. And the Lord's Supper was a very vital part of their experience but they did not allow pagans to attend. And since the pagans were not a part of it when they heard things like eating and drinking the flesh, the blood and the flesh of Christ, they assumed that some kind of cannibalism was going on. And so the word spread that Christians were cannibals, that they were eating and drinking each other. In fact, the story circulated that mostly they ate babies and Gentiles at their communion service.

And then there was the Christian kiss of love, the embrace that Christians commonly gave to each other when greeting. They used it at the love feast as a way to express their affection and pagans spread the word that they were having unbridled orgies of lust and vice, including homosexuality as men were embracing men with a kiss of love. And so that rumor spread as well.

And then they were most unpopular because many wives of prominent Romans embraced Christ. And for a woman to act independently of her husband in the Roman culture was an effrontery that knew no equal. So you had wives who were perceived then as being non-submissive to their husbands. You had children who then having come to Christ were breaking their connections with their families and so Christianity was seen as a movement which split families, brought great conflict, even insubordination from wives.

And also, Christians were always talking about a day when the world would dissolve in flames. And it was very, very fitting to easily blame them for a fire. So Nero picked the right group. There were several very valid reasons that they would be suspect and the blame could easily be pinned on them.

As a result of this accusation under Nero, the persecution against Christians began. It had already been incipient, it had already been latent because the hatred was already there. And there were

some incidents of abuse of Christians but now it was a wholesale persecution under Nero. Tacitus, the Roman historian, reported that Nero rolled Christians in pitch and then set them on fire while they were still alive and used them as living torches to light his garden parties. He served them up also in the skin of wild animals, sent his hunting dogs on them to tear them to pieces. They were also nailed to crosses. And so Christians began to perish in somewhat of a delirium of savagery. Even lynching them became rather common without a trial. Within a very few months actually Christians were imprisoned, racked, seared, broiled, burned, scourged, stoned and hanged. Others were lacerated with red hot knives and some were thrown on the horns of wild bulls.

That persecution which was generated in Rome began to spread throughout the Roman Empire. And as it spread it touched places like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. And as it spread into those places, it began to effect the Christians who were there whom Peter calls aliens, strangers. And it began to effect their lives.

We cannot know precisely when. But sometime after this began Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote this epistle. It is an epistle written to believers who are aliens, who are strangers, who are foreigners in a hostile culture. It is written in a time when Christians were forced to suffer severe persecution and even the loss of their lives. The campaign of slander and the campaign of suffering for the love of Christ was already moving.

Notice chapter 1 verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice even though now for a little while if necessary you have been distressed by various trials." Look at chapter 2 verse 21, "For you have been called for this purpose since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps who committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth and while being reviled He did not revile in return, while suffering He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." And he is saying now you're suffering, Christ suffered and set the example about how to suffer. Going back to verse 20, "When you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure, and this finds favor with God," and your example is Christ.

Chapter 3 verse 13, "And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed and do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

Chapter 4 verse 12, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing." Verse 13, "To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing." Verse 19, "Therefore let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right." And then in chapter 5 verse 10 he says, "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ

will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Now it's obvious from those passages which I briefly bring to your attention that these people were in a time of suffering. And that time of persecution would eventually catch Peter himself and Peter would be killed, tradition says, also his wife at the same time for their faith and proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

The emphasis of this epistle then is to teach believers how to live victoriously in the midst of hostility without losing heart, without wavering in faith, without becoming bitter, realizing where your hope is, realizing who your Savior is, and always looking forward to the glorious coming of Christ when all suffering will cease. In chapter 1 verse 7 he talks about the glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In verse 9 the ultimate outcome, even the salvation of your souls, that final salvation, when we see the Lord. Verse 13 talks about the revelation of Jesus Christ, meaning the Second Coming. Chapter 2 verse 12 talks about the day of visitation, that's the Second Coming of Christ. Chapter 4 verse 13 talks about the revelation of His glory, again referring to the Second Coming. Chapter 5 verse 1, the glory that is to be revealed. Chapter 5 verse 4, when the chief Shepherd appears you'll receive the unfading crown of glory.

So, you have here then indications of suffering and indications that those who suffer are to keep their heart and mind set on the return of Jesus Christ. No matter what comes in this life we have that promise. So we're going to be looking then at an epistle that was written to believers in persecution telling them how to be victorious in the midst of it and keep their focus on Christ who was returning. And in His return, in His coming for them would come the end of their suffering. How to live victoriously in the face of persecution, suffering and difficulty.

