

“From Reed to Rock”

HOLINESS
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Well, brothers, let's turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of 1 Peter. We began our introduction last week into the book of 1 Peter. The verses we'll have for our consideration this morning will be 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, continuing our understanding of this book of 1 Peter. Don, do you want to set the tone for us? Let's quietly go before the Lord, and realize that He is God. May our spirits reflect our reverence and our hallowedness and awe for who He is, and his Person. (*Music.*)

Gracious Lord, we humbly ask this morning that You would give us a sense of reverence for who You are, in all of Your glory, Your majesty and Your grace. Let us stand in awe of You. And Father, help us realize that studying the Scripture and learning should not stop at knowledge. It should go on to living, and living should go on to loving. Teach us how to love, as You have been a model of love for us sacrificially. May it be so for Jesus' sake. Open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for His glory. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Peter writes, in the very first chapter of the book of 1 Peter, in his greeting, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect, exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: One of the things that's very important to do when you're studying the books of Peter, as well as other books of the Bible, specifically those of the pastoral epistles written by the apostles, is that you've got to know the person, because when you understand the man Peter, you understand why the content of this book is a reflection of Peter's life. So it's important that before you understand the message, you need to understand the man, for we don't just go into the passage of Scripture and read it, and just start looking for insights and things that we can do. You've got to look behind the pages of the Scripture, and say, “Who is this man, Peter, that the Holy Spirit of God was pleased to be the one to write this particular message?” And the degree to which you and I understand the message of Peter will be based upon our understanding of the man Peter.

So today I want to take us through and get a glimpse of the man Peter, so that you'll understand, as we go verse by verse over the next couple of years, in these particular books of 1 and 2 Peter,--(it will probably take us that long to go through these books)—but we will understand the reason that the Holy Spirit selected Peter to be the one to write this particular message.

Now last week, in our introduction, we saw that the three major themes of the book of 1 Peter would be grace in salvation, grace in submission, and grace in suffering. Now why is it that Peter was the one who was foreordained to write this particular book to us

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today, that we can study it in the year 2014? Why is it that God singlehandedly picked him out to be the man who would write a message about grace and salvation, grace and submission, and grace in suffering? To understand those three major themes of the book of 1 Peter, you’ve got to understand the man, Peter. So let’s take an example this morning, an examination of who Peter is. I want to take you through a litany of the Scripture, to reveal to you who Peter is, who Peter was, and why it was that Peter wrote this particular message about the grace of God in salvation, the grace of God in submission, and the grace of God in suffering.

First of all, you’ll notice in verses 1 and 2 that the greeter is Peter himself. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” He is the one who is scribing these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The ones who are the greeted are the scattered aliens, elect exiles of the Dispersion. He’s writing to people all over Asia Minor, not just the church at Rome or the church at Jerusalem. He’s writing to exiles all over Asia Minor, who are now members of the body of Christ, both Jew and Greek. It’s a total example of the body of Christ. This is written to the body of Christ at large.

And notice his greeting. Grace and peace. “May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” Now why is it that Peter, in his greeting, would say—well, why didn’t he say, “Hello?” Why didn’t he say, “This is what I’m about.” Why did he say, “Grace and peace?” I think that the reason Peter said “grace and peace,” is because that is what he experienced in his own life as a man. He experienced God’s grace. He experienced God’s peace.

Now to understand that greeting, you need to understand the history of the man. So let me take you on a journey into all of the Scripture, and discover who the man Peter was, so we’ll understand the message that God was pleased to use in the man Peter.

First of all, let’s take a look at his names. His first name is Simon. He is referred to as Simon. That’s the Greek form of a Hebrew word, which is derived from the verb “to hear.” So one of the things we notice about Peter is that he is a hearer, because that’s what the word Simon means. It basically means someone who listens, somebody who hears. Now, did he do that well? Well, we’re going to see that he did that sometimes, (*laughter*), but sometimes he didn’t. Well, that’s an indication of his nonspiritual life, the word Simon.

And then you see the word Peter. That’s the Greek form of the Aramaic name Cephas, which means “stone,” or “rock.”

So you see, one time Peter is referred to as a hearer, and at other times you hear Peter referred to as a stone, or a rock that doesn’t move. And then you see the combination of Simon Peter, which is a combination of both of those words, the word Simon and the word Peter. That’s a very accurate New Testament style, referring to his nickname, which could be literally this, Simon Rock. That would be his nickname, Simon Rock.

