

The Gospel According to Peter

Peter never forgot what Jesus told him at Caesarea Philippi.

He knew Christ was the Rock and we are just living stones who are built into His habitation.

As we open to the 1st words of the Gospel by Mark – note what they are. “The beginning of the GOSPEL of Jesus”.

This whole book is about the Good News about Jesus.

Remember as we read those inspired words that they are the words written by John Mark recording the experience Peter had walking with Jesus for 3 plus years.

Remember what we learned about Peter last week?

- No one ever followed Jesus more closely than Peter.
- No one ever listened to Jesus more intently than Peter.
- No one ever knew Jesus better than Peter. And –
- No one ever wanted to imitate Jesus more completely than Peter.

Peter’s life is synonymous with the Gospel.

- Peter was called by Jesus to join the Gospel Team of Twelve.
- Peter watched Jesus minister the Gospel for over three years.
- Peter learned first hand and up close what the Gospel was and what he was to proclaim as Christ's messenger.
- Peter learned it, lived it, and preached it.

That total devotion to the Gospel changed his life forever. His world based on the shore line of Galilee was expanded by Jesus to embrace all peoples every where – and through the Gospels, the Book of Acts and 1st & 2nd Peter all people throughout all of time on Earth. That is why we can say Peter’s life was perhaps the greatest life ever lived for the Glory of God.

- Peter stands tallest among all that ever walked this planet.
- Peter, the man Jesus chose, the man Jesus trained, the man Jesus saved from death --
- Became Peter the man Jesus warned, the man Jesus watched deny Him, the man Jesus protected from the Devil --

- Became Peter the man Jesus restored, the man Jesus used, and the martyr who hung humbly upside down on a cross because he was unworthy to die as Jesus died.

If there is ever a person that shows the love of Jesus, the compassion of Jesus, the patience of Jesus, the forgiveness of Jesus, the restoring power of Jesus, and the empowerment for ministry that Jesus can give – it is Peter!

Next to the Name of Jesus there is probably no name more associated throughout history with Christianity than the name of – Peter. He was a pillar of the ancient church – a legend of a man. He is revered, venerated, and quoted around the world to this very day. But who was he? And more importantly -- what did he say about Jesus?

Today, we are going to uncover the Gospel according to Peter. What did the man closest to Jesus most of the time catch from the Master. And when Peter was unleashed by the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and after – what did he say. And then at the end of his life as he “stirs us up by way of remembrance” what did he want us to never forget? That is the Gospel According to Peter. And guess what – it is simple, direct, and to the point. Just like he was.

Do you remember Peter’s 1st encounter with Jesus in the Gospel by Mark? Peter couldn’t ever forget it. Turn there with me to Mark 1.16-20. Let’s read this incredible moment together.

In these few¹ lines we have one of the most famous acts of obedience in history. Christ came with a radical message and then a radical call, and these four responded in radical obedience. Today wherever men and women think of obedience, they sing of these four.

This meant an immensely expanded life. The horizon of these fishermen’s lives was bound by the margins of Galilee. Once in a while they went down to Jerusalem for a festival. But by and large they knew little more than the deck of their boat, the currents of the lake, and the handful of people in the marketplace. Their conversation consisted of trade talk, local gossip, family affairs, and Galilean politics. In a word, they were remarkably provincial, even to the extent of having their own telltale accent.

Then Christ came, and how their world changed! In place of Galilee came the world! John was to become Bishop of Ephesus, Peter went to Rome, and Andrew went as far as the borders of Russia! Their hearts were enlarged to take in the whole world.

¹ Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Mark—Jesus, Servant and Savior*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

Following Christ eliminates the trivial and expands our hearts. There is nothing that will make you grow more than following Christ. Peter and Andrew and James and John grew to undreamed of heights because they made themselves special objects of Christ's love. Next, they made themselves special objects of Christ's attention by choosing to follow him. His promise was, and is, "Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men." Christ committed himself to completing a miracle in them.

We could trace Peter's ministry as an exact model of obedience to Christ's last words at His ascension. Please turn there with me next to Acts 1.8.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Peter's planner had one aim in three stages: The Gospel out to Jerusalem, then to Judea & Samaria, and then to the furthest places. Jesus left him with that plan. He embraced it, and set out to do it. And ended up a martyr for it!