Now there are some other subjects that we're going to learn about in 1 Peter, I'll just give you a little bit of an idea. We're going to learn about foreknowledge. We're going to learn about election. We're going to learn about the significance of the blood of Christ. What does it mean, what is its significance and why is it precious? We're going to discuss our eternal inheritance. We're going to be taught about the proof of true faith. That's a major theme. We're going to learn about salvation. We're going to get into the Second Coming of Christ, as I said. We're going to discuss what it means to be holy, even as God is holy. We will look at the new birth. We'll study the milk of the Word and how it makes us grow. We'll get into spiritual growth as a subject itself. We'll discuss the fact that we're a holy priesthood and all that that means. We'll talk about excellent behavior. We'll talk about what is to be our responsibility to the government in which we live. We'll talk about marriage relationships between husband and wife. We'll talk about how it is to suffer for righteousness sake. We'll talk about the need to be able to defend your faith. We'll talk about baptism. We'll talk about humility. We'll talk about how God wants all your anxiety and all your care cast on Him. We'll talk about the perfecting work God is doing in your life through struggles. And that's just a little bit of what we'll talk about, tremendous, tremendous subjects.

But to begin with tonight, let's just meet Peter, all right? Let's meet Peter. It says in verse 1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Now Peter was the leader of the Twelve. There are, and you need to remember this, four lists of the Twelve in Scripture...Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6 and Acts 1. Those are the four lists of the twelve apostles. At the head of every list is always the name Peter, he was the leader of the Twelve. His name is always first. There is no other consistent order beyond Peter. But his name is always first. He was their leader.

The apostles were a unique group of men. They were the specially called servants of Christ. They had seen Him. They had seen Him after His resurrection. They knew Him. And He personally called, commissioned and sent them to preach. They were first-generation, direct apostles of Christ. They were sent by Him personally. They were the foundation of the church. In fact, in Ephesians 2:20 it says the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ being the chief cornerstone. According to Ephesians 3:5 they received direct revelation. In fact, the New Testament was written by apostles, or those associated with apostles. So they were specially called, personally commissioned by Jesus Himself. They were the foundation of the church because they laid the doctrinal foundation down. And their life of ministry was the first order of ministry in the church. They received direct revelation from God and they gave that revelation to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the pages of the New Testament.

They were also the source of the teaching of divine truth. The early church studied, according to Acts 2, the apostles' doctrine. They framed the doctrine of the church. Furthermore they were examples of virtue. They are called the "holy apostles," Ephesians 3:5 and Revelation 18:20. They are the holy apostles, they were the models of spiritual virtue.

Furthermore they were able to confirm their teaching as true by signs and wonders and mighty deeds, according to 2 Corinthians 12:11 and 12. God gave them miracle power to attest to the validity of their ministry. That was a crucial thing. Why would you believe an apostle? There was no New Testament to compare him to and if Peter blew into town and taught a lot of things, how would you know he was teaching the truth? How would you know he represented God? There might be ten teachers in town teaching ten different things. You would know because they had the power to do the supernatural miracles. God granted them the signs and wonders and mighty deeds that belonged to an apostle to attest to the validity of their teaching. Miracle power is always to attest to the validity of a true teacher.

I said to someone the other day if all of the so-called teachers running around today who can supposedly do signs and wonders are really able to do signs and wonders, then God is busy authenticating false doctrine. Do you understand that? And God would not do that. If there were any people in this generation who had the ability to do signs and wonders and mighty deeds, they would be the truest, purest, most exacting teachers of the Word of God, they would not be fly-by-night

traveling salesmen, hocking religion and selling miracle power. If God was attesting anything, He would be attesting the truest and purest representation of His truth. And so when someone comes along who has an aberrant or erroneous theology, and tells me that God has given them the power to do signs and wonders, I question why God would authenticate error. The apostles taught the truth and God confirmed it by signs and wonders.

And lastly, just discussing the apostles, they will be eternally honored. They will be eternally rewarded, according to Revelation 21:14. They have a very, very special place in eternity. I don't know if you remember that verse, it says the wall of the city, that's the new Jerusalem in heaven, had twelve foundation stones and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. So these were the unique, unique men that God called through Christ to be special in that first generation to lay the foundation of the New Testament. Peter was their leader. He was their leader.