Now let’s take a look at these three words—Simon, Peter, and Simon Peter in the Scripture, because of what they illustrate for us in his life. First of all, the word Simon is used 76 times in the Scripture. It’s always used in the context to refer to somebody who is hearing something. It’s a very secular name. So, when Peter is referred to as Simon,

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it’s referring to his secular life, which we’re going to examine. That could also be described of his sinful life. His secular, sinful life would be the term Simon.

Then you come to the word Peter. That is used six times in the New Testament. That could be his spiritual identification or name. You’ll notice that in John chapter 1, verse 42, that Jesus changes his name to Peter, because He gave him a spiritual identity. He went from Simon the hearer to Peter the rock.

And then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 22, Paul refers to Apollos, or Cephas, or Peter. In other words, you don’t boast about men. And so, you see that this is a description of his name Peter as his spiritual name, whereas the word Simon would be his secular name.

And then you put the two together—Simon Peter. That’s used about 17 times in the Scripture. You’ll notice, in John 13, verse 9, that Jesus refers to him as Simon Peter, when He washes the disciples’ feet. He refers to him as Simon Peter. Why does He refer to him as Simon Peter? We’re going to discover that today, as we look at some of these references to Peter.

Peter was a man who was trying to do the right thing, but he was unable, or he did it with a wrong motive. That would be the description of Simon Peter. He was trying to do the right thing, but he couldn’t do it. Or, he was trying to do the right thing with the wrong motive. That’s what you would see in the history of the name Simon Peter. So the names of Simon, Peter, and Simon Peter reveal a lot about the picture of the life of Simon Peter that we want to examine.

First of all, the word Simon could mean his shifting style of life, his sinful life. Simon Peter would be his searching life, and Peter would be his spiritual life. So you see him going from shifting—Simon, to his searching—Simon Peter, to Peter, which would be his spiritual life. So you see a transition in his life, that is really summarized by the phrase “grace and peace.” That’s why he wrote that phrase, because he understood two things. He understood the peace of God, and he understood the grace of God, because he had gone from his shifting, to searching, to spiritual life, and that was all a function of God’s grace. That’s why he says to them, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you,” because that’s exactly what he experienced himself in his own life. He is giving away to somebody else what God had given to him. And what is that called, brothers?

Participant: Ministry.

Bruce: Ministry! Ministry is giving away to somebody else what God has given to you. Peter is doing nothing more than what we’ve been saying for years. When God gives you something, you give that away, and that is ministry. You don’t go create ministry. God creates the ministry in who you are as a man, because ministry is what? Who you are, where you are. Remember, ministry is not your job. Look at the back of the little card we gave you. Ministry is who you are, where you are. And that’s the result of who you are as a man, who you are as a person. That’s exactly what you see in those words, “Grace and peace be unto you,” from Peter the greeter.

Let me take you through a little litany of his life. I’m going to take you through a journey of Scripture, brothers, to help you understand why Peter went from shifting, to searching, to spiritual Peter. He went from being a reed to a rock. That’s exactly what

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God wants to do with us. He wants to take us from people who are like a willow being swept by the wind, and moved back and forth, to a rock who is very stable. He wants us to go from being a reed to a rock, just like he did Peter.

Let me give you some illustrations of the characteristics of his life. First of all, he was naturally impulsive. Any of you like that? (*Laughter.*) Naturally impulsive? You see that in Matthew chapter 14, verse 28. He was also very tender-hearted and affectionate. Matthew 26, verse 75. He was full of contradictions. At times, he was very presumptuous. Matthew 16, verse 22. Other times he was very timid and cowardly. Matthew 14, verse 30. Sometimes he was very self-sacrificing. Mark 1, verse 18. Yet, at the same time, he could be very self seeking. Matthew 19:27.

He was gifted with spiritual insight. John chapter 6, verse 68. At the same time, he was slow to comprehend deeper truths. Matthew 15, verse 15. He made two great confessions in his life of faith in Christ. You’ll see them recorded in Matthew chapter 16, verse 27, and John 6, verse 69. Yet, at the same time that he would make these very deep spiritual confessions, he was also the most cowardly denier. Mark chapter 14, verses 67-71.

