

## **PETER: A CHRIST-MADE PASTOR**

### **PREFACE**

Peter is one of the key figures in the New Testament, and was heavily involved in the early church from the Day of Pentecost onwards. He was used by the Lord in a powerful way, thousands being converted under his ministry. We also have some of his sermons recorded for us in the book of Acts, and have his two letters at the end of the Bible which are full of spiritual and practical teaching. These show evidence of Peter's maturity as a servant of the Lord.

One of the things which it is easy to forget when we consider such a useful servant of God, is that Peter did not arrive at this state of usefulness overnight. It was not that he came to trust in Christ for salvation and from that moment on he was perfectly fitted for the work the Lord had for him to do.

That he had a pastoral heart goes without question, but a careful reading of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, shows us the Lord had to mould and change Peter's character considerably. There were many lessons he needed to learn from Christ first, and in this short book, Bernard Lewis shows us something of the Lord's patient dealings with Peter as he made him into 'A Christ-Made Pastor'. These lessons have great relevance today for all involved in pastoral ministry, and for those who are seeking the Lord's will for their lives and want to know what that work involves and what kind of people the Lord is pleased to use.

The main bulk of the contents of this book formed part of a series of talks on Peter for the *Serving Today* radio programme which is designed specifically for pastors and church leaders. Bernard Lewis's contribution is very much appreciated, and as you read these pages you will see evidence of the fact that Bernard himself has been in pastoral ministry. He is serving the Lord at the present time in Papua New Guinea where he is seeking to encourage the Lord's servants in their ministries.

I am indebted to Bernard for all that he has written, and gladly testify to the help I have gained personally from working with him.

Derek French

October 2002

---

---

### **Introduction**

The aim of this book is to help pastors in their ministry. It was not written simply as a set of Bible studies, but each of the chapters was first presented at a Pastors' Retreat in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea. They have also been used in later seminars for pastors.

From the start these studies have had a practical purpose and in this book we hope to show that God is able to take the most unlikely people and to change them into the type of people that he is able to use for his glory and the care of his people. Pastoral ministry is a high and holy calling and it is hoped that as a result of reading this book all pastors will have a different approach to their ministry.

The aim of this book is not to tell pastors the way to do pastoral work, but rather to help them see that God has given them all that they need for his work.

Throughout the world today there seems to be little clear understanding of the ministry of a pastor. God's Word, however, gives the clear aims of pastoral ministry as:

- i. showing sinners the only way of salvation and
- ii. caring for God's people.

As pastors we need a fuller understanding of God's continuing work in all of his people. We are not yet perfect nor have we got all the answers, but if we are called to this ministry we can be sure that God will give us all that we need.

We will begin our study of Peter by looking at the advice that he gave as a mature believer. He had learned many lessons in his Christian life. As a good pastor he is concerned to pass his advice and experience on to other and perhaps less experienced pastors. The remainder of the book will show how Christ called a young, unqualified and headstrong fisherman and changed him into a godly, caring pastor. This did not happen suddenly, but was the work of a lifetime. God used him to lead his people in prayer, as the main instrument in revival on the day of Pentecost and as the one who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

In each of the studies you will find that there are Bible passages recommended for you to read. The book will be a lot easier to understand if you pray, read these passages and think carefully about them yourself before reading the chapter.

Bernard Lewis

---

## Chapter 1 The shepherd of God's flock

---

Please pray and read 1 Peter 5:1-11.

It is a sad fact that many people enter pastoral ministry for the wrong reasons. Some want to rule over people and dominate their lives. Others feel that they have the power and authority to change people and churches, and therefore they should be the ones to lead the people of God. But these are not the right reasons for being in the Lord's work. These attitudes are the symptoms of pride which was the cause of the Fall in Genesis 3:5. Satan tempted Eve, saying that if she ate the fruit that God had forbidden then she would see things as God does. Those in leadership positions in the churches of Christ always need to remember that they are not God, and even as pastors or church leaders they are only servants of him and his people.

In the last part of his first letter Peter is writing to elders, that is, pastors and church leaders (v1) and he gives them two specific jobs to do.

He makes it clear that they are to:

1. be shepherds of God's flock (v2),
2. be examples to the flock (v3).

This means that the pastor has two main responsibilities – firstly, to care for God's people and, secondly, to live as an example for God's people to follow. We will examine the work of being a shepherd in later studies, but in this first

chapter we will see the areas where pastors need to become examples.

### **1. Be an example of holiness**

Many might think that this is a strange thing to set as a priority in pastoral ministry because Christians are often criticised for ‘being too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use’.

That is fair criticism if, by holiness, we mean having a set of rules that makes us think that we are better than other people. That is not what Peter means. He wants pastors to be living so close to God that they understand the will of God and his care to save lost sinners. True holiness is seen when our lives grow more and more in likeness to Christ (2 Peter 3:18, Romans 8:29). He was pure, blameless, set apart from sinners, and went about doing good, and delighted in fellowship with his Father (Hebrews 7:26, Acts 10:38, John 17).

Peter begins by reminding all believers that we are people who will also share in the glory to be revealed (v1). Peter had seen something of the heavenly glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17), and he had seen Jesus ascend to heaven (Acts 1). Indeed, he had been so moved by what he had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration that he wanted to stay there (Matthew 17:4). He was not allowed to do that, but his experience helped him to understand that his main work as a pastor and preacher is to prepare people for heaven. This life on earth is only short (2 Peter 1:13-14), and the earth itself will one day be totally destroyed (2 Peter 3:11). Therefore, we are to be holy people in preparation for heaven, because

“*without holiness no one will see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14). A godly pastor from a former age, Robert Murray M’Cheyne, used to pray each day, “Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be.” (See also the ‘Serving Today’ booklet ‘*Sanctified and Useful*’.)

The pastor is to be an example of holiness and to encourage his people to be holy. Peter knew that it was a blessed experience and he wanted all believers to enjoy the same blessing (v1). Pastors and church leaders are not simply organising a church on earth, but are preparing God’s people for heaven. As shepherds they are to lead people to holiness and to be an example of holiness.

### **2. Be an example of humility**

Peter then goes on to show the importance of humility. In verses 5 and 6 humility is mentioned three times: “*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’.* *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*”

As human beings we fear humility, because people will think that we are weak, but God’s way is always to humble his people. Many churches know the painful experience of humiliation caused by sin because Christians refuse to humble themselves by obeying God. Peter knew what it was to be humbled a number of times. This happened especially when he thought that he was strong, a notable case being when in fact he denied Christ. He failed when he boasted he would succeed. Mercifully, Christ restored

him, and the lesson in humility was engraved on Peter's heart.

In the church there are to be no big men, only servants. Where men are called to be leaders they are not to be bosses. They are to be examples and fellow-workers (v2).