The four gospels, by the way, are full of things about Peter. We can't even begin to exhaust it. Here's a thought. The only person in the New Testament in the gospel record mentioned more than Peter is Jesus Himself. He is the second leading character.

Just speaking generally about him, our Lord spoke more often to Peter than to any other of His disciples. Sometimes He spoke to him in praise and sometimes He spoke to him in blame. No disciple was so pointedly and directly reproved by our Lord as Peter. And no disciple ever ventures to reprove his Lord, but Peter. No disciple ever so boldly confessed and outspokenly acknowledged and encouraged our Lord as Peter and he repeatedly did that. And no one ever intruded and interfered and tempted the Lord as repeatedly as Peter. Our Lord spoke words of approval and praise and blessing to Peter, the like of which He never spoke to any other person. And at the same time in almost the same breath He said harsher things to Peter than He ever said to any other of the Twelve, except Judas.

And we all love to identify with Peter. He's so human. And all the rest were human, it's just that we know so much about Peter that all of his humanness comes through. He's so well equipped to speak, so well equipped to be the author of this epistle because he was so close to Christ. He was the leader of the Twelve.

Now God wanted to build him into a leader because when the Lord Jesus left this world to go back to heaven, Peter really was the key man. The first twelve chapters of Acts unfold the early beginnings of the church and the main character is Peter. He's the driving force. So it was vital that the Lord shape him into a leader so that he went back into heaven and the Spirit came and filled the life of Peter, he could be all that God wanted him to be.

Now I'd like us just to get to know Peter by looking at his life and discerning how the Lord shaped him into a leader. Okay? First of all, He had to choose him. And we find in that first listing of the

disciples in Matthew chapter 10, He summoned His Twelve, and he lists them there in verses 2, 3 and 4. And you just need perhaps to touch that passage in your mind because that is the passage which identifies for us the twelve men that the Lord chose. And I would say, to begin with, the Lord builds a leader by first of all choosing him, calling him to Himself. He chooses the man. And Christ particularly, specifically chose Peter. He chose him.

Studdard(?) Kennedy, who writes some marvelous poetry, or wrote it before he died, wrote some lines that fit Peter when he writes, "There's nothing in man that's perfect, there's nothing that's all complete. He's not but a big beginning from his head to the soles of his feet." That's all Peter was. He was just a big beginning.

In the gospel record Peter stands out as the spokesman of the Twelve. He verbalized everything. It was Peter who asked the meaning of a difficult saying in Matthew 15. It was Peter who asked how often he must forgive in Matthew 18. It was Peter who inquired what is to be the reward of those who have left all to follow Christ in Matthew 19. It was Peter who asked about the fig tree and why it had withered, recorded in Mark 11:21. It was Peter who asked the meaning of the things which Jesus had said about the approaching end, as recorded in Mark 13. It was to Peter that the Jews came to ask if Jesus paid His taxes in Matthew 17. It was Peter who answered when Jesus asked who had touched Him in the crowd, Luke 8. It was Peter who questioned the risen Christ, John 21. Peter always verbalizing, the spokesman.

Now that's the right raw material for leadership. You know how to tell a leader? They ask questions. Potential leaders ask questions. They initiate dialogue. They want to know things. Another thing about raw material for leadership, they make things happen. Sometimes the right thing, sometimes the wrong thing. But they make things happen. That's leadership material.

Now this man whom the Lord chose was named Simon. According to Mark 1:16, John 1:40 and 41, his name was Simon originally. He was the son of a man named Jonas, or perhaps John...the two are interchangeable, really. He was a fisherman by profession. He had a brother by the name of Andrew and they were fishermen. They first lived in Bethsaida and later on in Capernaum.

Now we know that Peter was married because in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 5 it mentions, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas, or Peter." He was married. His mother-in-law was sick so we know that he had a mother-in-law as well.

Now, you say, "Well now wait a minute, if he was married where was his wife?" Well he probably took her along. That's what 1 Corinthians 9 says. Paul says, "We have a right to lead along a wife as does Peter and the rest of the apostles." The wives do not play a prominent picture, in fact we don't even meet them in the gospel record but they were there. Peter perhaps had his wife

with him most of the time. It also seems that James and John took their mother along some of the time, if not all of the time.

When the Lord met Simon He changed his name to Peter, that's Greek, Cephas is Aramaic, it's the same. Both of them mean "stone," or "rock." Frequently, and this is kind of curious, frequently, even after he's been renamed Peter in the Greek or Cephas in the Aramaic, meaning "rock," even after he's been renamed, he's called "Simon." Have you noticed that in studying the gospels? You come along and all of a sudden he's called Simon.

