

POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

SIMON PETER'S SHADOW: AN OVERVIEW OF PETER'S LIFE (PART 1) *Wade L. Webster*

Luke records a very interesting statement concerning Peter in the book of Acts. He records that people in Jerusalem brought forth their sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that "at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them" (Acts 5:15, KJV). Clearly, those with sick friends and family hoped that the shadow of Peter would heal their loved ones. Although the text does not explicitly state that the sick were healed in this fashion, it is implied (Acts 5:16). Furthermore, it seems consistent with other recorded miracles (Acts 19:11-12; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44). We certainly have no reason to believe that anyone left diseased or disappointed. Although approximately two thousand years have passed since Peter's shadow first fell upon the sick in the streets of Jerusalem, the old fisherman's shadow continues to wield a powerful influence over men's lives. Obviously, the power today is not miraculous (1 Cor. 13). Yet, his shadow or example continues to help men to overcome sin and to walk anew with Jesus. I know personally that I am a better man every time that I study his life. I hope that the same will hold true for you. In seeking to get a firm grasp on his life, we will consider the many different roles that he played in Scripture. There is sure to be something for everyone.

The Prodigal

No study of Peter's life would be complete without a look at the many times that Peter ran ahead of or away from God's will. Although his intentions were almost always good, his actions were sometimes contrary to the will of God. For example, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Simon suggested that three tabernacles be built (Matt. 17:4). He wanted to honor Christ, Moses, and Elijah. To his credit, he listed Christ first. However, he should have started and stopped with Christ. Only one tabernacle was needed. While the words were still in Simon's mouth, along with his foot, a bright cloud overshadowed him to shed a little light on the matter. God did not want Peter or subsequent humanity to be in the dark relative to the position that His Son was to hold. The voice out of the cloud declared simply, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Peter, and all who came after him, were to honor Jesus by hearing Him (Heb. 1:1-3). A greater lawgiver than Moses and a mightier prophet than Elijah had come.

On another occasion, Peter again played the prodigal. As you likely know, he struggled mightily with Jesus' death. When Jesus began to tell Peter and the others of His impending death, "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:21-22; cf. Luke 18:15). Although we can see Peter's zeal and love for his Friend in this statement, his words were a clear contradiction of Christ's words and of God's will. Peter was wrong and Jesus withstood him to the face (cf. Gal. 2:11-14). Matthew records that Jesus "turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23). Jesus would submit to the will of God (Matt. 26:39; Heb. 5:8-9; Phil. 2:5-8) and so must Peter. The words of Jesus must have burned through Peter's heart like a hot knife through butter. However, the struggle in Peter's heart over the death of the Lord was not over. Peter would soon make another mistake. When officers from the Jewish leaders came to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and drew blood. As you recall, he cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest (John 18:10). I am convinced that Peter was aiming for more than Malchus' ear. Had Malchus not ducked, he would have lost his head. Of course, Jesus could have put his head back on as easily as his ear. Although Peter's intentions were good in the garden, his actions were contrary to the will of God. Jesus did not need Peter's sword. Had Jesus wanted deliverance, He could have called for more than twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53). Heaven would have emptied in Jesus' defense. However, it was God's will for Him to go to the cross.

A final example of Peter playing the prodigal was when he staunchly denied that he would ever turn his back on the Lord. As in the previous example, Peter contradicted Jesus' words. Jesus declared that "all" of them would be off ended because of Him that night

(Matt. 26:31). In fact, Jesus even quoted the Scripture that had predicted it (Zech. 13:7). Yet, Simon still dared to declare, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be off ended" (Matt. 26:33). Peter exempted himself from the Lord's statement. In essence, he declared, "All men, Lord, except me." The Lord then made the statement very personal. He declared directly to Peter, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matt. 26:34; cf. Luke 22:31). Sadly, Peter remained in a defiant state of denial, and declared, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matt. 26:35). Amazingly, Peter would not only deny Jesus three times, but he would do so with cursing and swearing at the questioning of a young maiden. When the cock crew, and Jesus looked upon him, it was more than Peter could bear. He "went out" and "wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62).