- Acts 2.14-39 he opens the Gospel to the Jews.
- In Acts 8.14-25 he opens the Gospel to the Samaritans
- In Acts 10.24-48 he opens the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- And from Acts 12 onward he lives the rest of his life going to the uttermost parts of the earth, spreading that Gospel.
- Then at the end of his life Peter writes two letters and in them says --
 1. I have – living hope 1st Peter 1.3; an incorruptible inheritance v. 4; an unfading reservation v. 4; and joy inexpressible v. 8.
 2. I am tasting of God's greatness personally (2.3)
 3. I am one of God's living stones, being built up in Christ as a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5)
 4. I am a member of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession and created to sing his praises (1 Peter 2:9-10)
 5. I have been given great and precious promises by God (2 Peter 1:4)

So what was the Gospel According to Peter? Just what we teach and preach today, calling men and women, boys and girls to be born a second time. So with all the confusion in Christendom today, what did he teach? Well, let's ask him by way of the New Testament inspired books and see:

How would he have answered questions both Catholics and Protestants ask in this ecumenical age? We have written and addressed some, as it were, to St. Peter.

His replies² are all taken from his own speeches and writings as we have them in the Holy Scriptures. We have used only the approved Confraternity edition of the Scriptures in giving St. Peter's replies.

As a fisherman to normal people like us, can you explain how a person can get to Heaven, Peter?

- "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).
- "To him all the prophets bear witness, that through his name all who believe in him may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).
- "Set your hope completely upon that grace which is brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Peter please explain to me who mediates my needs to God? Do I need someone to get me saved? Are there many ways to God?

- "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

How do we address our prayers Peter? Do we come through you, the Lord Jesus' mother, or some of the other great Apostles or Prophets?

- "Pray to God" (Acts 8:22)
- "Invoke as Father him who without respect of persons judges according to each one's word" (1 Peter 1:17).

Peter, can I buy God's grace in any way – through the Church, though others, or by something I can do?

- "Thy money go to destruction with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. Thou hast no part or lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness...and pray to God, that perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:20-22).
- "You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

What about traditions and laws that seem to grow over time – how many traditions do you expect us to keep as believers in Christ, Saint Peter?

- "Why then do you now try to test God by putting on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:10-11).

² These questions and answers are adapted from an article by John Phillips that was published in Moody Monthly April, 1982.

Peter, please explain what happens after we die? Is there anything to fear if we have been born again? Did Jesus tell you about fires to refine and purge away sins?

- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has begotten us again, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto a living hope, unto an incorruptible inheritance--undefiled and unfading, reserved for you in heaven. By the power of God you are guarded through faith for salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last time. Over this you rejoice" (1 Peter 1:3-6).

And Peter, how are we born again? Is it through baptism, or a sacrament that we become part of God's family?

- For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Peter, how important would you say that the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, are to us as Christians?

- The word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25).

Peter, tell us what Jesus meant when He picked you and said He would build His Church – was it to be built upon you? Do you or any of the other Apostles know what Jesus meant?

- 1 Pet. 2:4-7 "And coming to Him as a living stone (Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone". And as St. Paul said: 1 Cor. 3:11 -- Other foundation can no man lay....

Peter, what are priests to do as they serve in Christ's Church?

- You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may proclaim the perfections of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Should there be priests in the Church? And if so who should they be?

- Be you yourselves as living stones,...a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:15).

Do we have to do any amount of good works to help balance out our account with God? Can we help atone for any of our sins?

- Christ...has suffered for you,...who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sin, must live to justice; and by his stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:21, 24).

Who can we count on to open the way to God for us? Who does God listen to about our salvation and needed grace?

- Christ also died once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Peter, what is the best way for us to think about and commune with Jesus? What image should come to our minds -- should we think of

Christ as a baby in His mother's arms, as hanging dead upon the Cross, or what?

- Jesus Christ...is at the right hand of God, swallowing up death that we might be made heirs of eternal life; for he went into heaven, Angels, Powers and Virtues being made subject to him" (1 Peter 3:22).

Peter, now that you are near the end of your life, do you think that Jesus made you higher than the other Apostles or other servants of the Lord?

- Now I exhort the elders among you--I, your fellow elder" (1 Peter 5:1).

Peter, since Christ spoke with you directly about His Church at the start – is there a Vicar of Christ? Who is the true Sovereign Pontiff ? Who will reward faithful Church leaders?

- And when the Prince of the shepherds appears, you [The presbyters] will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4).

Will everyone eventually be saved and allowed into Heaven because God is so loving?

- But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by that same word have been stored up, being reserved for fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7).