One of the greatest temptations that pastors' face is pride. It is easy to think that the blessing that results from their preaching is due to them, their gifts and talents, whereas in fact it is all from the Lord (see John 15:5). It is also easy for pastors to think that the church belongs to them, when in fact it belongs to God. Pastors are to serve under God. In pastoral care an example of this humble spirit will be seen when there are problems in people's lives and pastors have to restore them. They will do so realising that even as pastors they also can be tempted (Galatians 6:1): *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."*

### **Humble yourself and pray**

A pastor will be an example of humility to his people as they see his life of prayer. When we pray we are telling God that we cannot manage to be good examples ourselves, but that we need his help. The Lord Jesus Christ finished his earthly ministry by saying that he had been given all authority (Matthew 28:18), but throughout his earthly ministry he made prayer a priority. True prayer is a confession of our weakness and a statement of our faith in God.

### **3. Be an example of faith**

The last example that Peter expects from pastors is to stand firm in the faith (v9). Hebrews 11:6 shows us the vital importance of faith when it states that *"... without faith it is impossible to please God"*.

Christians need to see that pastors understand what they believe and that they have faith in what they believe. The cross of Calvary is the centre of Christian faith because the blood of Jesus is able to deal with all sin. Pastors who condemn themselves and other people do not really believe that sin can be forgiven. It can! Peter laid the foundations of true faith clearly in his first letter, chapter 1, verses 3 to 5: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."*

Pastors called of God are to preach this message and call sinners to repentance. The God who saved you in your sin is able to save others in their sin. Paul, the great New Testament writer and preacher, called himself the chief of sinners. This Gospel is able to save all who come to God in faith.

The old ways of any culture without Christ only lead to death, pain and misery. Christians must leave **all the old ways** and follow the glorious saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pastors in particular are to be seen and known as those whose faith in Christ is real, warm and strong.

**Think about it!**

Take time now to pray over the points in this chapter.

A church will never be any better than its pastor! If you are a pastor and are dissatisfied with your people, then look at yourself! Do you feel unable to change yourself or others? Then look to Christ in prayer and ask for his help.

In the light of this chapter follow Christ, be a shepherd and be an example.

## Chapter 2 A sinner called to preach

Please pray and read Luke 5:1-11.

Many people reading the heading of this chapter might be shocked and think that a sinner could never be a preacher. After the first chapter others may feel that they could never be a pastor like Peter. It might even be asked, “Who or what normal person could ever be like that?” But, remember, every person in the Bible was an ordinary person like you and me, including Peter. Even Jesus, who committed no sin, experienced all the trials that we face.

We will see that Peter made many big mistakes (Matthew 16:23). However, when God puts his hand on a man or woman they become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and he works on them so that they become what he wants them to be. In this chapter we will see how Jesus started that work in Peter.

### 1. Jesus prepares Peter (v1-3)

It is easy to read the call of Peter in Matthew 4:18-20 and to think that the call happened instantly with no introduction, and that Peter simply responded to the voice of authority. That can happen when believers are called,

but if we look at other details we will see that Jesus led Peter to respond using three clear steps.

### i. Hearing the Word of God

In this passage (Luke 5:1-11), Peter would have heard Jesus preach, but it is likely that Peter had also heard about Jesus from his brother, Andrew, who had been a disciple of John the Baptist (see John 1:35,40). Even if Peter himself was not a follower of John the Baptist, he heard Andrew’s testimony (John 1:41). The main emphasis of John’s ministry was “... *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*”. God’s method of saving people is by knowledge of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15): “... *you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*”. The main way of doing this is through preaching and teaching. In fact, even as children are taught the Word of God they are being prepared for service.

Now it would seem that Peter was not fully listening to Jesus, because we are told that he and others were washing their nets (v2). Even so, God used the little that Peter did hear.

Romans 10:17 clearly teaches that “... *faith comes from hearing the message .... through the Word of Christ*”. You will recall when Paul was expecting his life to end he encouraged Timothy to “*preach the Word*” (2 Timothy. 4:2).

**Lesson:** Pastors will never do anything of real value for God unless they **publicly read and preach the Word of God.**

## ii. Obeying the Word of God

There is a great danger of thinking that having read or heard the Word of God then that is enough, but verses 4 and 5 show us an important principle: *“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”* The Word of God not only has to be heard, but it must be obeyed by all who hear it. Notice that the first thing that Jesus asks Peter to do is not some great spiritual exercise, but to be willing to obey God in everyday situations. All believers, especially pastors, must show a willingness to obey even when it seems beyond normal understanding. The Word of God has been given for the good of all people, and we should put it into practice in our daily lives.

For our encouragement, the promises of the Bible are able to uphold and strengthen believers in every age. Take time to think carefully about the promises in these following verses – Exodus 20:12; Joshua 1:5; Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 16:31.

However, the Bible is not only a book of promises, it is also a book that has laws to give guidance and keep us from the penalty of sin (see Psalm 119:9,11).

Pastors have to believe and obey the Word of God themselves before they can expect their hearers to do so. Notice that when Paul gave his very important advice to Timothy, he said that he had already set a public example (2 Timothy 2:2): *“And the things you have heard me say in*

*the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”* Consider also Paul’s pastoral instruction to the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 11:1: *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* The pastor has to be an example that others are able to follow for the glory of God, and in this early stage of his spiritual life Peter was called to obey the Word of the Lord.

## iii. Repenting at the Word of God

When the Word of God is truly heard and there is a willingness to obey or to respond to it, there can be a life-changing experience. Reading verse 5, it is obvious that Peter already had a respect for Jesus in that he called him, *“Master”*, which can be translated as a commander or teacher. *“Lord”* in verse 8 is, however, a much stronger word and can mean God, Lord and Master. It is likely that Peter did not fully understand what he was saying, but in this verse we see that he began to understand a number of things about Jesus.

### a. The holiness of Jesus

There is nothing to suggest that Peter saw the brightness of Jesus’ glory that he was to see on the Mount of Transfiguration, but because Jesus had authority over the fish in the lake Peter realised that he had some special authority. This caused Peter to realise that Jesus was in some way different from ordinary men so he says (v8), *“Go away from me, Lord.”* He was beginning to understand that Jesus is the God/Man. The lives of Old Testament prophets clearly show us that as God called them into further service so they understood that God was

completely different from men and women. Look at the following verses to see how these people became aware of the holiness of God: Moses in Exodus 3:6; Elijah in 1 Kings 19:13; and Isaiah in Isaiah 6:3.