As I studied that I determined there are two reasons why he's called Simon. Reason number one is simply to identify his secular identity. For example, in Mark 1:29 it says, "Simon's house." In Luke 4:38 it says, "Simon's wife's mother." In Luke 5:3, "Simon's boat." In Luke 5:10, "Simon's fishing partners." Cornelius in Acts 10 was directed to Simon's house. You see, that's his earthly identification and he will be called Simon in Scripture when there's nothing more than an earthly identification.

And there's a second thing. He is also called Simon when he's sinful. When he acts like his old self, he gets called by his old name which is not a bad idea because it pointed out directly to him what was going on in the Lord's mind. When the Lord wanted to focus on his sinfulness, He called him by his old name. In Luke 5 He said, "Simon, put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered and said, Master, we worked hard all night, caught nothing, but at Your bidding I'll let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, their nets began to break, they signalled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. They came, filled both of the boats, they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell at Jesus' feet and said...Depart from me for I am a sinful man." You act like your old self, you're going to get called by your old name.

Later in Luke's gospel in chapter 22 and verse 31, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." "Simon, Simon, you're succumbing to Satan." He calls him by his old self. Twice...he's not even just Simon, he's Simon, Simon...sinful, sinful.

The same is true in Mark 14:37 and perhaps most well known, John 21. Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you...what?...love Me?" Peter was caught in disobedience, Jesus calls him Simon.

Usually in John's gospel, this is kind of interesting, usually in John's gospel he is called Simon Peter. In fact seventeen times he's called Simon Peter. That might be because John never could figure out whether he was spiritual or sinful. So he just calls him Simon Peter since he can't read his heart.

But God picked the right material. He was an initiator. He was a speaker and a teacher and a preacher and a verbalizer. He made things happen, some things that the Lord would rather he had not made happen. But he was an initiator. So He picked the right raw material. That's how God makes a leader.

And that's why you have to be patient with the process while God develops a leader. Can you handle that? Because a person who has leadership ability is going to make mistakes because it's inherent in leadership to act. It's inherent in leadership to speak. It's inherent in leadership to initiate and not having perfection to go along with all of that aggression, leaders make mistakes. And Peter was like that but he was the right raw material.

Secondly, the Lord poured into his life the right experiences, to begin to temper and conform that raw material. And if you look at the gospel record you see all the experiences Peter had as the Lord began to pour them into his life. I'll give you a little list.

Number one was what we could call his great revelation--his great revelation. The Lord gave a great revelation to Peter, that was a very vital experience. In John 6:66 as a result of Jesus teaching about Himself and His death, many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said therefore to the Twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "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, quite a revelation, huh?

And what did he say in Matthew 16:13 to 16, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you, My Father in heaven did." So in shaping this leader, God gave him a great revelation...great revelation.

He also gave him something further. Matthew 16...I think it's verse 18...talks about a great reward. "I say to you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." Peter, you not only have had a great revelation, but the revelation that God has given to you is going to be the foundation of the church. What a tremendous thing...what a wonderful reward.

And then in the same chapter, Matthew 16, he had a great remission. He fell far back. Jesus was showing the disciples, verse 21, that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, scribes, be killed, be raised the third day. Peter took Him aside, began to rebuke Him. This is amazing. This is Peter rebuking Christ. And he says, "God forbid it, Lord. This shall never happen to You." Boy, pretty aggressive guy. But that's the right raw material for leadership, you just have to be able to deal with it. He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to Me for you are not setting your mind on God's interest but man's." Whew...strongest rebuke the Lord ever gave to anyone who believed in Him.

Peter had such love for Christ and such dependence on Christ that it clouded his thinking. Out of love, out of faith he becomes a tempter and he tempts Christ to evade the cross. He repeated to Christ the very temptation that Satan gave Him when He was in the devastation or the wilderness. Satan comes right back through Peter to tempt Christ to avoid the cross. What an experience. What a humbling experience. What a demeaning experience. What a breaking experience. So He gives him a great revelation, promises him a great reward that his confession and his own life will be vital to the building of the church. And while he's beginning to feel his oats, then just cuts the tail right out from under him and he collapses in the great remission.

And that wasn't the worst. There was a great rejection, too. In Matthew, you know the story, 26 verse 31, Jesus said to them, "You'll all fall away because of Me this night." That was the night of His betrayal and His arrest.