It is in these weak moments that most of us can relate to Peter the best. After all, who has not put his foot into his mouth at one time or another? Who has not been overconfident? Who has not acted impetuously? The question is not whether we will stray as Simon did, but rather, whether we will be as quick to return and repent as he was.

The Preacher

Before Peter was a preacher, he was a fisherman (Matt. 4:18-20). For Peter, fishing was a profession, not a pastime. He toiled all night searching for schools of fish in the shallow waters of the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes he caught a net full, and sometimes he caught nothing (Luke 5:6; Luke 5:9; John 21:3; John 21:6; John 21:8; John 21:11). Either way, by morning light, his arms were heavy and his back was hurting (Matt. 4:18; John 21:11). Although he probably wanted to crawl into bed and rest, there was still work to be done. Nets had to be cleaned and mended (Matt. 4:21; Luke 5:2). Any fish that were caught had to be carried to market and sold. Come nightfall, the process started over again. When Jesus called Peter, He called him to be a different kind of fisherman. Instead of catching fish, Jesus wanted Peter to catch men (Matt. 4:18-20). He wanted Peter to cast out the gospel net and to bring men

safely to shore. Through preaching and teaching God's Word, Peter would spend the remainder of his life looking for and landing lost souls. It would be the most rigorous and rewarding work that Peter had ever done. From the beginning, Peter understood the evangelistic nature of his work. He understood that to catch fish, a fisherman had to go fishing (Matt. 28:18-20; Isa. 2:2-3). Sadly, many preachers today need to be reminded of this simple truth. The Great Commission has become the great omission. Preachers sit in offices instead of visiting in homes. They schedule seminars instead of seeking souls. Please understand that study, and to some degree scheduling, are essential in preaching. For sure, some do not spend enough time in the book. I have heard them and so have you. However, fishing has become a lost art in the ministry today. I am convinced that many preachers are waiting for fish to jump into the boat, or better yet, out onto the shore. Sadly, I am afraid that even if the fish did jump out onto the shore, many of them would flop back into the water without anyone trying to collect them. Likely, there were times when Peter caught nothing (Luke 5:5; John 21:3). After all, such is the nature of fishing, whether physical or spiritual. However, there were times when he caught a net full. On the day of Pentecost, Peter and the others had a record catch. As you recall, about three thousand souls obeyed the gospel on that day (Acts 2:41).

Although all of the apostles, with the exception of Judas who had already gone to his own place (Acts 1:25), preached on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit only recorded the words of Peter's sermon. Perhaps, this is due to Christ's promise to him (Matt. 16:18-19). At least in this sense, he might be referred to as the keynote speaker on Pentecost. I am convinced that much can be learned about preaching from Peter's preaching on Pentecost and his subsequent preaching:

He preached loudly and logically.

On Pentecost, Luke records that Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice (Acts 2:14). Obviously, Peter did not have the aid of microphones or other sound equipment. He had to speak up to be heard. However, it remains true, that when we preach God's Word, we are to preach it so that men can hear it. There is no place for mousey preaching. In addition to preaching loudly, Peter preached logically. He was not just shouting at them, he was reasoning with them. Evidently, relative to the matter of speaking with "other tongues" (Acts 2:4) some had sarcastically suggested that the

apostles were drunken. Peter answered the false charge with the following logic: "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15). Peter reasoned from the hour of the day that the apostles were not drunken. As a general rule, men are not drunken at 9:00 a.m. (1 Thess. 5:7).

He preached publicly and privately.

Peter preached in the temple and in houses (Acts 5:42). On Pentecost, he spoke to a multitude of men from many nations (Acts 2:5-6; Acts 2:9-11). No doubt, the three thousand that were baptized on that day represented but a small portion of those in the city for the observance of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). On other occasions he preached God's word to a single individual or household (Acts 10:32). Peter knew the value of a single soul (Matt. 16:26). D. L. Moody once noted, "The men who have been permitted to do higher things are the men that began with small things. If you are not willing to deal with one man about his soul, and labor with that one man, you are not fit to go into the pulpit and preach to others. Some of Christ's greatest discourses were given to one or two persons."