### ***b. Human sinfulness***

Pastors are never popular when they point out the fact that all people are sinners, but people who begin to understand the true holiness of God then begin to understand their own sinfulness. Peter did not rush to be a preacher, because he saw that he was not worthy. He said (v8), *“I am a sinful man.”* This same response can be seen in the example of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5): *“‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’”*

This is the only real place to begin any Christian ministry, especially pastoral. When pastors are overwhelmed by their own unworthiness and aware of God’s holiness they realise that they are not fit to serve God. They also realise that natural gifts and talents are useless. This compels them to be wholly dependent on the Lord himself, first for his forgiveness and then his enabling to equip and use them in his service. Never forget, preachers are only ever **servants** of God.

This whole path of necessary preparation that took place in Peter’s life can be very painful. When men hear, obey and repent at the Word of God, they are truly humbled before God. In themselves they feel of no use to God at all, but that is when God is best able to use them. This is where Peter’s ministry was to begin.

## **2. The preacher’s ministry**

Remember, true Christianity is built on God’s grace. Although Jesus had led Peter to repentance he did not drive him to despair or to feel condemned. Jesus’ first words to Peter in this situation are words of encouragement.

### **i. “Don’t be afraid” (v10)**

The preacher is under the call of God, therefore, he should fear him more than man. The fear of man will trap men and make them useless for God (Proverbs 29:25): *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”* While all believers must fear him, God continually gives this encouragement not to be afraid of him, and that is an important difference (see Luke 1:13,30; 2:10.) It is natural for all believers to respect and, at times, to fear men, but the fear of (respect for) God ought to be greater and constant. This godly fear should characterise every believer, pastors in particular, but we should not live in terror and dread of God and be afraid to draw near to him. Jesus is actually saying to Peter, “Stop being afraid”, because he knew what Peter was feeling. Peter felt unworthy to be in the Saviour’s presence, so by his grace Jesus reassured him that he was welcome and had no need to be fearful. Jesus was going to use Peter even though he felt an unworthy sinner. Servants of God today are the same. If God has called, then the pastor or preacher has no choice but to go on, just as Peter did! So the Lord says to us also, *“Don’t be afraid...”* You see, the Lord was going to be with Peter and equip him for a great ministry, and he would help him, even in the face of fierce opposition. In a similar way Paul had to encourage Timothy not to be afraid

(2 Timothy 1:6-7): *“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

Let us look now a little more closely at what the actual challenge to ministry meant that Jesus gave Peter.

## ii. **“You will catch men” (v10)**

To understand the cost of this call it is necessary to see the temptation that Peter faced in verses 6 and 7. He probably had one of the biggest catches of fish in all his life. He could have said, “I have God’s blessing here so I will stick at what I do well,” but he had to leave everything.

Everyone faces this temptation when God calls a person to leave his business, or even one pastorate to go to another. The call to Christian ministry might appear to mean having to give up the security of a regular wage. For other people it might mean having to leave home and family for a strange area or even a different country. In that sort of decision it is easy to look back at everything that was available before and to feel that it is being lost. The believer called by God has to believe that God will supply all that is needed in the place of ministry. For Peter, with all the stresses and temptations, God kept his promise and on the Day of Pentecost Peter was used to catch three thousand souls. In the next chapter, however, it was just one man at the Gate of the Temple who came to faith (Acts 2 & 3). But Peter had to be willing to give up his fishing business to become a fisher of men.

When God calls he promises an effective life-giving ministry – the word “catch” actually means “to take alive”. That is what Gospel ministry is all about. This point about Jesus coming to give life is taught clearly in John 10:11 and Ephesians 2:1,4 and 5. Gospel preaching is a work with eternal results (see John 6:68).

## **Think about it!**

To be effective in ministry the pastor/preacher needs to know God and himself. Jesus is the Bread of Life and preachers are men called to share that Bread with other people.

---



---

## **Chapter 3 A disciple growing in understanding**

Please pray and read Matthew 16:13-28.

As you begin this chapter remind yourself of the theme of this book – Christ is making this man his type of pastor. Although Peter had such a clear and life-changing call, the work of preparation and improving was still going on in Peter’s life. God is also always working on believers to change them into the people he wants them to be. Paul explains this a little more fully in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Philippians 2:13.

As we grow spiritually so our understanding of the Word of God develops. And sometimes we learn lessons that we had never seen in the Bible before. When such new understanding is taught to the church members two problems can arise:

1. older believers can sometimes object, saying that they were not taught these things before, therefore the

ideas cannot be right, especially if it is given by younger pastors; and

2. younger pastors, particularly Bible College trained men, can think they know everything, and can come across in an arrogant way.

So how does the church resolve these problems?

Both ideas are wrong. The older ones need to realise that God is always giving us new understanding of the Bible. Notice that it is new **understanding**; it is not new **truth**. You cannot add to the Bible but your understanding of its teaching can and should grow. The younger pastors need to deal with their pride and to teach any new God-given understanding in a way that shows love and respect for those who may have been their teachers before. They should also exercise patience when they preach.

Before looking at the main teaching points in Matthew 16:13-28 we need to notice two important principles that will help us in our own ministry and spiritual growth.

### **1. Jesus teaches gradually**

Verse 21 says, *“From that time on Jesus began to explain...”* Jesus had been with his disciples for about 18 months at this time. They had been taught, been sent out to preach themselves and had had discussion sessions with Jesus. However now, in effect, he is saying, “There is more to learn.” This point is also emphasised in John 16:12,13 where Jesus made it clear that even after he had finished his own earthly teaching the Holy Spirit would lead the disciples into fuller understanding.

This teaching must not be misused by saying that the Holy Spirit teaches us new things in addition to the Bible today. We have the whole Bible – the Old and New Testaments – and in it God has given us all that we need to understand about himself and the necessity for salvation. This is the clear teaching of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Today the Holy Spirit **makes clear** to us what is written in the Bible, but nothing can be added to that or placed alongside it. Anyone who has a dream or vision must always allow it to be checked alongside the clear teaching of the Bible. Also, such dreams or visions cannot be added to the Bible.

### **2. Understanding in one area does not guarantee total understanding**

Notice how Jesus had really praised Peter in verses 16 and 17 for his understanding of God’s Word, but by verse 23 there is a frightening rebuke for him because he has not understood the will and plan of God. This could be true of any believer. We have the privilege of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, but **we** are not always correct. Paul’s experience in Acts 16:7 gives us a good example of this. Paul was living and acting in obedience to God’s general call in his life. He wanted to preach in certain areas, but God had a more specialised job for him at that time. So Paul had to learn what that was and obey it, which he did.. The principle of this point is also taught clearly in Isaiah 55:8 and 9. Often the Lord’s thoughts and plans are

different from ours. This ought to keep us humble and prayerful in our ministry, so that we only ever live and teach true biblical Christianity.