Peter, verse 33, said, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away."

Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, this very night before a cock crows you'll deny Me three times."

Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You I will not deny You." And all the disciples said the same thing, too. And if there's any question about Peter's leadership, that ought to eliminate it. They were like rubber ducks, he quacked, they all quacked. And he did deny Him on three occasions.

Now you have to note certain things about Peter. We look at his rejection and it's easy to condemn Peter. But keep in mind that he was the only one really hanging around, the rest were long gone. The other disciples had just melted somehow terror-stricken into the shadows and fled. And can I suggest to you that Peter's failure is the kind of failure that can only happen to a brave man who at least stayed around? He failed in a way the rest couldn't have failed because they were more cowardly than he to start with. It was a sad moment. But on the other hand, he looked like a better man than the rest.

And then the Lord brought another experience into his life we could call his great recommissioning. Look at John 21, we'll take just a moment to glance at it. John 21, Jesus had told the disciples, "You go to Galilee and you stay there till I come." He had told them, of course, that they were going to go and preach the Word and they were going to represent Him and He says, "Now you just go to Galilee and you wait, don't do anything, just go there and wait." We know this from the other gospel record.

So John 21 we find them in Galilee. Jesus said, "Go in a mountain and stay there." Verse 2, so they were together up in Galilee. "Simon Peter, John likes to call him that, Thomas called Didymus and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, and two others of His apostles," no doubt Philip and Andrew, His disciples. So here they are, all up there in Galilee. And Simon

Peter, leader, said to them, "I am going fishing." And they said to him, the rubber ducks, "We will also come with you." The Lord had said don't do that, just go the mountain and stay there. But Peter was a leader and they all went and they went, they got into the boat and that night they caught...what?...they caught nothing because the Lord rerouted all the fish, none of them came near the boat. The Lord had commissioned them to preach, they could never fish again because the Lord wouldn't let the fish get near them if He didn't want them to. So they fished all night and caught nothing.

You can imagine something the dialogue would go like this...Peter is up in the mountain, he's saying, "Look, we've been waiting here a long time, I don't know if the Lord's going to show up, I'm not sure what's going on. All I know is every time I'm given an assignment I fail. I don't have any confidence in myself. I seem to be having trouble being faithful. I don't know if I can cut it in the ministry. There's one thing I know how to do, I think I better go do it. I can fish. I know how to fish, I fished all my life. That's one thing I can do. I don't know if I can do this ministry stuff but I can fish." And he went back and the one thing he couldn't do was...what?...fish.

But I understand what he was thinking. And Jesus came in verse 5 and said, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" That's not really a very good thing to say to people who fished all night and caught nothing. They answered Him no. He said to them, "Well cast the net on the right hand side of the boat and you'll find a catch." Now I don't want to be presumptuous but if somebody said that to me and I didn't know who they were, I might be a little upset. But they did it and they couldn't even haul in the fish. And the disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, that's John, said to Peter, "It's the Lord...it's the Lord." And that tells you how powerful the authority of Jesus was that even before they knew it was Him they obeyed what He said. I just think He had the most powerful voice of any person that ever walked this earth and He commanded them and they did it.

So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, this is him, impetuous...he put on his outer garment for he was stripped for work and threw himself into the sea. He dove in, took off. And the other disciples who got all these fish and they come in the little boat and about hundred yards off shore and they're dragging a net full of fish. The Lord had made breakfast, you remember the story.

And now it was time for the recommissioning of Peter. So Jesus says to him three times, "Do you love Me?" He says, "You know I love You, I have great affection for you."

"Do you love Me?" "You know I love You, I have great affection for You."

"Do you love Me?" "You know I love You, You know everything. You know I love You."

"Then feed My sheep, tend My lambs." In other words, stay away from this stuff. You do what I called you to do. This is his recommissioning. And that was very, very important.

Typical Peter, look at verse 20, he turns around and he sees the disciple whom Jesus loved. Who's that? John...Peter says in verse 21, "Lord, what about him? Does he get to fish?" I love this answer. "If I want him to remain till the Second Coming, it's none of your business." Whew...."You...what?...follow Me." Get the picture? This is his recommissioning.

