

# Peter, the Rock

When the Lord Jesus first met Simon, He gave him the new name "Peter," which means "rock," (Jn.1:41-42). This name signified the new character that Christ would change him to become. Yet before this time Simon was not at all like a strong, steady rock.

When he first began to follow Jesus, Simon was impulsive and quick to speak. Jesus had to rebuke him and even reply "Get behind me, Satan" on one occasion. Another time when Peter spoke on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was the voice of God the Father that reproved him!

Simon Peter was also unstable in his actions. We all remember how he started to walk on the water but then began to sink. In the Garden of Gethsemane it was Peter who grabbed the sword to defend Jesus, but then he forsook Christ to run away! No, Simon in his natural character was the opposite of being like a strong and steady rock.

Yet God's calling and plan for each of our lives is not based on our natural abilities- it is based upon His supernatural grace and creative ability! The Lord knew that Simon could be changed to become like a rock, because *Christ* is the Rock, (1 Cor.10:4, Deut.32:4). Our Lord Jesus is the Rock that the Church will be built upon- He is the Chief Cornerstone, (1 Pet.2:6). And as we follow Christ and become like Him, Peter wrote that we can all become living stones, (1 Pet.2:5).

There was one major event that deeply changed Simon from being impulsive and unstable, into becoming Peter the rock. That was when Peter denied the Lord. Christ had warned the apostles that they would forsake Him. Yet in his pride and zeal, Simon Peter claimed he would be faithful even to death. Peter could not see the mixture in his heart that had caused him to reject the word of the Lord and trust in his own ability and consecration. So Christ allowed Peter to go through a fiery trial to reveal the mixture in his heart, just as a fiery furnace can purify melted gold as the dross floats to the surface, (1 Pet.4:12 & 1:7, Job.23:10). When the rooster crowed after Peter cursed and denied the Lord, Peter was crushed as he saw the mixture and sin still in his heart.

Peter's great failure did not destroy his faith, but it worked a deep repentance into his heart. No longer would he place his confidence in himself. As he put his faith in Christ, the nature of the Rock became established in his character and life.

When the Risen Lord restored Peter to the ministry, it was at a miraculous catch of fish (Jn.21:1-19). Peter had first consecrated himself to the ministry in Luke chapter 5 when he had his first miraculous catch of fish. However, that first catch had been largely lost because the net had broken. This signified how Peter's first ministry had been weak and would fail. Yet when Peter was restored to the ministry at the second miraculous catch of fish, his net did not break. This also signified how Peter's restored ministry would not fail! Christ knew that he was now ready to be faithful even to death.

The events through the Book of Acts show us how Peter had become strong and stable, and was not intimidated by opposition of any kind. History records that when the Emperor Nero sentenced him to die on a cross, Peter asked his executioner to nail him upside-down. He said he was not worthy to die the same way that Christ had because he had denied the Lord; although Peter had gone on to faithfully fulfill all of his ministry.

The Scriptures show us that our earthly life and ministry is only the preparation for our eternal ministry and reward. In Revelation 21:9-21 we see that in the new heaven and earth, the New Jerusalem will have the twelve apostles as its foundation stones. From his first having been the faithful leader of the twelve original apostles, Peter the rock will have his ministry enlarged into his becoming one of the great foundation stones of the eternal, glorious Church!

Have you gone through a fiery trial that has exposed mixture still in your life? Just as Christ had prayed for Peter, He is now praying for you, (Heb.7:25 & 4:14-16). The Lord wants to restore you and give you a renewed walk with God that needs never fail! As Peter wrote near the end of his life, *"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,"* (1 Pet.5:10).