Now that was a man who was a man of contradictions. He was impulsive, he was compassionate. Spiritual insight, but cowardly. Tenderhearted, but frustrated. Does that describe anything that you recognize? It’s a description of me. That’s exactly who I am. I’m just like Peter! That’s why this is such a wonderful book for us as men to study, because you’re going to see that God is going to take a man who had all these characteristics: gifted with spiritual insight, yet could not comprehend deeper truths. Here is a man who was naturally impulsive, tenderhearted. At times, he was very full of contradictions, timid and cowardly, self-sacrificing, self-seeking, gifted with spiritual insight, slow to comprehend deeper truths. He made great confessions and he was a coward.

Yet, notice. That’s exactly what God does to us. He takes us in those convoluted expressions of our character, and He creates us to be a rock. And that’s what He did with Peter.

So what does Jesus do? He re-names him, and He gives him a new name. He gives him the name Peter, which means “rock.” He’s basically saying this: “Peter, this is who I’m going to make you into. I’m going to take you from being a reed that blows in the wind, and I’m going to make you into a rock.”

Now that’s why it’s so important, friends, that you and I understand that when God gives us a name, in the Scripture, like the body of Christ, oaks of righteousness. That’s what He wants to make you into. The body of Christ, that’s what He’s making you into. My beloved, that’s what He is making you into. You see, all of the descriptions of the names that God gives the church is because that’s what He wants to make you into. And that’s exactly what we see in Peter’s life. He went from a shifting reed to a stable rock. And you see that in the transition of his name—from Simon, to Simon Peter, to Peter.

Let me give you another illustration of this. Go to Judges chapter 6, verses 11 and 12. It’s the re-naming of Gideon. In Judges chapter six, we’re told that Gideon was hiding in a winepress because the enemy was invading his land. And how does God greet him?

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With what terminology? He says this to a man who is hiding in the winepress, avoiding the enemy. He says this, “Hail, mighty warrior!”

Now what does that mean? Here is a man who is hiding from the enemy, in the winepress, and God addresses him as “a mighty warrior.” What does that mean? It means “this is what I’m going to make you into.”

That’s what you see in Peter. “Simon! Now you’re Peter, because I’m going to take you from being a reed, and make you into a rock, from being shifting wind to being a stable rock. That’s what I’m going with your life.”

That’s why it’s so important that we understand Peter’s life. Now let’s look, and examine some more things about Peter’s life.

On your outline, I’ve got some contrasts in Peter’s life, because the important thing, brothers, is to see this. The contrast of who he was, compared to the contrast of who God made him into. That’s our great hope, because if He can do that to Peter, He can do that to you and me. That’s why it’s so important that we study the life of Peter.

Let me show you the contrasting examples of his life. Now these are all going to be taken from the Gospels, primarily the chapters of Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 18. I’ll give you the verses, and as we go through them, you can follow your outline. But the important thing, brothers, is this. We’re trying to see the contrasting style of his life, how God took him from being a reed, and making him into a rock. That’s what we need to examine. When you understand that in the first two verses of the book of 1 Peter, you’ll understand why the message is about submission in suffering, because that’s exactly what God took him through to make him into a rock.

So, first of all, let’s take an example of his unholiness. Take a look at the steps to Peter’s fall, if you want to call it that.

First of all, he boasted too much. Now, let’s go and take a look at these. Go to Matthew chapter 26. He boasted too much. Pride is the result of comparison. The devil is content that we should excel in good works, especially when he can make us proud of them. Oh, yes, he is very interested in our doing good works. But he wants us to be proud of them. One of the things we have to be careful of is that we don’t boast too much.

Look at Matthew chapter 26, beginning at verse 30. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night. For it is written, “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.” Peter answered him, “Though they all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away!”

What did he do? He fell away. Guys, you’ve got to be careful about boasting too much. Satan wants us to be involved in wonderful spiritual things, especially when he can make us proud of it, because we begin to think what? It’s my ministry! How many times have you heard somebody say, “It’s my ministry?”

Participant: All the time.

Bruce: All the time we say that, because we think that we possess it. We have the privilege of being involved in what God is doing, but it’s not our ministry? Who is the

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author of ministry? He is Himself. It's not our ministry; it's His! We're just participants in it. We've got to be very, very careful about not boasting too much. Yes, Don?