Did he do it? He did. That was enough experiences. He got the message. He became the leader of the church, the main figure in the first twelve chapters of Acts. He was the one who moved in Acts 1:15 to find a replacement for Judas. He was the spokesman of the church on Pentecost. It was He in Acts 2:14 who preached that great powerful sermon and brought about the conversion of three thousand souls. It was he in the companionship of John who healed the lame man in Acts 3:1 to 11. It was he who defied the Sanhedrin in Acts 4 and said, "We will obey God, not men, you cannot tell us not to preach."

It was he who confronted that charlatan and fraud who wanted to buy the Holy Spirit named Simon in Samaria recorded in Acts 8. It was he who dealt with the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira and God killed them in front of the church, Acts 5. It was he who healed Aeneas and raised Dorcas from the dead, Acts 9. It was he who took the gospel to the Gentiles, namely Cornelius, Acts 10 and 11. It was he who probably provided resource material to Mark as he wrote his gospel. And it was he who wrote these two magnificent epistles which are before us in our study.

Jesus picked the right raw material. Gave him the right experiences, finally got the message across. He turned out to be a great, great leader.

There's another factor in building a leader and that is you have to have the right lessons...you have to have the right lessons. It's not just experiences, it's teaching. And Peter got the right lessons. You know what lessons Jesus taught Peter? First of all, he taught him about submission. That's right, submission. One lesson leaders need to learn is to be submissive. In Matthew 17 the tax collector came to Peter and said, "Where's the tax? Does your teacher not pay the tax?" He

said, "Yes." Jesus spoke to him and said, "Simon, what do you think? Shall we pay our tax?" "For whom do the kings of the earth collect customs, or poll tax, from their sons or strangers?" From strangers, Peter said. Jesus said to him, "Consequently the sons are exempt. We don't have to pay taxes, we're exempt, we're the son of the King, the King of kings. But, lest we give them offense, you go to the sea, throw in a hook, pull up a fish, open its mouth, you'll find the taxes, that will cover you and Me."

Well that's pretty exciting way to pay your taxes. You know what He taught him? He taught him to submit to the government. He taught him to submit to the government. So you know what Peter says in his epistle? "Submit yourself to the Lord's sake...for the Lord's sake to every human institution

whether to a king as one in authority, or governors sent by him for the punishment of evil doers and the praise of those who do right for such is the will of God." Where do you think he learned that? You know what you're going to get in 1 Peter and 2 Peter? You're going to get all the stuff that Jesus taught Peter. He gave him the right lessons. He taught him restraint. In the garden, here came the soldiers, they came to take Christ. Peter...what?...drew a sword and he's ready to fight them all. The Bible says there was a servant of the high priest named Malchus and it says Peter smote off his ear. May I suggest to you something? He wasn't shooting for the ear, there's nothing to indicate to me that he was trying to cut his ear off, he's trying to cut his head off. And he was already feeling invincible because Christ was there to whack his way through the whole Roman contingent. And the Lord said...Look, you use a sword, you die by the sword. In other words, the Lord advocated the priority of capital punishment. You take a life, you'll give a life. Put that thing away, restrain yourself, Peter, you can't...you can't go bludgeoning your way through the world slicing up everybody who gets in your way." Peter learned that lesson well, restrain yourself.

In 1 Peter 2 he says, "Take Christ as your example, while being reviled He did not revile in return, while suffering He uttered no threats, He just kept entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously." Where did he learn that? Jesus taught him that. Don't fight back, commit yourself to God.

The Lord also taught him humility. Boy, did he teach him humility. Peter says, "I'll never deny you, I'll never deny you." The Lord says, "Yes you will, you'll deny Me three times before the cock crows." And he did. And He taught him humility. And so, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5, "God is opposed to the proud, gives grace to the humble, humble yourselves," he says. He learned that lesson well.

The Lord also taught him about grace. In Matthew 18 verse 21, "How often do I forgive my brethren? Seven times?" Jesus said how many? "Seventy times seven." He taught him about the grace of forgiveness, the generous grace of God. And so he writes about having tasted the kindness of the Lord in 1 Peter 2:3.

He taught him about sacrifice. In John 21:19 He said, basically, some day you're going to get bound and taken where you don't want to go and you're going to give your life for Me. That's what He said. Jesus said you're going to give your life for Me, John 21:19. Peter had that in his mind all through his ministry, it's going to cost me my life. He knew that. And in 2 Peter 1:14 he said, "Knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent." He knew that. His whole life he realized that at any moment he was going to lose his life because that's what Jesus predicted. That's what he predicted.

