

## Peter

*Jesus said to his disciples, "All of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'*

*But after I am raised to life, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."*

*Peter spoke up, "Even if all the others reject you, I never will!"*

*Jesus replied, "This very night before a rooster crows twice, you will say three times that you don't know me."*

*But Peter was so sure of himself that he said, "Even if I have to die with you,*



*I will never say that I don't know you!" All the others said the same thing. Mark 14: 27-31*

### **The Background**

His name was Simon. He was a fisherman in partnership with Andrew (his brother) and James and John (sons of Zebedee). They fished the northern areas of Lake Galilee. One day Andrew announced he'd found the Messiah and brought Simon to meet Jesus. Jesus called Simon to follow. Later Jesus named him Cephas (Aramaic for "rock"). This name is also translated as Peter (Latin and Greek for "rock"). Jesus called Peter to be a fisher of men.

Frequently Peter's character resembled shifting sand rather than solid rock...

- Peter danced a step called the "Simon-bar-Jonah Shuffle." You take one step forward, followed by two steps backwards. He would boldly step forward with the right action; followed moments later by a retreat.
- At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter boldly proclaimed him to be the Christ, the Messiah. Moments later Peter reversed himself by

discouraging Jesus from facing the hard times ahead in Jerusalem (Matt 16:13-20).

*Peter had courage, but oh; could he flip-flop!*

- The disciples were in a boat in the middle of a storm. Jesus rose above the storm and invited Peter to follow. Peter walked on the water before losing confidence and sinking down (Matt 14:22-33)
- Peter was a bold witness but at times he talked too much. Peter, James, and John joined Jesus at the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah joined with Jesus for his final journey to Jerusalem. Peter disrupted the sanctity of the situation by suggesting “booths” to dedicate the sacred space. God’s voice declared, “This is my beloved son, listen to him!” Essentially Peter was given a heavenly command to “be quiet” and listen (Luke 9:28-33).
- Peter helped John prepare the Last Supper. He refused Jesus’ request to wash his feet. Jesus responded, “If I don't wash you, you don't really belong to me.” Peter reversed himself and asked Jesus to wash him completely (John 13:1-20).
- During the meal Peter pledged his devotion to Jesus. Later, he couldn’t stay awake during the prayers in Gethsemane. Jesus later rebuked him (Mark 14: 32-42).
- Peter spent years faithfully following the Prince of Peace, yet he violently attacked the high priest’s servant with a sword when they arrested Jesus (John 18: 1-11).
- Peter followed when Jesus was arrested. He waited in the courtyard outside the high priest’s palace. Three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. The rooster crowed and Peter realized he had betrayed his master (Matt 26: 69-75).

Peter did better when he kept his focus on Jesus. When Peter lost sight of Jesus’ message; bad things happened. There’s a certain contradiction that the name Simon means “one who listens.”

When Peter stepped out of the boat he was walking on water. He placed his trust in Jesus and rose above the stormy waters of life.

In a moment of weakness, he looked to his own efforts and sank. Maybe Jesus named him "Peter" because he sank like a "rock" which gives new meaning to the term "name-dropping!" Jesus did have a divine sense of humor.

After the resurrection, Jesus asked Simon to "feed my lambs, tend my sheep, and feed my sheep" (John 21:15). Three times he said yes. Jesus forgave him for the three denials. Simon Peter became a courageous and caring shepherd of the church.

### **Reflections**

Jesus is about giving second chances. Peter never hesitated to let others know that he had made mistakes and that Jesus had forgiven him. Early church historians tell us that Mark's Gospel contain the memories of Peter. Mark's Gospel is brutally frank about Peter's failings. This disciple was not perfect, yet Jesus accepted and helped him.

One day Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? Seven times? Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18: 21-22). Peter certainly offended Jesus more than seven times but the master forgave him again and again and again.

This story demonstrates the power of God to forgive and transform lives. Simon Peter became a decisive leader in the early church:

- On Pentecost, Peter's sermon converted three thousand people (Acts 2).
- He performed the first miracle (Acts 3: 1-26).
- He defended himself (and John) boldly before the temple authorities (Acts 4).
- Peter was an outspoken leader encouraging the early church to welcome God's children from other nations (Acts 10).
- Peter defended Paul and Barnabas' missionary work (Acts 15). Peter's positions were not always popular. He sought to do the right thing. Peter is the patron saint of pastors and

church leaders who strive for positive change in their churches.