Don: I would say, Bruce, that Peter probably thought that he had the best of intentions.

Bruce: Oh, he did!

Don: Whether it's here, or when he says, when Christ talks about his death, “This will never happen to you!”, or “You will never wash my feet.” I'm sure he thought he was doing Christ a favor, and he had really good intentions, but, like you said, Satan is so subtle.

Bruce: One of the contradictions of Peter's life is that he wanted to do the right thing, but he had the wrong motive. Now remember when we studied that a couple years ago? That sometimes, when you want to do the right thing, and you can't do it, that you get credit for the motive? You see, the real issue is, what's the motive behind it? And we've got to be very, very careful that, in our doing spiritual things, that we don't have a sense of pride, because we will be just like Peter, who boasted too much. It starts right there, with comparison.

I would offer this. The next ingredient in his life is that he prayed too little. Not only did he boast too much, but he prayed too little. Look at Matthew chapter 26, verse 40. It's the betrayal and the arrest of Jesus. You pick it up in verse 47. “And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, “So you would not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation! The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

What did Jesus do before He went into the situation? He was praying. What did Peter do? He was sleeping. So he prayed too little. Not only did he boast too much, but he prayed too little. Prayer is preparation.

Now, if you follow this through the rest of the way, in John 18, you'll notice that, in the next event, you see the same situation—two men responding identically different to the same situation. Jesus was praying, and when the people came to arrest Him, he said, “How can the Scriptures be fulfilled, unless it happens this way?” He was prepared to give the right response. What did Peter do? He prayed too little. He was sleeping. What did he do? (*Paraphrase.*) “I've got to defend God.” So he took out his sword and cut the ear off of the high priest's slave.

You see, prayer is our first response, not our last one.

You see, prayer is our first response, not our last one. But Peter not only boasted too much, but he prayed too little. Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will make a man cease from prayer. Prayer should be our first option, not our last, because prayer is preparation for the next proper response. You see that in the contrasting lives of Peter versus Jesus. Prayer is preparation for the next response.

So, not only did he boast too much. He prayed too little. I think he acted too fast. Look at John chapter 18, the illustration I just gave you. We'll be looking at verses 10 and 11. Let's back up to verse 7, please.

“So He asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He. If you seek Me, let these men go.” This was to

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fulfill the word that had been spoken: “Of those whom He gave Me, I have lost no one.” Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

You see, not only did he boast too much, and pray too little, but he acted too fast. Our practices are the best indications of our principles. We’re not call to defend God; we’re called to trust God. So be sure that you don’t boast too much, you don’t pray too little, and that you don’t act too fast.

Next, I would offer for your consideration that he followed too far. Go back to Matthew 26, down to verse 58. “But those who had seized Jesus led Him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders had gathered. And Peter was following Him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest. And going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end.”

Notice, he was following at a distance. I think he followed too far. If you want to run from God, God will give you the horse and the spurs to do it. We’ve just got to be careful that we don’t follow too far. Backsliding never starts with a bang. Backsliding begins slowly, quietly, and very, very subtly, because we follow too far. Don’t boast too much. Don’t pray too little, and don’t follow too far behind the Lord Jesus.

Next, I think we see in Peter’s life, in the contrasting of a reed to a rock, that he mingled too closely. Go to John 18, verse 18. “Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold. And they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.”

He mingled too closely with the crowd. He boasted too much, prayed too little, followed too far, and mingled too closely with the world and the crowd.

Counterfeit friendships are worse than counterfeit money. Nothing is more dangerous, as John Calvin said, than associating with the ungodly. So he boasted too much, prayed too little, followed too far, mingled too closely.

And I think he denied too quickly. Go back to John 18, verse 25, please. “Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of His disciples, are you?” He denied it, and said, “I am not!” One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” Peter again denied it. And at once, a rooster crowed.”

So, not only did Peter boast too much. He prayed too little, he acted too fast, he followed too far, he mingled too closely with the crowd, and then he denied too quickly, to save himself. What’s that called? Peer pressure.