Having seen how the Lord dealt with Peter by means of a process and taught him gradually, we also realise that just because we might understand some of the Lord's teaching correctly, that doesn't guarantee we are right about everything. It was a difficult time for Peter because Jesus had to rebuke him for his lack of understanding (v23). These experiences have a direct bearing on our own ministries today and come as clear warnings to us.

Now we will draw attention to another three clear points of Christian teaching that come out of this same passage.

### **3. Understand the Gospel message**

For anyone to be an effective pastor/preacher they need to be clear in their understanding of the Christian Gospel. This is especially true in countries where many religions are represented and the general teaching is that all roads lead to God. This might sound good, but it is not true Christianity.

#### **i. Jesus is the only way of salvation (v16)**

Peter understood this point in principle because he called Jesus, 'the Christ', which is the Greek word for the Messiah, or the one whose coming God promised in the Old Testament. At his birth he was given the name Jesus "... because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The Gospel and pastoral ministry is all to do with dealing with the problem of human sin. Jesus is the **only way** for anyone to be saved (see Acts 4:12).

In addition, while it is true that the Gospel promises and guarantees peace with God (Rom 5:1), it nowhere promises a lack of problems on earth (see vv 24,26). Since that point is true it will have an effect on both the preacher, and the message that is preached. Today, too many preachers are offering many things in this world with no real thought for people's eternal souls (see 'Think about it!' at the end of the chapter). The paragraph above shows clearly that God became man in Jesus in order to take responsibility for our sin, so that all who believe might be given the righteousness of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). It is the responsibility of all preachers and pastors to preach this message clearly so that all might believe and enjoy the promise of Romans 8:1: "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

#### **ii. The cross is the only way of forgiveness/redemption (v21)**

Having made it clear that he is the only way of salvation, Jesus explained that he knew that his ministry would be complete only in his suffering and death. However, right until the end of his earthly ministry the disciples expected a conquering, earthly king. Even after the resurrection Christ had to explain that suffering was part of God's way to save his people (see Luke 24:26,46). Remarkably this had been God's plan from the very beginning of the world:

- As far back as the garden of Eden God had covered Adam's sin with the death of another (Genesis 3:21): "*The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*"

- In the same way, when God freed his people from slavery in Egypt a lamb had to be killed and the houses of God's people had to be marked with the blood (Exodus 12:3,13). If their homes were not marked in this way in obedience to God's Word there was no way to escape from the judgement that God was going to bring on people who were enemies of the truth.
- In the same way Jesus came as "*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

**God's principle for forgiveness** is clearly taught in Hebrews 9:22: "*... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*"

If a pastor preaches any way of salvation other than the one outlined here he is guilty of deceiving people and being a false prophet. In fact, he has no authority to preach in this way. He will bring upon himself the condemnation of God.

Christians are so familiar with this teaching about the cross that we can easily take it for granted and treat it very lightly. We should never think that Jesus died easily. It cost him everything. Luke 22:41 tells us, "*He withdrew*" – this means that he was alone. When he was alone he prayed, "*... if you are willing, take this cup from me*" (v42). Although Jesus came to die it was still a difficult thing for him to accept. As we read on in the story we are told that "*... his sweat was like drops of blood*" (v44). This means that it was physically painful for him, and Matthew 27:46 shows clearly that he was deserted by man

and by God. Jesus cried out: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

Why was it so difficult? He took responsibility for and paid the full price of all the sins of his people. Peter understood this and taught it clearly in these words (1 Peter 2:24): "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; ... by his wounds you have been healed.*" Here in Matthew 16 he had not appreciated that Jesus had to suffer and tried to stop him even speaking of it (v22), but the stern rebuke from Jesus helped him to appreciate that without the cross there would be no forgiveness. This was a lesson he had to learn.

The cross should never be seen as a defeat for God. When Jesus called, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30), it was not a hopeless cry, but it was the shout of a conqueror. He had finished the work that God the Father had given him to do and **had paid the price for all the sins of all God's people in every age and culture.**

**iii. Where this message is preached and believed total forgiveness is freely given (v19)**

The bold print in the last lines of the previous paragraph are not a printing mistake. It is written like this in order to emphasise the truth of the Gospel. Verse 19 is a picture of the authority that is given to all Gospel preachers: "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*"

This chapter has shown us clearly that Peter was not perfect, but what he learned here he later preached with

conviction and authority and people were converted (see Acts 2:38,39; 3:19). This same authority was given clearly to all Gospel preachers in the Great Commission (Mathew 28:18-20). Therefore, anyone called of God to this work should preach this same message with confidence. However, remember that it is always on God's terms.

The true and only Gospel must centre on the death of Christ with the promise that all who repent (Acts 2:38) and believe (Acts 16:31) will be saved. Jesus taught more about this later, but for the present, preachers and pastors need to understand the authority that is given them to tell repentant sinners that there is eternal life and forgiveness through faith in the death of Jesus.

### **Think about it!**

Many people around the world have been influenced by many false teachers who offer other things in the Gospel which the Bible does not promise: things such as wealth and health and position and prestige. This is wrong! Jesus taught clearly that he had come to ransom lost sinners (Mark 10:45). This is what the Gospel is about. If anything is added to the Gospel then the Gospel is destroyed (see Galatians 1:7-9). The Gospel is hindered today because too many preachers have lost sight of the cross. It is and must remain in the centre of our preaching. Jesus was angry with Peter because he hindered and opposed the plans of God. He is angry with preachers who offer any form of changed Gospel, either by adding or subtracting things not taught in the Bible (read verses 24 to 28 again carefully).

---

## **Chapter 4 A disciple is made a pastor**

Please pray and read Luke 22:24-32.

### **Introduction**

In the last chapter Jesus had to correct Peter's theology. This chapter is centred 18 months later. It was the night of Christ's betrayal and denial. Jesus had just conducted the Last Supper (vv 17-20). Even after all of Christ's teaching the disciples were still not perfect in behaviour or understanding, but were arguing which of them was to be considered the greatest (see v24). This problem continues in many churches today as people misunderstand the true meaning of ministry and struggle for power. Jesus described true leadership when he said (vv 26-27), "*I am among you as one who serves.*" (See also John 13:4-15 where Jesus says, "*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*")

This teaching needs to be developed, that is, that we lead by service and example, but in this chapter we will focus on verses 31 and 32: "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*" Here Christ shows his personal interest in all those called to lead his people and their responsibility as pastors.