- At Joppa, Peter stayed with Cornelius, a tanner whose trade was objectionable under strict Jewish law. Peter received a vision convincing him that God shows no partiality. He demonstrates God's acceptance of all people by baptizing and welcoming Cornelius into the church (Acts 10). Peter was an outspoken leader encouraging the early church to welcome all God's children from all nations.
- Peter spoke up for the type of missionary work that Paul and Barnabas were doing when he proclaimed "*My friends, you know that God decided long ago to let me be the one from your group to preach the good news to the Gentiles. God did this so that they would hear and obey him. He knows what is in everyone's heart. And he showed that he had chosen the Gentiles, when he gave them the Holy Spirit, just as he had given his Spirit to us. God treated them in the same way that he treated us. They put their faith in him, and he made their hearts pure. Now why are you trying to make God angry by placing a heavy burden on these followers? This burden was too heavy for us or our ancestors. But our Lord Jesus was kind to us, and we are saved by faith in him, just as the Gentiles are*" (Acts 15: 6-11).

Peter's positions were not popular with everyone. His acceptance of other people led to hostility and opposition from other church leaders. Peter is certainly the patron saint for all pastors who try to enable positive change in their congregations. St Peter is recognized by many as first Pope or leaders of the Christian Church. Later he was dismissed in that role with James (Acts 15). Peter's vision may have been too bold for the early congregations at that time. Later they would realize he had been righteous in the first place.

Early church traditions reveal Simon Peter and his wife became missionaries; he mentored John Mark; he traveled to Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and even Rome. Traditions finally indicate that Peter and Paul were martyred during the Roman persecution.

Simon Peter courageously cared for the Good Shepherd's sheep. "And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23). In the end, Peter had the courage to take unpopular positions because they were the right thing to do. He reached out to people of all races and nations because that's the way Jesus would have wanted it to be. The wavering disciple had become a dependable leader for the church. Peter followed Christ Alone.

**Strength Finders talent: ACTIVATOR**

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252140/activator-theme.aspx>

Activators like really make things happen. They have powerful energy that needs to be released and make things happen. Activators can also inspire others to join in. What a great gift/talent/strength Peter had! He really could and did make a difference for the early Christian church. St Francis of Assisi once said "Proclaim the Gospel at all times! And if you really have to; use words". Peter shared the Good News with all that he did.

**Enneagram connections: Seven**

I suspect that Peter was a "Transmitting" Seven (*otherwise sexual seven*). Peter had powerful energy that he wanted to share. He was always willing to speak out/up first. Peter went through a powerful transformation witnessing the Risen Lord that Easter Sunday. Sevens have a positive orientation, but this was extraordinary. Peter's whole life was re-framed. He spoke with gravitas because he spoke from personal experience. His life had been changed. Jesus changes the world.

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-seven>

*St Peter once: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"*

*Much more I say: Lord, dost thou stand and I  
At my closed heart more rugged than a rock,  
Bolted and barred, for thy soft touch unmeet,  
Nor garnished nor in any wise made sweet?  
Owls roost within and dancing satyrs mock.  
Lord, I have heard the crowing of the cock  
And have not wept: ah, Lord, thou knowest it.  
Yet still I hear thee knocking, still I hear:  
'Open to me, look on me eye to eye,  
That I may wring my heart and make it whole;  
And teach thee love because I hold thee dear  
And sup with thee in gladness soul with soul,  
And sup with thee in glory by and by.'*

Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1892

Or

### **The Coasts of Caesarea Philippi**

CHRISTUS, going up the mountain.  
Who do the people say I am?

JOHN.

Some say  
That thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias;  
And others Jeremiah.

JAMES.

Or that one  
Of the old Prophets is risen again.

CHRISTUS.

But who say ye I am?

PETER.

Thou art the Christ?  
Thou art the Son of God!

CHRISTUS.

Blessed art thou,  
Simon Barjona! Flesh and blood hath not  
Revealed it unto thee, but even my Father,  
Which is in Heaven. And I say unto thee  
That thou art Peter; and upon this rock  
I build my Church, and all the gates of Hell  
Shall not prevail against it. But take heed  
Ye tell no man that I am the Christ.  
For I must go up to Jerusalem,  
And suffer many things, and be rejected  
Of the Chief Priests, and of the Scribes and Elders,  
And must be crucified, and the third day  
Shall rise again!

CHRISTUS: A MYSTERY, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1872

Or

*The Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,  
No gesture of reproach; the Heavens serene  
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean  
Their thunders that way: the forsaken Lord  
Looked only, on the traitor. None record  
What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen  
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,  
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,  
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.  
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy--  
'I never knew this man '--did quail and fall  
As knowing straight THAT GOD; and turned free  
And went out speechless from the face of all  
And filled the silenc, weeping bitterly.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1806 - 1861

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