I don’t think that the term “peer pressure” is the right description; I think it’s “peer acceptance.” See, in my mind, it’s not peer pressure; it’s peer acceptance, because the issue is this. Who do I want to be accepted by? Do I want to be accepted by my schoolmates? What do teenagers struggle with? We call that, sociologically, “peer pressure.” But it’s really this: peer acceptance. Who do they want to be accepted by? The parents? The parents’ friends? Or their friends in the crowd? Do you see how subtly that creeps in?

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That is one of the things that Peter did. He denied too quickly because of peer acceptance. He wanted to be accepted in the crowd, to save himself.

Notice what Jesus said. When you deny the Lord in order to protect yourself, that is the moment you have become unprotected. Jesus says it this way in Mark 8:38. “If anyone is ashamed of me and My words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father’s glory, with the holy angels.” You see, the moment you try to protect yourself is the moment that you become unprotected, because we deny too quickly our ability to trust Christ.

And lastly, I would say this. It resulted in blasphemy. He denied too quickly, and it resulted in blasphemy. Go to Mark chapter 14, verses 70 and 71. “And the servant girl” (in verse 69), “saw him, and began to say to them” (to the bystanders, to the crowd), “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear. “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately, the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he broke down, and wept.”

You see, he boasted too much, he prayed too little, he acted too fast, he followed too far, he mingled too closely, he denied too quickly, and it resulted in blasphemy. And where does it start? It starts with pride. What leads to blasphemy? It starts with pride. Pride is the idolatrous worship of ourselves. If there is no room for God, then a person is full of himself.

Now, notice. That’s a description of Peter. Let me just summarize it for you. This is a contrasting style of life. This is the man who wrote this book about the grace of God in salvation, the grace of God in submission, and the grace of God in suffering. This is the man—and we just looked at his lifestyle—who wrote this book.

And that’s why, in his very first greeting, he says, “Grace and peace unto you,” because, if anybody experienced the grace and peace of God it was Peter, because of his contrasting lifestyle. He went from being a shifting reed to a solid rock. He went from being shiftless to being stable. Shifting Simon becomes the solid rock.

And notice. The last thing I would say in Peter’s life, which shows the transition from his ungodly life to his holy life, would be the verse we just read in Mark 14:72. He mourned when he was rebuked. Yes, he had all those other contrasts. He boasted too much, followed too far, mingled too closely, acted too quickly, prayed too little, denied too quickly, which resulted in blasphemy, and ended up in a rebuke. But notice this, in verse 72. “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he broke down and wept. The last thing I would say about Peter’s contrasting life is this. He mourned when he was rebuked.

What is our response? When the Scripture rebukes us, what is our response? “I didn’t do that. That’s her fault. Look what she stimulated in me!” (*Laughter.*) We always have a tendency to blame it on other people, because we are sinful in ourselves, because it starts with pride. “I won’t do that,” we tell ourselves. And yet, we know we’re just like

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Peter, aren't we. We're like a shifting reed being turned into a stable rock, because of the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So one of the things that we need to understand, brothers, is this. Do we mourn over our sin when we are rebuked? You see, after the possession of his life, by the Holy Spirit of God, Peter went through a radical change. That's why I want you to see the contrast of his lifestyle, all the things that we've just looked at.

All of a sudden, now, let me take you to the other side of the picture. Let me show you Peter, the rock. I've shown you Simon the reed. Let me show you Peter, the rock. Let's go to the book of Acts. I want you now to see that Peter's characteristic style of life is courageous and immovable. He went from being a shifting reed to being courageous and immovable, the solid rock.

Go to the book of Acts, please. I want you to see the change, the contrast in his life that the Holy Spirit of God made when He implanted him with the righteousness of God Himself, through the Holy Spirit.

In Acts chapter 4, verses 19 and 20, notice this in his speech. We've heard him say, “I don't know Him!” That was his speech then. Notice his speech now, in chapter 4, verse 19.

“So they called them and charged them not to speak, or to teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

How can a man who prayed too little, followed too far,--and all of those other characteristics,--how can that be a man who now says, (*paraphrase*), “I can only repeat what I've seen, and that is the grace of God and the peace of God that has invaded my life?” That's ministry. But notice, he's now courageous and immovable in his speech. His speech changed.

What are the things you talk about? What do you talk about in your life? Remember that wonderful description Jesus says, that “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks?” You see, brothers, what you and I talk about is probably the greatest indication of your spiritual maturity. Listen to yourself talk.

