



SoulShare

Saturday, March 17, 2018, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion:
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.

I say business partners and feel a little pretentious saying it because, you see, we are fisherman. I don't know about your country here, but 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.

To say the least, fishermen are not usually noted for ever having great thoughts, except for things like, "It sure looks like rain to me!" But we, our little fishing company, were not just your typical guys. We may not have great 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 who had been foretold by the prophets.

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 pitiful cases seemed to be completely out of their heads. But then Andrew met Jesus and sent word, "This is the one." (John 1:35-40)

You could tell 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 actually 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 the one. When he asked us once who men said that he was, the guys were reporting this and that. Then Jesus asked who we thought he was. I blurted it out, "You are the Christ! The one sent by God!"

Then Jesus started talking about me being a "Rock" again and about 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 blurt things out before anybody else. When I think about it, I wonder if I really know enough to take responsibility for more than a boat and a net.

But, and let me try to figure out what happened as I say it --that's usually the way it is with me -- then Jesus started with one of his "hard sayings." He started telling us he was going to Jerusalem and that

he would be taken by the chief priests, tortured and killed.

He also said something about rising again on the third day but by the time that hit my brain, I was already telling him this should never happen. He stung me with a rebuke. In a moment I had gone from leader of the church to "enemy."

Have you ever noticed how the things you know for sure can get all jumbled and confused by feelings? I felt distant and frustrated. After all, if he were going to continue his mission as Messiah, he couldn't let himself be killed, 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. I wasn't so sure about that but agreed that this all did not make sense.

When, at the Passover, Jesus said something about one of us betraying him, I was worried. I was beginning to learn enough about myself 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 was in my talk mode again and said that even if all 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.

He said that Satan wanted to sift me and what he prayed for me was that I would come through with my faith intact. I guess 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 said something about needing a sword and it seemed that he had changed his mind about fighting back. But in the garden, when I did start to 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 guy, especially a fisherman, having even one feeling a day is a challenge, but six or eight at a time is absolutely overwhelming.

So, speaking without thinking, just following those confused feelings, I did exactly as he predicted and lied about the most important things in the whole Universe three times within a few minutes.

Then, just after hearing the cock crow, I saw him looking at me. What does it mean? The look seemed to say, "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 be a leader 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 mind 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.

Remember that this is an historical drama and the first task is to decide if it is accurate to the Scriptures.

Is it surprising that "ordinary guys" find and follow Jesus while the intellectuals and religious do not?

How was Peter groomed for leadership? Was his failure part of his training?

How does Satan "sift" us? What does God do about it?

Do we as guys really have trouble with feelings?

How do we usually explain Judas? Just a pure bad guy? Could he have been a misguided zealot with a plan?

Have you experienced a situation where everything seems to be turning out wrong?

Have you seen the end of it yet? What makes it easier to accept?

Does our response to "disasters" affect others?

Did people of that time seem to believe in a resurrection at the end of time? (Martha in John 11:24)

We meet Peter here before the resurrection but even afterwards he felt guilty. How did that affect his life afterwards?

Having been through this, what would his response to a failure or challenge later likely be?