

The Apostle Peter

The life of Peter, a disciple of Jesus Christ, is a lesson for all who are discouraged.

Peter struggled with despair and discouragement but through the faithfulness of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Peter found acceptance and forgiveness.

Peter was a man of great contradictions, at times he was impulsive and bold yet at other times affectionate and loyal.

Matthew 4:18-20 [NIV] *“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.”*

We do **not** know how long Peter had known Jesus Christ, but his response was instant and with great eagerness.

Peter left behind his work and his familiar surroundings to follow Jesus Christ, and an unknown future.

Peter could be too assertive and had to be brought back into line.

Matthew 16:21-23 [NIV] *“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*

Peter could **not** understand why the man for whom he had such affection should forecast such a humiliating future, nor the reason for this rebuke.

Matthew 16:13-17 [NIV] *“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”*

Remember the Holy Spirit had just revealed to Peter just who Jesus was, the very Son of God.

It must have really been painful and discouraging for Peter for his beloved friend to tell him that he was a mouthpiece for Satan.

Jesus Christ understood His dynamic friend was also vulnerable, so assured him of His help.

Luke 22:31-32 [NIV] *“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.”*

This must have restored Peter's confidence for see how he responded to the encouragement.

Luke 22:33 [NIV] *“But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”*

The impulsive Peter answered Jesus with a solemn pledge of loyalty.

Brave words, but Peter was setting himself up for his greatest fall.

Luke 22:34 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”*

I'm sure Peter could **not** believe what Jesus was predicting would ever happen.

Matthew 26:31-32 [NIV] *“Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”*

Again Jesus was predicting the future that Peter could **not** accept.

Matthew 26:33 [NIV] *“Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”*

Again we see the loyal, yet bold and impulsive response from Peter.

Matthew 26:34 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.”*

Still Peter could **not** accept this prediction of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 26:35 [NIV] *“But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.”*

Peter here showed his boldness but also his natural leadership as all the other disciples followed his lead.

Soon this loyalty and boldness that Peter had was totally deflated. [**Matthew 26:57-75**]

Luke 22:61-62 [NIV] *“The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.”*

This gaze of Jesus was just too much for Peter to bear. He had betrayed his friend and his Lord in his hour of greatest need. Totally overcome with guilt, Peter wept bitterly.

During the next few hours, Jesus was beaten, crowned with thorns and murdered by the Roman soldiers, on the cross in unimaginable pain and humiliation.

All the disciples were filled with grief, but perhaps none among them experienced the depths of Peter's discouragement and shame.

How could Peter face the other disciples?

Would anyone ever trust Peter again?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brought new hope for the disciples but fresh anxiety for Peter.

The angel at the tomb the next morning gave the women who came to anoint Jesus' body a special message for all the disciples but especially Peter.

Mark 16:6-7 [NIV] *“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

Two words must have brought great joy and encouragement *“and Peter”!* But then did it turn once again to apprehension?

Why had Jesus singled Peter out?

Was it because of the denials Peter was so ashamed of?

By this time Peter must have known for sure that Jesus was indeed the Christ [Saviour], the Son of the Living God.

All Jesus' claims about His life as a ransom for many were true.

But would Jesus have anything to do with Peter, after Peter had denied Him, not just once but three times over?

Peter soon got his answer.

Jesus still accepted Peter, trusted him, and loved him, despite the way Peter had turned against Him.

Peter soon found out that the words, "*and Peter*" were an expression of love, confidence and forgiveness from Jesus.

"*and Peter*" what loving words of assurance for one who had been unfaithful.

Jesus Christ was saying **not only** to Peter but to all other disciples of His through the generations. No matter what you have done, there is forgiveness available to all who repent, there is hope.

Jesus Christ tells us "*I am alive, I am with you all the time, and I will offer you new beginnings if you have faith in Me.*"

Peter spent the rest of his life boldly proclaiming the Good News of what Jesus Christ the Son of God had done for all human beings.

Peter became a mighty witness to the Lord he had once denied, finally sealing his faith with his own blood in martyrdom.

Peter left us a legacy of one who, of his own strength, failed, but with the power of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit working in and through him, had a new beginning.

When we feel discouraged, as we all do at times.

When we, like Peter, are dismayed at the extent of our inadequacies in living our Christian life.

When we, like Peter, may have denied Jesus Christ when we are faced with the ridicule of people who are not Christians.

Jesus Christ does know what Christians will be facing in this present Satan-influenced world, remember He has been there.

Our faithfulness to our Saviour, Jesus Christ, will be tested many times, through temptations, rejection, opposition and personal discouragement.

But in those two words, "*and Peter*" we can see the will of our Saviour and be able to bounce back and prevail.

Then as those times come to us, we, like Peter, can also be a source of strength and inspiration to others.

When discouraged just remember those two words, "*and Peter.*"