### **1. God's special servants are open to Satan's attacks (v31)**

In the last chapter Jesus was angry with Peter because he had allowed his thinking to be wrongly influenced, but in this chapter we see Jesus' concern for his people when they

are attacked by Satan. Remember the biblical teaching of 1 Peter 5:8,9: Satan is always trying to spoil God's work – he spoiled the creation (Genesis 3); he tried to kill the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:16); he tempted Jesus to spoil his ministry before he began preaching (Matthew 4:1-11); even in the crucifixion Satan thought that he had won his fight against Jesus. Temptations and spiritual attacks often make Christians believe that they are somehow more sinful than others, but Job chapters 1 and 2 show clearly that there are times when our problems are not caused by our own sin, but by the direct attacks of Satan. The point that we need to remember here is: **be aware, but do not despair**. We have these warnings, but we also have the promise of Romans 8:37: “... *we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”

## **2. Christ is interested in his people and prays for them (v32)**

The final statement of the last paragraph should not make us treat the temptations of Satan lightly, because again the story of Job shows that Satan is a strong and powerful enemy. The Christian's confidence, however, is in the care and prayer of Jesus: “*I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.*”

That is a tremendous encouragement and it will probably help if we look at it in more detail. In this section it will be good to notice four things about the prayer of Jesus:

### **i. He prayed**

The word that Jesus used is an urgent one, but notice that Jesus did not prevent Satan from tempting (testing) Peter.

In the same way, he did not prevent the attacks on Job or Daniel, for example, but Jesus goes through the problems with his people. Prayer is not just empty words, it is a powerful weapon that Jesus used continuously in his time on earth.

### **ii. He prays to help and support his people**

He is involved with the lives of his people and he prays specifically – “... *that your faith may not fail*”. These are not just empty words. There is probably more detail of this type of prayer in John 17. In John 17:11 he prays, “... *protect them by the power of your name*”, and in verse 15, “... *not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them.*”

God does protect his people in trials. This is demonstrated clearly in Job 1:12 and 2:6. God would only allow Satan to go so far. For your encouragement remember this, we are in the world for a purpose. We will not be removed or killed before our time and we may have to face great trials, but God does set limits for the protection of his people. Any difficulties experienced by Christians are for a purpose and God will use them for good (Rom 8:28).

### **iii. He prays today**

Although this point does not come specifically from this text, Hebrews 7:25 tells us clearly that Jesus continues to pray for his people in heaven today. You are not alone; Jesus sees you; Jesus prays for you; Jesus protects you. Even if death is a result of the trials we are still protected because not even death can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ (see Rom 8:35-39).

#### **iv. He prays with hope and confidence of victory**

Peter went on to deny Jesus, but Jesus knew that he would repent, or turn back again. Jesus makes this clear when he says, “... *when you have turned back*”. In his own eyes Peter would have been greatly ashamed; believers are often greatly ashamed, but even when they are ashamed Jesus prays for his children. It is very important that we do not let our feelings guide our beliefs. Believers will often feel deserted by God because of their sin. The fact is that he is praying and actually working to draw them back. As far as Christ was concerned nothing actually separated Peter and Jesus, but Peter was allowed to go through this and other experiences so that God might humble him. Paul had similar experiences and wrote that God allowed them “... *to keep me from becoming conceited*” (2 Corinthians 12:7). What we have seen so far in Luke 22:24-32 is true for any Christian, so now we will look at the next important lesson that is helpful for pastors in the way that the Lord deals with Peter.

### **3. The purpose of pastoral ministry**

There are many parts to pastoral ministry and these include preaching the Word of God, and caring for the sick and sad. The overall goal of pastoral ministry, however, is summed up in the words, “... *strengthen your brothers.*”

Who does Jesus mean when he talks of “brothers”? Is he referring to the disciples? Yes, that is quite likely. It can, however, apply to all believers. We are therefore to encourage our fellow leaders, as well as all Christians, who are our fellow believers. Paul referred to all Christians as

his brothers, and pastors should never feel that they are somehow more important than anyone else.

When Jesus says, ‘strengthen your brothers’, he uses a word meaning ‘to set fast’, ‘to turn resolutely in a certain direction’. This means that the Christian Gospel is a set of definite facts that must be understood, believed (and obeyed) by every Christian. This fact is very important today when books, cassettes and videos are bringing wrong ideas to many of our people. It causes confusion and people leave the church because they do not know what to believe.

Paul developed this teaching further and gives some guidelines for pastoral ministry in Ephesians 4:11-13. The ministry in the church must teach the Word of God so that all believers are “... *built up ... reach unity ... and a knowledge of the Son of God and become mature*”. Pastors must always be seeking to teach the Bible in order to strengthen the faith of Christian believers.

Where pastors fail to do this there are problems. Again Paul gives clear warnings in that he says people will be “... *tossed back and forth by ... every wind of teaching*” (Ephesians 4:14). What he is saying is that people who have not been taught the truth of Scripture will change their ideas depending on who is doing the teaching. It is happening in many churches today and at times churches will be completely ruined by these false teachers. That is the time to start again and to lay a new foundation.

Christ had not finished with Peter and this matter so he gave him some extra teaching after the resurrection. It was the same basic advice, using another picture, when he said

(John 21:15-17), “*Feed my lambs... Take care of my sheep... Feed my sheep.*”

Obviously, Jesus is using picture language, but this feeding is done in two main ways. The first is *teaching the Word of God*, so that faith stands up in trials. This teaching must always be built on the same foundation and repeating the main points of Christianity, for example:

- sin confessed is sin forgiven;
- the blood of Christ cleanses all sin;
- when people sin the problem should be pointed out and they should be encouraged to repent, believing that they can be forgiven.

Those are the unchanging foundations, but people also need to be helped with regular areas of difficulty and false teaching. For example, the return of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, etc. This short book will not allow us to go into detail about these points. However, when people have problems in these areas they need to be reminded that the priorities of the Christian life are faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Christ and a life lived in obedience to his Word until he comes back in his own time.

The second way of caring for believers is by *showing practical Christian love*. Pastors must never give up the main work of prayer, preaching and teaching for the sake of practical care, but Acts 6 and Galatians 2:10 show that true Christianity is demonstrated in helping the poor. This is an area where we need to involve other members of our church far more.

**Think about it!**

A great deal has been taught in this chapter and it may seem too much, but we are not alone in this work. We have all the gifts of God. This puts us under great responsibility (see Luke 12:48). We need to have a clear understanding of God’s love and concern for his people and follow the unchanging advice of Matthew 9:35-38.

---

## **Chapter 5 A zealous pastor shows his weakness**

---

Please pray and read Luke 22:33-46 and 54-62.

### **Introduction**

Although pastors are called upon to preach the grace of a forgiving God they do not always find it easy to forgive themselves. Sadly, too many Christians set standards for pastors that are not biblical and expect them to be perfect. If they fall then many find it difficult to forgive them. In this chapter we will see how Christ dealt with a preacher who failed.