Peter changed the verbs and the words that he was using because something radically changed in his life. He went through a marvelous transition by the grace of God, and now he experienced God's grace and peace, and his language changed, and his speech was totally transformed.”

Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” That is one of the most convicting things in my own life, as I listen to what I talk about, and say, “Is that really who I am?” That's a reflection of me! What I just said is a reflection of me. That's why, sometimes, I really disappoint myself, because that's not what I want to say. But I said it. I'm the shifting reed. But I realize that God, over time, through the difficulties of life, which are a struggle and a battle, is going to make me into a rock. I've got to be careful about what I talk about, because it is a reflection of me.

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“Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” Peter changed what he talked about. He became courageous and immovable, not only in his speech, but in his obedience. Go to Acts chapter 5, verses 28 and 29.

Verse 27. “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned him, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in His name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this Man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” His life changed to one of obedience.

That’s why we’re going to talk a lot about grace in submission, because Peter is an example of going from a shifting reed to a stable rock in a life of obedience. He purified himself by the obedience to the Scripture, as we will see later on.

Let me take you to 1 Peter for a moment. Go down to 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 22. “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly, from a pure heart.” How do you purify yourself? By obedience to what? To the Word, to the Scripture. That’s exactly what you see in Peter’s life. Something happened to Peter when God invaded his life through the work of the Holy Spirit, and gave him a heart for Himself. He not only became stable in his speech, but he became solid and stable in his obedience.

And one more example of the contrasting of Peter’s life, which would be chapter five of the book of Acts, verses 40 and 42. “And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them, and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer honor in His name. And every day in the temple, and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Who better to talk about the grace in suffering than Peter?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because he experienced that. We’re going to learn a lot from Peter about suffering, because he went from being a shifting reed to a stable rock, and his life was radically changed, and the Holy Spirit invaded his life. He became courageous and immovable.

And Peter’s life offers us hope. I find a lot of hope in Peter, because I see so much of myself in Peter. He offers us hope, because, if you are in Christ, then you are one of God’s elect. You’ve been chosen in Him for two things. Look at verse 2 of 1 Peter chapter 1.

Back to our introductory greeting. “According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit,” for two things, “for obedience to Jesus Christ, and for sprinkling with His blood.”

Now that phrase “sprinkling with His blood” is an interesting phrase. It is a term relegated to the nation of Israel. The sprinkling of blood had three symbolisms to it, three meanings. What Peter is now saying is that the sprinkling of blood applies to the whole church. It applies to anybody who is one of the elect, not just the church of Israel, but now to God’s elect. Notice to whom he is writing, “to those who are elect exiles.” He is

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saying that the sprinkling of the blood applies to all of you who have been elected before the foundation of the world.

The sprinkling of blood had three applications in the Old Testament economy. First of all, after a leper was cleansed, he was sprinkled with blood, because it was the sign of cleansing. The sprinkling of blood was the sign of cleansing to the nation of Israel.

Secondly, when they sprinkled blood on the high priest, it set them off for service. And then lastly, the sprinkling of blood was an indication of the covenant relationship that God had with His chosen people, the elect.

So now, Peter is using that phrase “the sprinkling of blood” to say this. This applies to the whole church, not just the nation of Israel. It applies to the elect. And, if you are one of God’s elect, then you have been called to obedience, and the sprinkling of blood, to cleansing, preparation for service, and the covenant relationship that God now has with you as a heavenly Father, who chose you from before the foundation of the world. He is now into a covenant relationship with you because of the sprinkling of the blood, the shed blood of Christ. So he is applying this Old Testament language to the New Testament church, and saying it’s all of God’s elect.

So, what have we been called to do? Peter offers hope to us, and we’ve been called to obedience and a holy life. That’s why we’re studying the book of 1 Peter, because it deals with holiness—obedience to Christ, and holy living. He went from a reed to a rock. And that’s exactly, brothers, what Christ wants to do to you and me. He wants to take us from being a shifting reed to a stable rock.

Here is one of my favorite Puritan expressions. “Do not fear the doctrine of election. If God had not chosen you, you would never have chosen Him. If He had not chosen you before the foundation of the world, before you were born, He would certainly have no reason to choose you after you were born.” (*Laughter.*)

Let me give you that again. Do not fear, brothers, the doctrine of election. It’s basically this: to deny election is to deny the mercy of God. To deny the doctrine of election is to deny the fact that God is a God of mercy. Yes, Don?

