

# GRACE KLEIN

## Community

One of the things I love about the bible is how it explains human behavior and why we are the way we are better than any other book. It also does not sugar-coat things or make people in the bible out to be better than they really were. Even the closest of Christ's followers, such as Simon Peter, were just regular people with faults and problems. When Peter first met the Lord, Jesus told him he would be called Cephas or Peter, both of which mean a rock. Jesus knew the many flaws and failures Peter would exhibit during their journey together, but the new name Jesus gave him represented what Peter would become. If you have put your faith in Christ and are trying to follow Him, a work is being performed in you, like Peter, to make you more like the one who is the rock, the chief cornerstone (I Peter 2:4-8). None of us will be completely like Him until we meet Him face to face (Phil. 1:6, I John 3:2). However, the more time we spend with Him in prayer, bible study and especially serving Him in obedience to His word, the more the Holy Spirit will work that good work in us. The Holy Spirit helps us do those things, but He will not do them for us or make us do them. We cannot earn our salvation. Christ did that work on the cross alone, and we can only put our faith and trust in His finished work. However, we, like Peter, do play a role in our spiritual walk and growth in the Lord as we strive to follow Him as believers.

The Lord used Peter as a great example to us of what it means to follow Him. Peter was just a fisherman, but he was strong-willed, outspoken and sometimes brash, and he did not always listen to the Lord very well. Yet the Lord loved him and was patient with him. People like to identify with Peter because he messed up so often. However, at least he was willing to step out of the boat in the middle of a storm when the Lord said "come" as he did on one occasion (Matt 14:22-31). When Peter finally realized who Jesus really was and that He wanted Peter to join Him, Peter did not hesitate to leave everything that was important to him and follow the Lord. On that occasion when the Lord called Peter and His partners by the Sea of Galilee (Luke 5:1-11), Jesus stepped into Peter's boat and asked him to launch out a little so He could preach to the crowd following Him on the shore. After Peter listened to His message, Jesus told him to push out further into the deep and let down his nets to catch some fish. Being an expert fisherman on that lake, Peter thought he knew the fish better than Jesus did. He objected and said they had fished all night and caught nothing. Still, he obeyed the Lord, even if only half-heartedly. Then, the Lord demonstrated to them who he really was. They caught so many fish their nets began to break, and they filled their boats to the point they began to sink. When Peter saw it, he fell at the Lord's feet and said "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Why did he say that? Because he finally realized Jesus was not just a great prophet or man of God, but the very Son of God, who knew the fish better than him and had power over the sea and the fish. In the face of that knowledge of being in the presence of the one who is holy and in control of all things, he could not help but feel the weight of his own sinfulness even in thinking that he knew better and doubting. We likewise need to recognize that Jesus is the Lord of all and face our own sinfulness and confess it to the Lord.

Jesus could have left Peter. He was not worthy of the Lord's mercy or grace, nor are we. Still, the Lord did not want to leave him but comforted him and gave him a much higher purpose saying, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." On the best day of his fishing career, he left his boat and followed Jesus. In the next story (v12-16), Jesus met a leper (leprosy pictures the effects of sin in the bible) who fell on his face before the Lord, like Peter. He said to the Lord if you will, you can make me clean. Jesus said He did will it, reached out and touched him (who would dare touch a leper), and immediately the leprosy left (departed from) him. Both men fell on their faces before the Lord. One recognized his own sin and asked the Lord to depart from him, but the Lord did not. The other recognized that the Lord could heal him and asked Him to. The Lord caused his leprosy to depart from him.

The third story in this section is about Jesus healing a paralyzed man before a bunch of Pharisees and teachers of the law. In it, Jesus forgave the man's sin and proved His authority to do so with a miracle. In each of these three stories, Jesus shows some experts that He could do far more than even they thought was possible. He showed some expert fishermen that he was in control of the fish. He sent the leper after being cleansed to the priest, who could pronounce someone clean, but could never cleanse them of disease. He then forgave and healed a paralytic before some teachers of the law, who could pronounce someone sinful or righteous, but could never fathom forgiving sin. Only God could forgive sin, because all sin is ultimately against God who owns everything. Taken together, these stories show us a more complete illustration of the gospel and what the Lord wants to do and will do in a believer's life. He wants to cleanse us (I John 1:9) and abide with us (John 15:1-10, I John 4:9-15).

Peter learned many lessons from the Lord. Before Jesus died on a cross, Peter faltered greatly even denying Jesus and had to be restored later by the Lord (John 21 - also by the Sea of Galilee after a similar fishing experience). Jesus foretold all of this to Peter (Luke 22:31-34), but did not give up on him. He does not give up on us either (2 Tim 2:13). He was preparing Peter to follow in His footsteps. Peter challenged us in I Peter 2:21 that we should also follow in His steps.