



Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2018

## 8. PETER [Don't try to cover all the questions!]

We know more about Peter than any of the disciples. His name heads the listing of the Twelve. Peter's vivid personality is reflected through all the incidents that involve him recorded in the gospels and Acts. Peter's life and testimony is a great picture of the way God, by his Spirit, seeks to create a new nature that is a risk taking God-glorifying life.

We see this powerfully emphasised in the initial encounter that Jesus has with Peter recorded in John 1.42. ***Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter ).***

- Why do you think Jesus changed Simon's name to mean 'Rock'? What significance would it hold for his young man?
- There is the principle of discipleship captured in the words *You are* and *You will be*. What do you learn about discipleship from such a statement and in what way is this a statement of Jesus over your own life?

It was Lloyd Douglas who wrote of Peter as **THE BIG FISHERMAN**. It is this description of Peter being '**BIG**' that Alan underlined in his message.

Briefly, take one or two of the incidents recorded and observe how Jesus was fashioning Peter's life.

- **The big discovery** – Mark 1.16-18 Jesus specifically calls Peter to '*Come follow me.*'
- **The big enthusiasm** – Matt 14 25ff is where Peter steps out of the boat in the midst of the storm and walks to Jesus.
- **The big promise** - Matt 16.18 where Jesus commends Peter for his confession of faith declaring how '*on this rock I will build my church...*' Many would interpret this as the rock of Peter's confession of faith that is centred on Jesus.
- **The big rebuke** - hard on the heels of his great confession (Matt 16.22-23) Peter is rebuked when questioning Jesus' statement of his mission that involved death.
- **The big denial** -Peter declares his commitment to Jesus only to deny him outside the High Priest's home when Jesus is arrested, Matt 26.69ff.
- **The big trust** - Jesus speaks about the promise of the Spirit that came at Pentecost, Acts 2. Peter is empowered to trust God in a whole new way and was mightily used to preach a power packed sermon that brought 3,000 to personal faith in Jesus.
- **The big faith** – Peter constantly steps out in faith and this is seen with the lame man at Gate Beautiful, Acts 3.1-10.

- **The big courage** – Peter found himself in constant trouble with the Jewish authorities and he was frequently arrested. Acts 4.13 is a wonderful statement about the courage of Peter that was down to the fact that ***he had been with Jesus.***

Within your group focus mainly on the episode in Acts 12.1-19 where Peter is arrested.

The church was experiencing persecution from King Herod (v.1) where James was arrested and killed.

- How do you think the church worked through the tensions of this story? James is imprisoned and dies and Peter is miraculously released and both were equally prayed for in faith? How do we face our own continuing trust in God in the light of the mystery of prayer?

Peter is arrested and the church continues to pray.

- How do you see Peter responding to the pressure of his personal circumstances of being in prison and knowing the intention of Herod at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?
- What challenges come to us as the wbc church family when we read in v.5 concerning the response of the church to such news of Peter's arrest. ***'Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.'***
- How can we encourage our own church to be a united, faith filled praying people like this church in Jerusalem?

The divine release for Peter comes as an angel awakens him and leads him out of the prison. It seems that Peter naturally accepts the supernatural angelic messenger and deliverer! Imagine the scene of Peter knocking at the door of the prayer meeting and eventually being received with a power packed story of release in answer to their prayers.

**FOR YOUR OWN NOTES:**