He preached boldly and Biblically.

On Pentecost, Peter declared, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David" (Acts 2:29; cf. Acts 28:31). "Freely" means "freedom or frankness in speaking" (Zodhiates #3954). Peter told the people plainly what they had done and what must be done about it (John 10:24; John 11:14; John 16:25; John 16:29; 2 Cor. 3:12; Acts 2:36-38). Repeatedly, Peter charged the Jews and their leaders with murdering the only begotten Son of God (Acts 2:22-23; Acts 2:36; Acts 3:13-15; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:28; Acts 5:30; Acts 10:39) and called upon them to repent (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19). Even in the midst of severe persecution, he preached "the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31; cf. 4:13; Acts 4:29). He was threatened, imprisoned, and beaten, but not silenced. He told them that he was hearkening unto God and could not but speak what he had seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20). Furthermore, he told them that he was going to obey God rather than them (Acts 4:29). We need more preachers today with the boldness of Peter. We need men who will stand in the gap and declare the good way of God (Ezek. 22:30; Jer. 6:16).

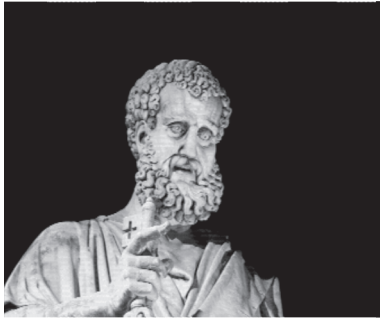
Not only did Peter preach boldly, he preached Biblically. Repeatedly, Peter referred to that which was written and spoken by the prophets in the Old Testament (Acts 3:21; Acts 3:24). He specifically referred to what was spoken by Joel (Acts 2:16-21),

David (Acts 2:25-28; Acts 2:34-35; Acts 4:11), and Moses (Acts 3:22-23). Peter's sermon was filled with Scripture. We need men today who will like him "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2).

He preached humbly and habitually.

Following the healing of the lame man laid daily at the gate called Beautiful, Peter declared, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12). Peter was not a self-promoter. He did not take credit for the lame man's healing. He gave God the glory (Acts 3:13; Acts 3:16). Sadly, many preachers today are ready and willing to take the credit for what is accomplished. Let us never forget that it is God that gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6) and that without Him, we could do nothing (John 9:33; 15:5). Later, when Cornelius fell at Peter's feet to worship him, Peter told him to "stand up," declaring that he also was just a man (Acts 10:25-26). I am afraid that some of my preacher brethren like it when individuals swoon over them or put them on a pedestal. They like it when people follow them from one congregation to another. Peter did not want men to follow him. He wanted them to follow Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21). Take a look at Peter's sermons and see how much he talked about himself. He did not do it. He preached Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 1:23; Acts 2:23; Acts 2:36; Acts 3:13-15; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:28; Acts 5:30; Acts 10:39). Take a look at his sermons in the book of Acts and consider the number of times that he refers to the Lord and the names that he uses for him. He referred to him as: Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22; Acts 10:38), Lord (Acts 2:25; Acts 2:34; Acts 2:36; Acts 10:48), Holy One (Acts 2:27; Acts 3:14), Christ (Acts 2:30; Acts 2:31; Acts 2:36; Acts 3:18), Jesus (Acts 2:32; Acts 2:36; Acts 5:30), Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:20; Acts 5:42; Acts 10:36), His Son Jesus (3:13; Acts 3:26), the Just (Acts 3:14), the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15), Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 4:10), the Head of the Corner (Acts 4:11), Prince (Acts 5:31), Savior (Acts 5:31), and the Judge of quick and dead (Acts 10:42). Sadly, some preachers today talk more about themselves in their sermons than they do about Jesus. They are haughty and high-minded (Rom. 11:20; 2 Tim. 3:4).

In addition to preaching humbly, Peter preached habitually. Despite the attempts to get Peter and the other apostles to stop preaching, Luke records that "they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus" on a daily basis "in the temple, and in every house" (Acts 5:42).



