

## Presenting the Theme

I think everyone likes stories, whether fictional or about real people. We know that Jesus used stories a lot in His teaching and, in the Old Testament, God teaches us a lot through the life stories of people.

In the Old Testament God teaches us a lot through the life stories of people – biographies.

**2 Tim. 3 v 16 (ESV) All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

So, all these biographies are there to profit us: to reprove us, correct us and train us in righteousness. In order that we might grow into mature, rounded, useful people of God.

In both the Old and New Testaments, we have a record of real people of faith, who had character flaws, and whose mistakes and sins are faithfully recorded for us to learn from.

So, we have the stories of people we can relate to, and today, I want to consider **Simon Peter**, whose life is pretty much summed up in the **walking on the water** episode in Matthew 14:

In a life-threatening storm on Galilee, the disciples saw Jesus walking towards the boat on the water. Naturally enough, they were terrified. When He realised it was Jesus, Simon Peter, in an amazing burst of faith, said to Jesus, “If it’s You, Lord, command me to come to You on the water.” So, Jesus said, “Come!” and Simon Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water towards Jesus, **until he realised what he was doing** – walking on a deep lake in a storm – **human thinking** took over, **his faith melted away** and he began to sink. He cried, “Lord, save me!” and, of course Jesus lifted him up and into the boat.

Simon Peter’s life was one of boldly stepping out in faith, but human thinking so often caused him to fail.

But, as we look again at his triumphs and disasters, let’s consider what **we** can learn for our profit, correction and training in righteousness.

## Sermon

When you think of Simon Peter, what incidents come to mind? *Responses.....*

Well-known as they are, we're going to briefly look at some of these today and see what we can learn from them.

Simon Peter was a bold, faithful believer who received great revelation, made great statements and actions of faith and, occasionally, failed.

In Matthew 16 v 13 – 20, we have his great statement of faith 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!'

### **But let's back track to when Simon first came to Jesus. John 1 35 - 41**

Andrew, his brother was a disciple of the prophet and baptiser, John. Seeing Jesus approach, John said, 'Look, here is the Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world. I saw the Holy Spirit descend from heaven and rest on Him and I bear witness that this is the Son of God'. Andrew and another of John's disciples followed Jesus and spent the day with Him.

Then, Andrew went to his brother, Simon and said, 'We have found the Messiah'.

So, this thought of Jesus as the promised anointed One, was already in Simon's mind, and when Andrew brought him to meet Jesus, Jesus looked at him and spoke prophetically over him:

**'You are Simon Bar-Jonas. You shall be called Cephas.' Cephas is the Aramaic equivalent of Petros – a rock.**

Simon was naturally a pretty confident guy; I wonder how he felt when Jesus called him Rock?

**In Luke 5 v 1 – 11** Before Jesus called His disciples, Jesus used Simon's boat as a preaching platform and then told him to put his boat out into deep water for a catch. Simon said, '**No point, we fished all night and caught nothing.**' Perhaps, he saw Jesus' expression, because he went on, '**But, OK, if You say so.**' They put out the nets and caught so many fish that the boats were overloaded and in danger of sinking. Simon's response to this was to **fall at Jesus' knees in worship and cry, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'**

He had already come to think that Jesus was the expected Messiah, perhaps with only a vague understanding of what that meant; now, he saw something much more.

The effect on Simon in the revelation of Jesus' otherness, was to become aware of his own unworthiness and sin. Like when Isaiah had the vision of God in all His glorious holiness.

There, on the beach, Jesus called Simon to follow Him and he and Andrew, James and John, all fishermen, became Jesus' first disciples.

Simon had another revelation of Jesus' authority over nature when the boat Jesus and the disciples were in was hit by **a terrible storm** and in danger of drowning them all. Jesus spoke to the storm and the wind and waves died down. 'Who is this who is obeyed by wind and waves?' they asked.

The point I'm making is that the revelation and declaration Of Matthew 16 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' didn't come out of the blue. There was a progression of revelation –

He's the Messiah: He is special –

He heals, He commands nature – and fish and storms obey Him, He expels demons;

He knows things and does things and says things that are beyond our understanding.

Gradually, all of his experience of Jesus gels into this knowledge – **He really is Messiah** – He actually is who John the Baptist said he is – the **Son of God, the Promised, anointed One.**

In our life with the Lord – we start off born of the Spirit – healthy little babes, hopefully avidly drinking in the milk of His word – growing, learning, understanding more and more as we move on to solid food. As Alice showed us a few weeks ago, we still need the milk – the basic doctrines, but we should be constantly digging deeper into God's word for the solid nutrition, so, **our understanding of Father, Son and Holy Spirit will deepen and become more real.**

Like Simon Peter and Isaiah, the more clearly we see Who He is in His glorious holiness, the greater will be our understanding of our own sin and need of the Saviour.

After Simon Peter's great revelation and declaration of who Jesus is in **Matt. 16**, Jesus says again, **Simon Bar-Jonas, you are Peter ..'**

Jesus used the word Aramaic word, Cephas – equivalent to Greek, Petros, which means a piece of rock. So, He was again, prophetically calling Simon a piece of rock – in English – Peter.

Then He said, 'On this rock ...' but He used a slightly different form - Petra, rather than Petros, Petra is a mass of rock. Simon Peter: Petros is a piece of rock, but Jesus said he will build His church on this mass of rock.

There are differences of opinion as to what Jesus meant by the petra, the mass of rock on which he would build His church.

Personally, I think that the Petra, the great mass of rock, the foundation for His church, that Jesus was referring to, is **the truth of Who He is**, as seen in Simon's declaration, and **His teaching.**

I like the thought that Simon Peter was a bit of rock. We say someone is **a chip off the old block**, when we mean they are like their parent. Simon Peter was perhaps *becoming* a chip off the rock of His mentor and messiah, Jesus.

