

## Simon Peter

My name is Simon. Oh, maybe you have heard me called Peter --you know, "The Rock?" Jesus gave me that name way back in the beginning. I'm sure he meant it as an inspiration, but now I've gone and messed it all up beyond fixing. If I ever was a rock, what I turned into now is just plain mud.

Maybe I should explain a little more. I have been able to call myself a follower of Jesus of Nazareth for the past three years. My brother, Andrew, first introduced me to him. Eventually we and our business partners, James and John, also joined his band of disciples.

Perhaps business partners is a bit pretentious. Actually, we are fishermen. And where I come from, fisherman are not real high on the social ladder. One of the mildest things they say about us is that we smell funny.

And fishermen are not usually known for having great thoughts, we say things like, "It sure looks like rain!" But we, our little fishing company, were not just your typical sailors. We may not have powerful minds, but we tried to think real thoughts.

You see, we followed the teachings of the rabbis and kept track of what was happening in the world. Many said that the long promised Messiah was soon coming, the one whom the prophets had foretold.

There were many claims and we decided to check some of them out. We decided that if the one sent by God was really here, this was more important than making money. We let the business slack off a little so we would have time to check these guys out ourselves.

Some were clearly fakes, probably after power or money or fame. Some were clearly nuts, but then Andrew met Jesus and sent word, "This is the one."

You knew when you talked to him that he knew more than the rabbis. He seemed to look right into the depths of my soul as soon as he saw me. That's when he called me "Peter."

It all seems like a cruel joke now.

Later he called us from our nets to follow him, and for three years we heard him teach publicly and privately. He told us things the crowds did not hear. We saw the miracles that became more amazing each time. We saw how he lived, even when the public was not looking.

It was clear that if there ever was a Messiah, he was it. When he asked us once who men said that he was, the others reported the latest gossip. Then Jesus asked who we thought he was. I blurted it out, "You are the Christ! The one sent by God!"

Then Jesus started reminded me that I was the "Rock," and told of building his church and me having the keys. I felt like -- well I don't really know. Sometimes I do act like a leader, but it's probably just because I am the first to talk. When I think about it, I wonder if I can handle more than a fishing boat.

But then Jesus said something horrid. He told us he was going to Jerusalem and that he would be taken by the chief priests, tortured and killed.

He also said he would rise again on the third day but by then I wasn't listening, I was already telling him this should never happen. He stung me with a rebuke. Instead of the leader of the church, I was the enemy

Have you ever noticed how feelings jumble and confuse things? I felt distant and frustrated. After all, how could he be killed and continue his mission as Messiah? Could he?

Judas told me that he thought it was a mental problem, but that he had a plan that would corner Jesus into using his miraculous powers to defend himself and start the revolution. Judas was being farfetched, but I agreed with him that this did not make sense.

At Passover, Jesus said one of us would betray him, I was worried. I was beginning to realize that I was capable of rash acts. But it was not me he was referring to, at least at that moment.

Next, he said that all would be offended and fall away. I said that even if all the others fell away, I would never do that. He told me that I would actually deny I even knew him, not once but three times, before dawn of the next day.

Jesus said "Satan wanted to sift me" and what he prayed for me was that I would come through with my faith intact. I would rather he had prayed for the whole thing to go away. because I failed the test. Oh, my faith was there but my courage left me completely.

After the supper, he mentioned needing a sword. Perhaps he had changed his mind about fighting back. But in the garden, when I did fight, he told me to stop, and then he even healed the injured guard.

I was confused, angry, hurt, embarrassed and I don't know what all. For a fisherman, having even one emotion a day is a challenge, but six or eight at a time is absolutely overwhelming.

So, speaking without thinking, just following those confused emotions, I did exactly as he predicted and lied about him three times within a few minutes.

Then, just after hearing the cock crow, I saw him looking at me. What does it mean? He looked me in a way that said "You are weak, I knew you would do this from the beginning but I love you and chose you anyway." Yet it also meant that I had failed the big test. How could I lead now?

Seeing him die, I am confused. It all seems so wrong, yet he was not angry or sad. Has he really died for my sins as Isaiah prophesied? I would rather that I died and he go on living to complete his work.

My head tells me that I will see him again in the resurrection and that somehow this all will work out. Yet my heart wants to hide and never have to face him or anyone else who has seen the dark side of my nature.

Who can help me in my confusion? Why was I chosen if I am only to be remembered as a bad example? Is there really forgiveness for such a terrible failing? How will the life and ministry of Jesus be remembered now that it has been cut short? I can only tell my troubled mind to be still. It is now all in the hands of God.

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 18