2009 POWER LECTURES

July 26-30, 2009

Simon Peter: The Disciple Who Walked On Water With Feet Of Clay

Sunday—July 26

9:30 A.M. – Simon Peter's Shadow: An Overview Of Peter's Life—**Wade Webster**
10:30 A.M. – Keynote Speaker On Pentecost (Acts 2)—**Garland Elkins**
7:00 P.M. – Not The Pope: Rebuked By Paul (Gal. 2:11-14)—**Sean Hochdorf**
8:00 P.M. – Operation Restoration: Tell The Disciples & Peter (Mk. 16:7; Lk. 24:34)—**Paul Sain**

Monday—July 27

9:00 A.M. – When Peter's Preaching Landed Him In Jail (Acts 4)—**Chad Ramsey**
10:00 A.M. – Liar, Liar: When Peter Shut The Door On A Sinful Couple (Acts 5)—**Cliff Goodwin**
11:00 A.M.—Feed The Flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4)—**Jerry Martin**
1:00 P.M. – Ready Always To Give An Answer (1 Pet. 3:15)—**Caleb Colley**
2:00 P.M. – The Inner Circle (Mk. 5:37; 14:33; Lk. 8:51; 9:28)—**Mike McDaniel**
2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) - Mary Magdalene: The Woman Who Told Peter About The Empty Tomb (John 20)—**Cindy Colley**
7:00 P.M. – Peter Learns To Worry About Himself (John 21:20-24)—**Gary Hampton**
8:00 P.M. – When Jesus Washed Peter's Feet: A Lesson In Humility (John 13)—**B.J. Clarke**

Tuesday—July 28

9:00 A.M. – Simon Says, "Repent and Pray" (Acts 8:9-24)—**Jason Roberts**
10:00 A.M. – When Peter Went To Sleep In Class (Mt. 26:40; Mk. 14:37; Lk. 9:32)—**Clarke Sims**
11:00 A.M. – Qualified To Serve In Spite Of Past Failures—**Billy Bland**
1:00 P.M. – Put Up Thy Sword (John 18:10-11)—**Paul Meacham, Jr.**
2:00 P.M. – The Debate Over Circumcision (Acts 11, 15)—**Tony Lawrence**
2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) - Peter's Mother In Law: Who Showed Her Gratitude By Service (Mt. 8:14-15)—**Tanya Cox**
7:00 P.M. – Eyewitness Of His Majesty (2 Pet. 1:16)—**Kyle Butt**
8:00 P.M. - Desired By Satan (Lk. 22:31)—**Michael Shepherd**

Wednesday—July 29

9:00 A.M. – Too Many Tabernacles (Mt. 17:1-5)—**Greg Dismuke**
10:00 A.M. – Seventy Times Seven: A Lesson In Forgiveness (Mt. 18:21)—**Kevin Ruiz**
11:00 A.M. – The Rooster That Woke Peter Up (Mt. 26)—**Barry Grider**
1:00 P.M. – Andrew: Simon Peter's Brother (John 1:40-44; 6:8)—**Todd Crayton**
2:00 P.M. – In The Hands Of Herod/In The Hands Of God (Acts 12)—**Ronnie Scherfuss**
2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) - Dorcas: Raised By Peter To Continue Serving (Acts 9:36-43)—**Rose Crayton**
7:00 P.M. – Get Thee Behind Me Satan: When Simon Rebuked The Savior (Mt. 16:22-23; Mk. 8:32-33)—**Wayne Cox**
8:00 P.M. – Not The Pope: He Led About A Wife (Mt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5)—**Steve Higginbotham**