He taught him about love. "Do you love Me?...Do you love Me?...Do you love Me?" He taught him about love among the apostles, "All men will know you're My disciples by loving one another." And so when he writes 1 Peter 4 he says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another." He taught him about courage. He said you're going to die for Me, but follow Me anyway, John 21. And Peter

stood before the whole Sanhedrin with courage and said, "We will preach Christ no matter what you say."

Strong leaders need those lessons. They need lessons about submission, restraint, humility, grace, sacrifice, love, courage. He taught Peter about faith. He taught him about faith, taught Peter to believe. In Mark 16, I think it's verse 7, "Tell His disciples and Peter He is going before you to Galilee, you will see Him just as He said to you." He told them, "I'll be there, I'll be there, believe Me." But Peter failed. And as I said, he went down the mountain, the Lord confronted him and said, "You better believe when I say something I'll do it." And when Peter writes, he writes about faith, he writes about believing God, he writes about trusting God, chapter 1, chapter 4 verses 7 to 10.

What are the lessons a leader needs to learn? I think those are some of the very vital ones. He needs to learn about submission because he tends to run ahead. He needs to learn about restraint because he tends to react with all his energy. He needs to learn about humility because he tends to be proud. He needs to learn about grace and kindness and forgiveness because he tends to be so resolute that he just bulls his way through and if people fail he scatters them like reeds in a high wind. He needs to learn about sacrifice because he tends not to sacrifice but to make others sacrifice to fulfill his own goals. He needs to learn about love so that he doesn't use people. He needs to learn about courage because with his leadership ability he's going to get into confrontation that will demand that he not compromise. And he needs to learn about faith so that he can believe God in any situation and God gave Peter all those lessons, all of them. And that's how He shaped him...that's how He shaped him.

What a man he was. What an incredible man. He molded him from Simon to Simon Peter to Peter. And by the time he writes this epistle, he's just Peter. Don't have to call him Simon anymore, he has victory. He's not even Simon Peter anymore because nobody is confused about where he stands now. He's Peter. He's Peter. His history can be told in his names; Simon, Simon Peter, Peter. And by the time he writes here he is Peter.

Jesus said originally to him in Matthew 4:18 to 20, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." By now he's a fisher of men. Satan wanted him. Luke 22:31 and 32, "Satan desires to have you, to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Oh how the Lord holds and molds His own. Isn't that marvelous? He holds and molds His own.

Peter could sing with the hymn writer, "O to grace, how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be, let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above." He had that proneness to wander.

Alexander White wrote, "Blame Peter as much as you like. Dwell upon the faults of his temperament and all the defects of his character and the scandals of his conduct as much as you like. I defy you to deny that with all of it he was not a very attractive and a very lovable man. The worst disease of the human heart is cold. Well with all his faults, and he was full of them, a cold heart was not one of them. All Peter's faults indeed lay in the heat of his heart. His hot heart was always in his mouth and he spoke it all times when he should have held his peace."

You have to love him. You have to love his zeal. It's the unanimous tradition, by the way, of the early church, that Peter was martyred just as Christ predicted, of course, in John 21. Tradition says, according to Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, that the cruelty was intensified because his wife was crucified first and he had to stand there and watch his wife be crucified. And he encouraged her with the words, "Remember the Lord." And when it came time for him to be crucified, he pleaded not to be crucified like his Lord, but rather to be turned upside down because he was not worthy to die as his Lord had died. And his testimony was so profound that tradition says his jailer believed in Christ.

Luke ends the story of Peter and his denial with a dramatic sentence. Luke 22:61 says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." I believe that it was probably that look that was riveted in his mind and always brought him back and always drew him back.

Another hymn writer sums up Peter's testimony, "O cross that liftest 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, (or, their blossoms read??) life that shall endless be." It was as if Peter lay in the dust and God picked him up again. Simon was the big beginning. He became all that the Lord could ever make a man. He became a fisher of men. Thousands were saved because of his life and are still being saved. This is the man who was a rock. This is the man who writes this wonderful epistle which shall in the weeks to come become a part of our very lives. Let's pray together.

Father, what a joy to study this man and we're going to see him literally oozing through the text of this epistle. What a joy to see You take such a brash, bold, thoughtless, pushy man and shape him and mold him into a great apostle. O Lord, what a blessing to see Your work in his life and to know how he enriches us through his epistles and his example. Make him dear to us, precious to us and the truth he teaches as well. For Christ's sake. Amen.

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