It is quite possible that Peter remembered everything that happened in this story when he wrote in 1 Peter 5:5-6: “*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*”

It was a difficult time in Peter’s life, but God used it to teach Peter that he was human. Every man and woman that God used in the Bible was exactly like we are (see James 5:17).

## 1. A young pastor's zeal (v33)

The first thing that we need to see about Peter was that he was zealous and committed. (This is also obvious in Matthew 26:33.) Every young pastor ought to have zeal and fire in his life. Every time he preaches he ought to treat it like a new start and have that fire. Zeal and enthusiasm are not wrong (see John 2:17). If we are not excited in our ministry we need to ask ourselves a few questions and to be concerned. If we are not enthusiastic we do not know the strength that we could know (see Nehemiah 8:10).

## 2. A young pastor's problems

One of the interesting things about human beings is that when we are at our strongest it is also possible to be at our weakest. With all his excitement and zeal Peter had his problems, and excitement does not get rid of them.

We will look now at what happened to Peter after his statement of total commitment. These are four things which can happen easily to all believers.

### a. "... he found them asleep" (v45)

Peter's first problem was a physical one – he was tired, but it had a spiritual effect. Jesus knew the possibility of this and had already taught about it in Luke 18:1: *"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."* At special meetings it is easy to pray, but we so easily give up. Prayer is fellowship with God, drawing near to him. We need to check our Christian lives when we fall asleep instead of praying. Christ wept and prayed while his people slept. What about

us? (See also verses 20-22 and verse 24 – where Jesus thought of the cross, the disciples thought of personal power.)

### b. "*Peter followed at a distance*" (v54)

Peter wanted to do the right thing, but he did not have all the courage needed to go all the way. Many people follow Christ at a distance. Some people sit in the back of churches because they do not want to get involved. Many attend only one service and do not pray. They often do this because they believe that Christianity is the right way, but they do not want to get too involved. This can also be shown in many other ways. Notice how quickly Peter changed from being on fire for Jesus to being a backslider. This can happen to any Christian

### c. "*Peter sat down with them*" (v55)

"Them" in this verse refers to "they" in verse 54, that is, the enemies of Jesus. He is sitting at the fire – the place for fellowship and being with friends and family. See how quickly a disciple on fire for Jesus has become a man who has fellowship with the enemies of Jesus and the Gospel.

Although this can happen very quickly there are two serious facts to consider at this point:

- i. A Christian will never fully be at home with unbelievers (see Matthew 26:73). A Christian is a new creation and a citizen of heaven; even our language is different.
- ii. Backsliding robs the Christian of all strength and courage. Peter, who had been so brave earlier, even became afraid of a girl. Sin robs us of strength.

#### ***d. "He denied it" (vv56-60)***

Peter had started down a road that he could not leave until he had completely turned his back on Jesus and would not even admit to being his friend. Be warned, once we begin to backslide we have no guarantee that we will be able to stop. There is no pastor or ordinary Christian who is free from this temptation.

We have seen how easy it is for a pastor to lose his zeal for serving the Lord, and as we have looked at Peter we have found him sitting with Jesus' enemies and then denying he ever knew the Saviour. It would be easy to think that this would disqualify him for future service, but we will go on to see that the Lord did not cast him off. Jesus continued to work in his life and make him the man that he wanted him to be.

#### **3. A backslidden pastor humbled (v61)**

The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the words the Lord had spoken to him: *"Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times."*

What did Peter see in those eyes? From a human angle it would be easy to suggest that he heard Jesus say, "How could you do such a thing?" "Why have you left me?" "I thought you were my friend!" "I told you so!" But if we remember the words of verse 32, *"I have prayed for you"*, I believe that we will have clearer ideas. Peter probably saw the grace of God and forgiveness flow from the eyes of Jesus at this time.

How important it is for such a considerate and merciful attitude to be present at times when church discipline is exercised against a member who has fallen into sin. It can be seen from two angles:

- a. the person trying to help the one fallen, or the spirit of the Gospel;
- b. the person who has fallen, or the spirit of humility.

#### ***a. The spirit of the Gospel***

If we consider this in the spirit of the Gospel the following verses will help.

- In John 3:17 we are told quite clearly that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world but that through him the world might be saved. Pastors should always be set on restoring sinners rather than condemning or judging them.
- John 8:11 is another example of the spirit of the Gospel. Jesus would not condemn the woman taken in adultery as the people wanted him to. However, he told her to stop her life of sin. While there is no room for condemnation there should always be a place for showing people the way that is pleasing to God.
- Romans 8:1 is an example in the teaching of Paul that shows God will never condemn his blood-bought people. Christ has already paid the price, or suffered the punishment, for all the sins of all God's people. Therefore, God cannot punish believing sinners and still remain a just God.

From these three principles there are three facts that we need to remember when we try to help a Christian who has come up against problems.

- i. Restoration rather than punishment should always be our goal as Christians (see Galatians 6:1).
- ii. All of us are in the same danger of being tempted (see Galatians. 6:1).
- iii. When our lives are perfect only then we will be in the position to condemn others (see John 8:7). However, in case you deceive yourself – none of us is perfect, so be humble (1 John 1:8-10).

In this situation Peter again understood something more of the Gospel that he had been called to preach, and it had an effect on him. This brings us to the second angle of the restoration:

### ***b. The spirit of humility***

All believers can learn much from what Peter did in this situation. Verse 62 tells us that he went outside and wept bitterly. Even in this short statement we see the following points:

- i. Realising his mistake he had to separate from the company of sinners who had drawn him away from Jesus (see Psalm 1; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). A person cannot pretend to repent if they are not prepared to leave the place of sin or the cause of temptation.
- ii. To go outside society is a sign of shame. We are told that Jesus was crucified outside the city as a sign of shame, and there is a way in which we as Christians need to be ready for that same shame (see

Hebrews 13:12-13). Please notice that this is something that Peter did of himself when he repented. It was not forced on him by Jesus or other people.

- iii. When he wept he was truly sorry for his sin and was broken before God. He knew true humility and probably felt great humiliation (see Psalm 51:17). By this act of humility he was, in effect, preparing his heart again for the presence of God (see Isaiah 57:15). Too many people sacrifice the felt presence of God because they are not prepared to humble themselves before God and other believers.

### **Think about it!**

Peter learnt some hard lessons about himself that night and there may be pastors and believers who have learnt the same way. It hurts, but it is better to be humbled now than lose an effective ministry or be condemned eternally. This should keep us all humble and we ought to learn 1 Corinthians 10:12: *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”*

Make sure that you know your weak areas and avoid them. Cover them in prayer any time that you have to go near them. Pray with each other to help each other in these areas.

Notice, finally, that Jesus left him there. It was a time that Peter had to go through in order to help him later. We will face similar situations, but no experience is ever wasted with God (see Romans 8:28).

