Peter—A Servant Who Becomes Strong

Intro: When you hear Peter’s name, what do you think about? What attributes come to mind? It will be our intention in this study to profit from the life of a man who sometimes failed, yet, because of his faith and love for the Lord became a great servant and leader in the cause of Christ.

I. NAME.
   A. Hebrew: Simon.
      1. The short form of Simeon.
      2. The name means famous.
   B. Aramaic: Cephas.
      1. The church at Jerusalem made use of his Hebrew name (Acts 15:14 “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.”) but Paul more often used his Aramaic name.
      2. 1 Cor. 1:12; 9:5; 15:5 “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.... Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?... And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.”
      3. Gal. 2:9 “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”
         a. But consider
         b. Gal. 2:7-8, 11, 14 “But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles);... But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.... But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”
   C. Greek: Petros.
   D. English: Peter.
      1. When Simon was brought to the Lord by his brother, Andrew, he was renamed Cephas, meaning “stone” or “rock.” (The same meaning is given to the Greek “Petros” and the English “Peter.”)
         a. John 1:42 “And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”
         b. Mark 3:16 “And Simon he surnamed Peter;”
      2. After his confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord reaffirmed his name as Peter; Mat. 16:18 “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

II. FAMILY.
   A. Parents.
      1. His father was Jonas.
         a. This name is a Grecized form of the Hebrew name Jochanan or Jehohanan translated as John into our English.
         b. Mat. 16:17 “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”
         c. John 21:15-17 “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto
him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

2. Tradition says that his mother’s name was Joanna.

**B. He was a brother to Andrew by whom he was brought to the Lord; John 1:40-41** “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

**C. Married.**

1. Tradition says that her name was either Concordia or Perpetua.

2. Mat. 8:14-15 “And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.”

3. Mark 1:30 “But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.”

4. Luke 4:38 “And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.”

5. 1 Cor. 9:5 “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?”

**III. BACKGROUND.**

**A. Residence.**

1. Evidently he was a native of Bethsaida of Galilee; John 1:44 “Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.”

2. He had a home in Capernaum of Galilee.

   a. Mat. 4:12-13, 18 “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.”

   b. Mat. 8:5, 14 “And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,... And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever.”

   c. Mark 1:21, 29 “And when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.”

**B. Vocation.**

1. With Andrew, his brother, he evidently was a partner with James and John in commercial fishing.


   a. Mat. 4:18-22 “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”

   b. Mark 1:16-20 “Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.”
C. Discipleship.

1. Probably he and Andrew were first disciples of John the Baptist; John 1:36-42 “And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 36And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 37Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 38He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 39One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 40He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 41And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”

2. Through Andrew’s influence he was brought to the Lord; John 1:40-42 “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”

IV. AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

A. Mat. 10:2 “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;”

1. In listing the apostle, his name headed the list.
2. Mark 3:14-16 “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16And Simon he surnamed Peter;”
3. Luke 6:12-14 “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,”
4. Acts 1:13 “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.”

B. Peter, along with James and John, on many occasions enjoyed an especially close relationship to Christ.

1. Raising of Jairus’ daughter.
   a. Mark 5:37ff
   b. Luke 8:51ff
2. At the transfiguration.
   a. Mat. 17:1ff
   b. Mark 9:2ff
3. Questioned Jesus about His prophecies; Mark 13:3-4 “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”
4. Along with John he was entrusted with the preparation for keeping the Passover; Luke 22:7-8 “Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.”
5. Again with James and John he went with Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane.
   a. Mat. 26:36-37 “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.”
b. Mark 14:32-33 “And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;”

C. Peter was especially active during the time of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

1. When the soldiers came to take Christ, Peter cut off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest.
   a. Mat. 26:51 “And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear.”
   b. Mark 14:47 “And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.”
   c. Luke 22:50 “And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.”
   d. John 18:26 “One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?”

2. Yet, he followed Jesus afar off denying the Lord three times.
   a. Mat. 26:30-35 “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. 31Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”
   b. Mark 14:66-72 “And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maidens of the high priest: 67And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This man was also with him. 70But he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by, said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”
   c. Luke 22:54-62 “Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off. 55And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. 60And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”
   d. John 18:15-18, 25-27 “And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. 16But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. 17Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man’s disciples? He saith, I am not. 18And he denied him, saying, Man, I know not. 19And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, I am not. 20And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. 21And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 22And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 23Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”
3. Peter, along with John, investigated the empty tomb.
   a. Luke 24:12 “Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”
   b. John 20:2-8 “Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.”

4. After the resurrection Christ honored him with a special appearance.
   b. 1 Cor. 15:5 “And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:”
   c. cf. John 21:1-12

D. After the resurrection he was especially active in the work of the Lord.
   1. He was entrusted to preach:
      a. Mat. 16:18-19 “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
      b. The first gospel sermon to the Jews; Acts 2.
      c. The first gospel sermon to the Gentiles; Acts 10.
      d. Preached with boldness.
         (1) Acts 4:13 “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”
         (2) Prayed for boldness; Acts 4:29 “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,”
         (3) Acts 4:31 “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”
   2. Peter, with James the Lord’s brother and John, is described as a “pillar.”
      a. Gal. 2:9 “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”
      b. cf. Acts 15:6 “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

E. His nature was one of enthusiasm, impetuosity and courage. He was a man of extremes filled with paradoxes: strong but weak, fearless yet fearful, but also energetic as a leader.
   1. Consider a few examples.
      a. Mat. 14:22-33 “And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. 25And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 26And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28And Peter
answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

b. Mat. 16:15-16 “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

c. Mat. 17:4 “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

d. Mat. 18:21 “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”

e. Mat. 26:33-35, 51 “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 3 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 3 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.... 51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear.”

f. John 13:6-9 “Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”

g. Gal. 2:11-14 “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

2. Yet, this impulsive fisherman, Simon, truly became a “rock” in the church of our Lord.

V. PETER’S LAST DAYS AND DEATH.

A. Nothing Biblically is know of his last years on the earth and secular history does not offer us much help.


2. To this fact of a martyr’s death at the hands of Nero we find further support in the writings of Clement of Rome, Tertullian and Origen.

3. John 21:18-19 (A martyr’s death implied.) “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

B. Roman Catholic tradition states that Peter founded the church in Rome, acted as Bishop over the church for 25 years and finally was, during the Neronian persecution, crucified head downward, since he felt unworthy to die as did his Lord (cf. “Quo Vadis” tradition).
VI. WRITINGS.

A. Two epistles bear the name of Peter; they are as interesting, informative and applicable as any to be found in the New Testament. The problems and subjects dealt with throughout these letters are issues which disturb the Lord’s people, even today.

B. 1 Peter deals with the subject of “hope,” that which is needed to sustain the Christian in his trials and sufferings.

C. 2 Peter deals with “knowledge,” that which is so vitally needed to fortify the Christian in meeting the onslaughts of false teachers and their doctrines.

Conclusion: When we spend time with our Lord and always stay with Him, we will become strong even as Peter did.