

Peter Restored

Let me tell you about the events that transformed my life. I am Simon Peter, a fisherman who knew early on that Jesus was someone special. I was quick to say, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But I had to be dragged into recognizing, and finally accepting, the part I was going to play. I never lacked self-confidence, although I was always a little weak on judgement.

After Jesus rose again, I dreaded seeing Him because of my spectacular failure in the house of the high priest, denying I knew Him when challenged by, get this, a servant girl! It was even worse because I had promised Jesus in the upper room that if everybody else fell away, I never would. And, of course I attacked the servant of the high priest in the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested Jesus. I thought He had said to get a sword. I still don't know what I did wrong there, but I was humiliated.

I saw the tomb and the clear evidence after hearing the women's reports. Women got to see Him first! And I didn't believe them! But Jesus made a special appearance to me alone. After that I was with the rest of the disciples, first without Thomas and then with Him. That first time Jesus even ate in front of us to convince us He was not a ghost.

By the lake it was like a return to the very beginning. Most of us were there, sort of wondering what to do next. Jesus had said something mysterious, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." That must mean that we were to tell the story, but how? I am informed that in your day, you have something called "therapy." In my day, we have fishing. I told the group, "I'm going out to fish." We didn't catch anything all night, and it didn't help my mood, either.

Coming in the next morning, a stranger stood on the beach and asked if we had caught anything. When He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some," I suddenly knew it was the Lord. John knew it too and said it first. He always understood everything first, but I usually said it, whether I understood or not. But it was no surprise when our nets were full.

On the shore, Jesus was making breakfast of hot bread and roast fish. Where did He get them? We had seen Him multiply bread and fish to feed vast multitudes, but this was like He made them from nothing. He had told us about the temptation in the wilderness when Satan challenged Him to make stones into bread. It would have been wrong then but was it right now? I would have to ask John about that later but right now something else was happening.

Jesus spoke directly to me, and I do mean directly. It pierced to my soul. He asked, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" The word He used meant sacrificial love that would mean willingness to die for Him. Somehow, I could not say that, because I had already failed. So, I said, "I am your friend." To which He said, "Feed my sheep." Then, He asked again, the same way, and I answered the same way. But it really got to me when He asked, "Are you my friend?"

He repeated, "Feed my sheep," and went on to tell me about my future and the things that would be out of my own control. I tried to change the focus to John, but Jesus basically said that I could only preview my own story.

Later, we all met again, and Jesus opened the Scriptures to us so that we saw clearly what had been there all along. And we actually believed we could do it when He said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

He made it even more clear just before He was taken up into the clouds from the Mount of Olives while we watched. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

And it happened just as He said. We, the eleven, Mary, the other women and Jesus' brothers and other followers went to an upper room in Jerusalem. We were still a bit nervous about what the Jewish leaders were going to do. I took charge of the selection of a substitute for Judas. It was not because I wanted to be prominent but because Jesus had asked me to do so.

Then, on Pentecost, all heaven broke loose! Here's how brother Luke wrote it after interviewing us all. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

When a crowd had gathered around, noticing the disturbance and then hearing the good news of Jesus in their own heart language, I began to speak to the whole crowd. It was not the pompous overconfident Peter of old but the broken and healed, simple vessel, filled with the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus. I even started with a joke, "These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!" And we did not have to argue with them about doctrine or ceremony.

The words I was given were not what you in your day would call "sugar coated." I said, "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him."

When the people, cut to the heart, called out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" I said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The rest of that day we had 3000 new believers to teach and train. Those were the lambs that needed to be fed! Everyone was very busy! And very happy. This is why we had been trained. This is why we had been humbled. This is why we had been chosen. And it just kept going!

Matthew 26 - 28, Mark 14 - 16, Luke 22 - 24, John 13 - 21, Acts 1 - 2