---



---

## **Chapter 6 A backslidden pastor is brought back**

Please pray and read John 21:1-19.

### **Introduction**

In the last chapter we left Peter in tears, humbled and crushed over his failure by denying the Saviour. We also said that God is able to use these situations in the Christian's life.

As we begin this next chapter we need to remember the main theme of this book – “Peter: a Christ-made Pastor”. Christ has been working in Peter to make him the type of man that he wants him to be. The last chapter left Peter broken, out of fellowship with others and away from Christ. We now find him ready to turn his back completely on his walk with God (v3): “*I’m going out to fish.*” His spiritual sight is dimmed because he does not recognise Jesus (v4, see also Luke 24:16).

At the beginning of this chapter we need to understand clearly that these are temptations and experiences faced by all Christians at different times.

### **1. God’s kindness leads you towards repentance (Romans 2:4)**

Peter, like any other sinner or backslider, was unable to help himself, therefore Jesus took the initiative and came to him (see John 21:1,4). This is God’s grace or undeserved love. Christ came continually in his earthly ministry. He came to earth, to all the people in his ministry, to Calvary, to his disciples after the resurrection. He still comes today. In our pride we so often wait for the sinner to return, but Jesus comes in love.

In this section we see why it was so necessary for Jesus to come to Peter and not the other way around. We will learn the following points for guidance in our Christian lives and ministry:

**a. Without Jesus we can do nothing** (v5, see also John 15:5). Although he was an expert fisherman, without Jesus Peter caught nothing. The Christian/pastor out of fellowship with Jesus for any reason is useless for God at that time.

**b. After a mistake Jesus took Peter back to the beginning of his call** (see vv5-7). In this incident Jesus took Peter and all the disciples right back to the beginning of their Christian lives. In chapter two we saw how Jesus called Peter in Luke 5:1-11. In this incident he was showing that there had to be a new start. Notice that he also uses the name Simon rather than Peter. In effect, Jesus was treating him as the person he was before they had met and Jesus named him Peter. He was saying that we have to start again.

As Christians we must remember that we are not our own, but we are a people bought with a price – the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We ought to remind ourselves of this daily.

**c. In spite of his sin Peter felt no fear of condemnation** (v7). Even though Peter had been so thoroughly humbled the night of the denial, he did not believe that Jesus would now condemn him. He had come to understand the Gospel. He had heard and seen the love and mercy of Christ. Even for the people who condemned him to death and nailed him to the cross he prayed, “*Father, forgive*

*them ...*” (Luke 23:34). The message that we preach must show the Christ who longs to draw sinners to himself (see John 12:32). This whole story shows that it is God’s character to forgive. Jesus brought Peter back into a relationship where food was shared and the original call was strengthened (see Romans 11:29).

This was all part of the Saviour’s plan to take Peter forward in preparation for leadership among the people of God.

## 2. A pastor’s priorities are made clear (v15)

*“Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”* This is the basic question that every Christian faces. It is the same as the priorities of Matthew 22:36-39. Christ is not particularly interested in our academic qualifications, power or authority, but our love. Consider 1 Corinthians 13, especially verse 13: *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*

This is where Christianity is out of step with most cultures, because many people see love as a weakness. Love, however, is the essential part of true Christianity. Jesus has shown Peter that he holds nothing against him even though Peter let him down; he has drawn him back and is prepared to use him in spite of his mistakes. Jesus does, however, give a further test of responsibility: *“If you love me, you must love my people.”*

In this section Christ gives:

Two types of work	<i>Feed and take care of</i>
Two groups of people	<i>Lambs and sheep</i>

He is telling Peter that the work of the pastor is to give spiritual food and all the protection that is required for God’s people. When he preaches he is to give spiritual food to encourage and strengthen. He is to give promises to support and defend. He is to give medicine to correct and to cure.

In these two groups of people Jesus shows that our ministry (or love) should help older and younger Christians. In John 10:16 Jesus said that he had other sheep that had to be brought in and our ministries must include evangelism. Paul states this clearly in 2 Timothy 4:5: *“... do the work of an evangelist...”*

The Gospel message must flow through our ministry, but our ministry must help all parts of the church.

Pastoral ministry should never be cold, academic lecturing. Also, the New Testament letters (e.g. Colossians, Ephesians, Titus, etc.) give instructions for people in many different stages of life. It is practical teaching and we must be practical and relevant as well.

We can see this clearly in Peter’s own first letter and ministry. In the sections below it is obvious that he made his teaching relevant to every group in the church:

2:13-17	rulers
2:18-25	employers and employees
3:1-6	wives
3:7	husbands
5:1-4	elders/pastors
5:5	young men

Christianity applies to every part of the believer's life and the pastor/preacher is responsible to see that people are taught correctly. God cares and we ought to care, too.

### **3. We walk the same path as Christ (v19)**

*“Follow me.”* Jesus had not finished teaching Peter yet, because here again Jesus reminds him of his first call (see Matthew 4:19). The Jews had expected Jesus to lead an army against Rome, but for three years he had preached a message of grace and forgiveness. Peter had seen his own failures and had seen Jesus rejected by the people. He had been present at Gethsemane – the place of painful prayer; at Gabbatha (John 19:13) – the place of Jesus' trial; and at Golgotha – the place of crucifixion. (He had also visited the grave of Jesus and seen evidence of the resurrection.)

When Jesus said, *“Follow me”* (or “walk in the same road as me”), Peter would have recalled those places of pain and humiliation and knew that it would not be easy. When Peter wrote 1 Peter 2:20-21 he was not just writing some easy ideas: *“But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”* Peter himself knew the pain and injustice of false imprisonment (Acts 4:3). He knew what it meant to be forbidden to preach (Acts 4:18), to experience further threats (Acts 4:21), and to be imprisoned with a planned execution (Acts 12:1-4).

If we follow Jesus faithfully many of us could experience the reality of persecution. Jesus warned Peter that he would suffer a painful death (see John 21:18-19).

It does not matter what God's will is for someone else. Our responsibility is to follow where God leads us.

If we are to be true pastors to God's blood-bought people we must be ready to follow in the path of sacrifice.

### **Think about it!**

It is a great calling. Many mistakes will be made, but let us fix our vision on Jesus. Let us preach Jesus and, in so doing, do all we can to care for and to protect his people.

## **Chapter 7 A Spirit-filled pastor preaches Christ**

Please pray and read Acts 1:1- 2:41

### **Introduction**

The earlier chapters have shown how Christ prepared Peter to be a God-honouring pastor. However, even at the time of the ascension in Acts 1:1-11 it is obvious that he was still far from perfect. Verse 6 shows that the disciples still did not understand the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God. Similarly, verse 11 shows a group of disciples, like so many people today, who waste time looking for signs instead of leaving God to do his own work. As Christians we should be obedient in the work God has given us. God was still working on Peter.