Don: I don’t think that it’s by accident that, in verse 2, Peter mentions election and foreknowledge at the same time.

Bruce: Absolutely, yes.

Don: Foreknowledge is such a rich term. Most people think that it means that, well, God knows who is going to be saved and who isn’t, and He looks down through the corridors of time. But it’s so much more than that. It’s love, it’s affection.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Don: “Adam knew his wife,” etc.—that kind of knowledge.

Bruce: Good insight, Don, that’s exactly right. It doesn’t mean that He knew who was going to choose Him. It was that He chose who was going to choose Him, because they would choose Him after He chose them. That’s what it means. Yes, please?

Participant: Romans 8:29?

Bruce: 8:29, exactly. Romans 8:29 is a good cross reference. Yes, sir?

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Participant: It must have been a tipping point in Simon Peter’s life, when he went from the reed to the rock, and I’m trying to picture it in my own mind. I know it was not after the Resurrection.

Bruce: No.

Participant: Because he still had a problem. And then he was sent to Galilee, to the body of water, and it wasn’t then, either. And then Christ showed up, and made breakfast for them, and it still was not the tipping point.

And then He asked him, “Do you love Me?” Now that’s where, I think, the change starts.

Bruce: I think that’s when the change became evident. The change began when he mourned over his rebuke. What do we see in Mark 14:72? He broke down and wept. That’s the beginning of it. Now we see the fruit of that, when He says, “Do you love Me?” And Peter says, (*paraphrase*), “Yes, I do.” That’s the evidence that something occurred prior to that, and that was his repentance, because he mourned over his rebuke. It starts right there.

Participant: He was annoyed.

Bruce: All I’m saying is, remember, the beginning. Mourning and repentance is only the beginning. It doesn’t mean perfection. It just means that you now have a different disposition, and a different desire, and the Holy Spirit feeds that over time. That’s why the Christian life is a fight. It’s a battle. It’s a struggle.

Participant: I think what turned it was when he saw the Ascension.

Bruce: Well, you can ask him when you see him. (*Laughter.*) That’s a good question, though. Yes, Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: I take some comfort that even after he was so changed, and gave such great leadership, he also had to do an adjustment with St. Paul with the Galatian situation, because he had given into the folks from Jerusalem.

Bruce: Yes. We’re going to see that Peter does not mean perfection. It means that he is a stable rock. And that’s why he is such a great person for us to study, because you’re going to see the contradictions and the struggle. Remember, the Christian life is not yielding yourself to Christ. There is only one time in the New Testament where the word “yield” is ever referred to, and it’s in Romans chapter 6, when you yield your members of your body to acts of righteousness, not sinfulness. That’s what you yield. The term “yield” doesn’t mean that you sit back and just let go and let God, and you do nothing. The Christian life is a fight. As I mentioned, there are 25 to 30 verses that talk about the Christian life as a fight. It’s a struggle. That’s what you’re going to see in Peter’s life.

And that’s why it’s so important that we understand these three things: the grace of God in salvation, the grace of God in submission, and the grace of God in suffering. We’ll see all of those. Yes, sir?

Participant: If we are elected before we are born, then why is there a Judgment Day, because God already (unclear?)

Bruce: That’s correct.

Participant: And if He is judging them on Judgment Day, is he judging himself, or is he—

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Bruce: No. We’re held accountable for our own choices.

Participant: But He already elected us.

Bruce: That’s correct.

Participant: The people who are not elected, He knows that they are going to hell.

Bruce: That’s correct. And what is our responsibility?

Participant: When He created us, He elected us for heaven.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: He elected the others for hell.

Bruce: No, they made their own choice. You have to understand this. There is a difference between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Those two things go together. God sends no one to hell. They choose to go there themselves, because of the choices they make. The gospel is the means by which Paul says this. “I’m not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of salvation unto all that believe.” It is the message. Our responsibility is what? Not to figure out who is and who isn’t elect, but to believe. That’s the command. The gospel is a command, folks, it’s not an option!

Participant: That’s not what I’m saying, though.

Bruce: I know. You’re right, you’re right!

