

The Normal Christian Life - Stability

Stability is a quality that must be found in the life of every true Christian who is going to be used by his Saviour and Master in the work that God is doing on earth.

Sadly many who claim to be Christian are very changeable, their mood changes with the weather, so that at times they become a plaything of the circumstances they find themselves in, consequently they are unreliable.

Their intentions may be good but because they are emotionally unstable they frequently lose their poise.

The Word of God, the Christian Bible, records parts of the life of one man who before being filled with the active presence of the Holy Spirit had an irresolute, wavering temperament.

Yet when he allowed the Holy Spirit to begin to guide him, he became a changed man.

Matthew 16: 13-18 [New King James] *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’”*

The immediate and convicted response of Peter was prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ’s response to what the Holy Spirit had given insight to was that would be the rock on which He would build His Church.

Two Greek words are used here, Peter’s name *“pētrōs”* meaning a small rock or pebble, and rock on which the Church would be built *“petra”* a massive foundation rock, the same rock foundation on which a wise man built his house, [**Matthew 7:24-25**].

We also know that Jesus Christ is the rock on which the true Christian Church is built, [**1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4**].

It is our faith in Jesus Christ and our building our life on the foundation He gives us that can stabilise our lives.

No matter what strain or persecution may come on the true Christian Church or individual true Christians, our life will never collapse around us for it is firmly established on the rock Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5 [New King James] *“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

The superstructure of the true Christian Church is of the same substance as Jesus Christ its rock foundation, and just as stable a character as that of its foundation Jesus Christ.

Stability is a necessary trait in the character of every Christian, for each of us are “living stones,” as every part of a building must be stable for the whole to remain intact.

Matthew 16:19 [New King James] *“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Peter was given this responsibility, with these keys to function as an opener of doors. Peter clearly functioned in that capacity at Pentecost, when he opened the door of the kingdom to the Jews, [Acts 2:14-39].

Peter also opened the door to Gentiles, [Acts 10:1-31], Cornelius being the first Gentile convert.

When Jesus Christ addressed Peter at Caesarea Philippi, [**Matthew 16:13-19**] Peter’s character did **not** correspond to his name, as yet **not** having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, so he was unable to use the keys to the kingdom.

Keys are symbolic of authority or opportunity, an Old Testament example is found in Isaiah 22:22 where Shebna the steward is displaced by Eliakim and his authority transferred to him.

This is applied directly to Jesus Christ in Revelation 3:7.

In rabbinic usage the terms *“bind and loose”* signified the rules of conduct [*“hâlâkâ”*] referring to represent internal authority in the church.

The promise does not of course mean that God will be bound by anything that Peter says, but that things done according to the will of Jesus Christ will have binding validity.

The church in Philadelphia had a door opened for them by Jesus Christ and eventually authority over those who worshipped in Satan’s synagogue.

“From that time,” [**Matthew 16:21**] a new depth of teaching is available and possible when Jesus Christ is recognised for who He is, the Son of God and our only Saviour, [**Acts 4:12**].

Peter is an example of a person without stability in his life.

From the “high” of having revealed to him that Jesus Christ was the very Son of God, there was a sudden swing to the low of being an instrument in the hands of Satan.

Matthew 16:21-23 [New King James] *“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”*

One moment Peter was declaring Jesus Christ to be the very Son of God, at another moment Peter was actually rebuking Jesus Christ.

These two moments, so near in time and poles apart in spiritual experience.

The reaction of Jesus Christ was very direct from, “blessed are you” to “get behind me Satan.”

Peter had fallen into the trap that Satan sets for all Christians and we are warned about in James’ letter to the church.

James 1:5-8 [New King James] *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a **double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**”*

The key to this scripture is being “*double minded*”.

The Greek translated “*double minded*” is “*dipsuchōs*” meaning twice spirited, **that is influenced by two spirits, the Holy Spirit but also the spirit of Satan.**

Hence unstable and vacillating.

If Peter, or any similar person, is going to be used by Jesus Christ they, like Peter, must undergo a fundamental change.

Matthew 26:31-35 [New King James] “*Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ And so said all the disciples.”*

Peter was again contradicting Jesus Christ, this was the truth as far as Peter was concerned. Peter’s self-confidence was so deep-rooted that all that Jesus Christ said failed to convince him and he protested more vehemently than ever.

When Peter spoke as he did he was expressing his heartfelt desire, but he mistook himself for the man he desired to be, **not** the man he was at that time.

Jesus Christ summed up Peter and the other disciples in the words “*the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak,*” [verse 41].

The circumstances change, [Matthew 26:47-56] and Peter changed with the circumstances, defending his Master, [verse 51; John 18:10] to fleeing for his life with the other disciples, [verse 56].

Peter’s trouble was not just superficial, there was a fundamental flaw in his character. He was governed by his emotions, and his conduct was always unpredictable as the conduct of people who are controlled by their feelings. The enthusiasm of such people carries them at times to the loftiest heights, at other times depression drives them into the depths.

It is possible for such people to receive divine revelation, but it is also possible for them to put hindrances in the way of the divine purpose.

They are apt to speak and act swiftly under the urge of a sudden impulse, but the impulse may **not** be a divine prompted impulse.

Many problems arise in God’s work through people because of this radical defect in their lives and because it is radical it calls for radical correction.

It is woefully possible that our fancied love for our Lord Jesus Christ is little more than a sentimental attachment. Our emotional reactions to His love are **not** necessarily so deep and pure as we think.

We feel we want to live for Jesus Christ alone and even die for Him if He so wills, but **unless Jesus Christ shatters our self-confidence, as He shattered Peter’s, we will go on being deceived by our feelings and our life will remain unstable.**

Peter did **not** deliberately tell a lie when He affirmed his devotion to Jesus Christ, but his feelings tricked him into believing what was **not** true.

It is a horrible thing to tell a lie, but it is a pitiful thing to believe a lie.

The measure of our ability to follow Jesus Christ is not assured by the measure of our desire to follow Him.

The foundation of the true Church of Jesus Christ is on His rock-like foundation but unless every stone throughout the building is quarried from that same rock-face it will be unstable.

If our character has **not** been brought into correspondence with the character of the Head, [**Colossians 1:18**] and foundation, [**1 Corinthians 3:11**] of the true Church of God, how can we hope to have any part in its construction, [**Ephesians 2:19-22**]?

1 Corinthians 15:58 [New King James] *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

This new character is totally dependent on our allowing the Holy Spirit to re-educate us, [Romans 12:2] and through an intimate relationship with Him develop the very characteristic of the Creator God in us.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **self-control**. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

Note “self-control” as we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, [verse 25].

Allow the Creator God to transform our lives as He did Peter’s.