Thursday—July 30

9:00 A.M. – Not The Pope: He Refused Worship (Acts 10:25-26)—**Russell Kline**
10:00 A.M. – Things Most Precious (1 Pet. 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6-7; 2 Pet. 1:1, 4) – **Ben Wright**
11:00 A.M. – The Lost Art Of Fishing: Answering The Call To Be A Fisher Of Men (Mk. 1:16-18)—**Mark Reynolds**
1:00 P.M. – Peter and John: Thunder & Lightning (Lk. 22:8; John 13:24; Acts 3:1, 3, 4; 4:13, 19; 8:14) — **Brandon Britton**
2:00 P.M. – Peter Learns A Lesson About Tax-Exemption (Mt. 17:24-26)—**Robert Jefferies**
2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) — Rhoda: The Girl Who Forgot To Open The Gate For Peter (Acts 12)—**Tish Clarke**
7:00 P.M. – Mt. 16:18-19: Was The Church Founded Upon Peter? Did Heaven Follow Peter's Lead?—**Tom Holland**
8:00 – Confronting False Teachers and Scoffers (2 Pet. 2-3)—**Robert R. Taylor, Jr.**

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Deuteronomy 5:32

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POWER is a monthly publication overseen by the elders of the Southaven church of Christ, Southaven, Mississippi.



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SOUTHAVEN
CHURCH OF CHRIST

Perhaps, one of the reasons why the early church had daily additions (Acts 2:47) was that they had men like Peter preaching and teaching on a daily basis. Teaching and preaching today is pretty much limited to two hours on two days a week.

He preached systematically and simply.

When explaining the conversion of Cornelius to those of the circumcision, he "rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them" (Acts 11:4). Sadly, many sermons today have no skeleton. They are a blob of verses and thoughts. The listener is left to try to sort out the information and to make sense of it. The person in the pew is asked to do in a half-hour what the preacher has not done in a week. Most members are ill-equipped to do so. To the saints at Corinth, Paul wrote, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Although the context just cited is dealing with spiritual gifts, it contains a general truth that can be applied to many things. For sure preaching, of all things, should be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Many things relative to the pulpit today are wanting and need to be "set in order" (Tit. 1:5). Those attempting to build a fire in the hearts of members must lay "the wood in order" (Gen. 22:9). Think about building a fire on a charcoal grill. Only novices dump the charcoal in the grill and light the pile on fire. You will never get a good fire that way. Those trained in the art of grilling know that the charcoal briquettes have to be stacked in a certain way to get a good fire. The same is true in getting a good fire in preaching. Rambling and disorganized messages from the pulpit generally lead to rambling and disinterested minds in the pew.

In addition to preaching systematically, Peter preached simply. He was preaching to make things "known" unto them (Acts 2:14). He was preaching to inform them and not to impress them; to educate them and not to entertain them. The little word *this* which is used several times in Peter's sermon on Pentecost captures the simplicity with which Simon spoke. For example, at the outset of the lesson, he declared, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16, emp. mine, WW).

Peter's declaration left no doubt about the events of Pentecost. They were the fulfillment of prophecy. Later, in the sermon, he spoke of "this Jesus" (Acts 2:32). Peter wanted those who heard him to understand that David was speaking of Jesus and His resurrection (cf. 2:36). Sadly, many preachers today are not simple enough in their preaching. The old rule holds true, "Put it down where the calves can get it, and the cows can get it to." T. David Gordon, in his book, *Why Johnny Can't Preach*, observed the following: "I have come to recognize that many, many individuals today have never been under a diet of competent preaching. As a consequence, they are satisfied with what they hear because they have nothing better with which to compare it...As starving children in Manila sift through the landfill for food, Christians in many churches today have never experienced genuinely soul-nourishing preaching, and so they just pick away at what is available to them, trying to find a morsel of spiritual sustenance or helpful counsel here or there." He went on to explain that over 25 years of listening to sermons he has routinely asked his wife, "What was that sermon about?" to which she has answered: "I'm not really sure." I imagine other preachers and their wives have had this same conversation. Gordon further revealed that down through the years he has asked individuals what they thought of their preacher. Often, their response began, "Well, he is not a great preacher, but..." They see their preacher as a good man, but not as a good preacher. He is faithful in visitation, but frightful in presentation. I believe that a good study of Peter's preaching will help us to get back to the kind of preaching that was done in the first-century, and that must be done today, if we are going to be successful in saving souls and safe-guarding saints.

- ¹ Miller, Steve. **D.L. Moody: On Spiritual Leadership**. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004, p. 30.
- ² Gordon, T. David. **Why Johnny Can't Preach**. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing Company, 2009, p. 17.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.