Participant: He elected some to go to hell.

Bruce: They choose to go to hell themselves.

Participant: Yes, but they didn’t choose, because God made them that way.

Men: No, no.

Participant: Before they were born.

Bruce: I didn’t say that. You’re absolutely right. I’m saying, “both and.” I’m saying that God chose you before the foundation of the world, and that they choose to go to hell themselves. Now can I balance that out? No. But I have to teach both sides. God is absolutely sovereign, and man is absolutely responsible. Now can I balance that out? No, God alone can do that. Yes, Don?

Don: He passes by them. They are already candidates for hell when they’re born. In His infinite wisdom He doesn’t give them the grace and mercy and the ability to believe. He passes by the reprobate.

Bruce: That’s good. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: It seems to me that election presupposes the Fall.

Bruce: Correct.

Bishop Rodgers: When He looks at us, He sees us as fallen, and then He makes the choice.

Bruce: That’s correct. We have to understand this. We were born in sin. Let me give you just a crass example. We need to understand this. We are not the accused awaiting trial. We’re the convicted, awaiting execution. You’ve got to start with that. Those are the implications of the Fall. If we don’t understand the implications of the Fall, then everything I’ve said doesn’t make any sense. You’ve got to understand the implications of the Fall. We are not the accused, awaiting trial for our sins. We are the convicted, awaiting execution, because the wages of sin is what?

Men: Death.

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Bruce: Death. Did you ever sin? Then why are you alive? God’s mercy. “The soul that sins shall die,” the Old Testament says. Why are you alive? God’s mercy. So we are the convicted, awaiting execution.

Now let’s just take that example. Let’s say that there is a house of ten convicted criminals awaiting execution, and the house is on fire. And the fireman runs in, and he grabs six people, and he pulls them out and he saves their lives. They’re all convicted, and on their way to execution, and he saves six of them. What are you going to say? “That’s not fair?” You see, if you save one, you’d have to say what? That’s an act of mercy, because he saved one. They all are going that way. He was just pleased to go in and save six. And you can’t argue with that, because, if you deny that, then you’re denying a God who is merciful. He saved who He wanted to save.

Now, can we rationalize that and understand that with our finite minds? Absolutely not. We can’t understand it. But you have to trust the grace of God, and realize that it’s a both/and, not an either/or.

Participant: I think that one of the big things we need to focus on, too, is that the change in Peter came at Pentecost, because, in Acts 4, verse 8, he’s talking in the power of the Holy Spirit, not in His own power. So wouldn’t you think that, when we have this battle you’re talking about, it’s us fighting ourselves, to yield to what the Holy Spirit wants us to do.

Bruce: That’s being an aggressive responder; it’s not yielding. Get over this word “yield.” It’s too passive. Be an aggressive responder! That’s an active verb! That’s what it means to believe. Believe is a very active word. It’s a fight; it’s a struggle. It’s a war. You’ve got to mortify your sins. You’ve got to put to death your sins. It’s a struggle, guys. That’s not yielding anything! I’ve got to fight that. That’s what I’ve got to do every day. That’s why it’s so important for us to understand Peter’s life. It’s a fight, it’s a struggle. And you get that through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, as he said in verse 1. It’s the sanctification and work of the Holy Spirit that does that.

So, brothers, there is much for us to study. We don’t have all the answers today. We won’t have all the answers at the end of our two- or three-year study. But we’ll just know more than we did when we began. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: Paul says that the clay cannot call the potter to account. It’s inappropriate for us to ask God to justify Himself. There’s an arrogance in that.

Bruce: That’s right. For me to assume that I should understand everything that I just said is a sense of arrogance and pride. That puts me in God’s place. There needs to be the mystery! Remember, the gospel of Christ is a mystery! And the mystery is this: “Christ in us, the hope of glory.”

Now, one more thing about the book of 1 Peter is this. Peter is the apostle of hope. John is the apostle of love, and Paul is the apostle of faith. There’s hope in this book, because we are the guys who are the reeds being changed into rocks, just like Peter.

Let’s pray. Lord, help us realize that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a command, not an option. And when somebody disobeys the gospel by not believing, they are held accountable. That is their personal responsibility to believe. Give us the grace to believe, Father, for Jesus sake. And all the brave men said, “Amen!”