In our reading from Peter's letter to the dispersed Christians, he refers to stones and he uses a different Greek word – **lithou** for **the Living Stone** – obviously meaning Jesus – and **lithoi** for us smaller building stones being built up into His church.

Don't think of nice regular bricks; a better image is of **dry-stone walling**. The waller looks around for the right stone to fit in the wall, then he **chips bits off it** until it is a good fit. The Lord has **chosen us** and He is **shaping us**, chipping bits off and fitting us into the **right place in His church**.

The gospel writers tell us that, **after Simon Peter's tremendous statement of faith**, he was then used by Satan, the adversary, to try to dissuade Jesus from doing the **Father's will in the Father's way**.

He was horrified that Jesus was heading for suffering and death and, taking Jesus aside, said, '**Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You!**' Jesus rebuked him and explained to Simon Peter that he was not seeing straight: '**You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.**'

**We all do it. We look at things from a human perspective** – through the lens of a human mind shaped by our **experiences**, our **upbringing**, our **culture** and the **current worldview**.

But, we have, in the scriptures, **a window into the mind of God**; and in **Jesus**, the Word or **communication of God**, God made flesh, we see **One Whose thoughts, words and acts are one with the Father's**.

If human reason and God's revelation disagree, guess who's wrong!

We must renew our minds in line with His Word.

**Transfiguration:** One day, Jesus took Simon Peter, James and John up a mountain and they saw Him become bright light like the sun and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him. This was so amazing that Simon Peter suggested building three shelters so that they could stay there. But as he was speaking **the glory of the Father** – like a bright shining cloud came over them all and they heard God's voice affirming His Son. They were struck with awe and terror at the **glory and holiness of God** and fell on their faces. Until Jesus spoke reassuringly and they found they were alone with Him again. My point is – **don't underestimate the glory and holiness of the Lord God. We could not stand before Him, if it were not for the redemptive work of Jesus.**

Now, I want us to whizz past the amazing three years of Simon Peter's discipleship, learning from the Master's teaching, actions and rebukes when he got things wrong. Past him trying to help in Gethsemane by attacking the **High Priest's servant** with his sword, past the terrible **denials** in the courtyard, past the trauma of the **crucifixion** and the joy of the **resurrection** appearances,

to the beach by Galilee.

Simon Peter and some of the other disciples were there and hadn't seen the risen Lord for a while. Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' So, they got in the boat and put out onto the lake. Unbeknownst to them, the risen Lord Jesus came onto the shore and called out to the fishing boats, 'Have you caught anything?' 'No!' 'Put down the nets on the right!' So they did, and it was **a repeat of that time when Jesus first called them to follow Him** – the nets filled with fish. John realised that it was Jesus: 'It's the Lord!' and Peter flung himself off the boat into the water and headed for shore, leaving the others to get the catch in.

After a fishy barbecued breakfast, Jesus took Simon Peter aside and there was **that** conversation.

'Simon Bar Jonas (**back to his birth name!**), do you love Me – more than these?'

Why 'more than these'?

Was Jesus asking whether Simon Bar Jonas loved Him more than his former life as a fisherman? Or was he asking him if he loved him more than the other disciples?

I have an idea which I will share with you for you to consider:

Let me read Jesus's question like this:

'Simon bar-Jonas, **DO** you love Me more than these? **Do you, Simon?**'

Back, when Jesus and His disciples headed out to the Mount of Olives after the Last Supper, Matthew's gospel records this conversation:

Jesus; 'You will all fall away because of me, this night....but I will go before you to Galilee.'

Peter: 'Though **they** all fall away because of you, **I** will never fall away.' (*repeat*)

Peter had, probably sub-consciously, thought himself superior to the other disciples – he was the 'rock', the special one. But, he wasn't very rock-like when he denied knowing Jesus to a serving girl.

'Do you really love Me more, Simon?'

Jesus told a parable about not thinking too highly of ourselves and despising others; Paul writes in Romans 16 v 10, 16 'in honour preferring one another' and 'Do not be wise in your own opinion.' An easy summary is: **let others go first; let others shine.**

Towards the end of his life, Simon Peter wrote in his letter to the church.

'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you.'

These are the words of a man who has had great revelation and made big mistakes; a man who has received correction and learned from it.

## Conclusion

Dear Peter, how he encourages us. **We** have bursts of revelation and faith and we step out in it. Then, things happen and we fail, or sink, or let Jesus down in some way. But as we cry out to Him in repentance, He lifts us up, puts us back on track and recommissions us.

So, like Simon Peter,

- as we immerse ourselves in God's word, we receive on-going revelation of Himself.
- As we receive gifts of faith, we should step out boldly and act on them.
- Failure, error or even disobedience need not be final as we return in repentance to our Lord and receive his forgiveness.

Then, like the Olympic rowers Alice referred to, we can get back in the boat and row like crazy with our FOCUS on the Lord and the prize ahead.

## Order of Service for Sandwich

### ‘Rocky Simon Peter’

**Welcome and notices** Elder

**Call to Worship** Chris W-S

**Hymn R & S 34** Holy, holy, holy

Intercessions Elder

**Hymn R & S 96** Great is thy faithfulness

### **Offering**

**Presenting the theme** Chris W-S

**Hymn R & S 492** Dear Lord and Father of mankind

**Reading** 1 Peter 2 v 1 – 11

**Sermon** Chris W-S

**[Response hymn 493** Dear Master, in whose life I see]

### **Prayer**

**Final Hymn** Songs of Fellowship 520 **Tell out my Soul** (either tune)

**Blessing and Grace**