### **1. God's last-minute preparation**

In this chapter it will be important to notice some of the things that had to be done before the disciples were ready to become the church.

**i. (1:4) Wait for the gift**

Believers, and especially pastors, must always wait for God's time and God's power (see also 1:8). Whenever men have run ahead of God they have caused problems that they have had to live with for years. For example, Moses tried to lead too early; Abraham tried to produce a son.

**ii. (1:14) Joined together constantly in prayer**

It is quite likely that they were asking God to keep his promise and to send the gift of the Holy Spirit. Regular, believing prayer must be much more a part of our church lives – not noisy, confused shouting at God which is like that of the heathen, but humble pleading and waiting for God.

**iii. (1:16) The Scripture had to be fulfilled**

The Bible must always be a part of our worship. It must be read in a clear, understandable way and it must be explained to help God's people.

**iv. (1:12-26) They sorted out a problem**

Problems in life generally and in the church do not go away. They have to be brought to Christ and dealt with. When they are dealt with it is important to remember what we learned in the last chapter and always be aiming at restoring a backslider.

These points above ought to be a regular part of our lives in our walk with God. When prayer was answered in God's time and in God's way we see that Peter preached Christ.

Most people believe that Acts chapter 2 is all about the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, but the main part of the chapter is a sermon about Christ. We see that after the Spirit is given and people react, Peter corrects wrong ideas and then he preaches Christ.

**2. The plan and power of God (2:22ff)**

**i. God's Plan (v23)**

Peter has learnt an important lesson – God is still in control. The cross of Jesus was not a mistake. God had planned for it since the beginning (see Isaiah 53:5-6; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24). It was not a victory for Satan, as many false teachers would suggest. Jesus gave his life; it was not taken from him (see John 10:17-18). On the cross he was in control until the end (Luke 23:46). His life was given as a sacrifice to God and he was the priest that offered the sacrifice.

**ii. God's power**

The salvation of God's people is not only the work of Jesus Christ, but it shows clearly the power of God. Peter explains this a number of times in this great sermon. He also summarises a number of the points that have been developed in this book.

**a. (v24) *God raised him from the dead***

Most religions fear death, but our God has power over death (see Matthew 10:28). The confidence for the Christian is summed up by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

**b. (v32-33) *God exalted (him) to the right hand of God***

This is the position of power and authority. Christ has all power in heaven and on earth. The man Christ Jesus

ascended to heaven in his body (Acts 1:9) and is now sitting in heaven (Hebrews 1:3). He has authority, and is praying for his children (Hebrews 7:25).

**c. (v36) God has made this Jesus ... both Lord and Christ**  
As Lord he has authority, and as Christ he is the Messiah. That is the one God has especially anointed to be the Saviour of sinners. Indeed, he is God's only way to be saved (see Acts 4:12). He is the only way, and without him there is no salvation – no other is needed. God let Jesus take our sin. He has suffered in our place, therefore his redeemed children will never again suffer God's punishment. What a wonderful gift!

### 3. The power and peril of sin

Peter did not avoid difficult issues and in this sermon he points out clearly the sins of his hearers.

We see here to what lengths people will go to destroy God's work (see vv23,36). Notice the following:

- As Peter preached he actually named the sins of the people; he did not avoid the real problems.
- The Jewish leaders did not actually bang the nails into the hands of Jesus. They were careful not to mix with the unclean Romans, but because of their desires and plans they were responsible. They had organised it. They forced it. It happens today. The real problem is that men and women hate the truth and sadly sometimes this is true even of people who would claim to be Christians (John 3:19): *"Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."*

Peter is driving home the point that we are all personally responsible for our own sin. God himself showed this clearly in Genesis 3. The man, the woman, and the serpent were each judged separately for their own part in the Fall of humanity. They each tried to blame the others, but God said, in effect, "You are responsible – no-one else." You cannot hide behind your family, your friends, or your culture. Nor can you even blame the spirits or Satan. These things may cause the temptation, but in the end it is you who make the decision. You are responsible, and unless you deal with sin it will destroy you eternally (see Romans 6:23).

### 4. The power and pardon of the Gospel

True gospel preaching must speak about the mercy and forgiveness of God, and Peter does this in this mighty sermon. Although it is an Old Testament quotation, verse 21 is a clear and accurate statement of the Christian Gospel: *"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

We need to realise fully the truth that it contains and teaches:

**"Everyone"** – this is a message for every tribe, nation, colour and religion (see Galatians 3:28), even people who have, at times, denied the truth or preached against it, even the people who nailed Jesus to the cross. There are no human limits to the type of people who can come to God to be saved.

**"Calls"** – this word speaks about a weak person coming to a stronger person for help. You cannot save yourself; only

God can do that. You must call on him, ask for help in his name. It is only the name of Jesus that has power to save (see Acts 4:12).

**“Will be saved”** – it is a certain, sure, unchanging promise until the return of Jesus.

The truth of salvation has two main applications:

- On earth Christians know the help of God the Holy Spirit when they face temptation.
- In eternity Christ has paid the price of our sin – he has suffered the punishment of God’s law in our place. The justice of God cannot punish again a person who has called on the name of Jesus to help him with his sin. There is eternal life for all who call on Jesus in faith.

After Peter had preached in this way it seemed that people were calling out, “How do I gain this pardon for my sins?” Peter did not leave them without hope. His answer came in three ways:

**a. Call** – admit that you need God’s help and you will be saved. Someone might argue that their sin is too great, so Peter gives the second part of the answer.

**b. (v38) Repent** – your sin might be great, but nothing is worse than rejecting the preaching of Jesus and actually nailing him to a cross. God forgave three thousand people in the crowd that day. Someone else might argue that they find it too difficult to understand. This brings us to the third part of the answer.

**c. (Acts 16:31) Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved** – although these words were not actually preached

by Peter they were believed by him. They stress the fact that we cannot always fully understand, and those are the times that we have to trust the promises that God has given us in his Word.

### **Think about it!**

The story of Peter did not end here. God used him to preach to many more of his own people. He changed and used him to take the message of the Gospel to the Gentiles. He continued to correct his mistakes through other people. He was not perfect but God transformed him as a daily process. The main goal of this book has been to show pastors that we all need that initial change caused by faith in the Gospel and then, daily, we need the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to transform us and to use us so that others, too, might be changed.

---

**This book is supplied by Grace Baptist Mission and other titles are available in e-mail format at the address below:**

**Grace Baptist Mission  
12 Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OXON  
OX14 3JD  
UK**

**e-mail: [radio@gbm.org.uk](mailto:radio@gbm.org.uk)**