

9. A Pillar of Mission: The Apostle Peter (3Q 2008—Agents of Hope)

Biblical material: Ps. 18:2, 31; 95:1; Matt. 16:18; Acts 4:13; Acts 5:15; 10:25, 28–43; 11:19–26; Gal. 2:11–14.

Quotes

- God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow Him. *Hudson Taylor*
- He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. *Jim Elliot, missionary who lost his life in the late 1950's trying to reach the Auca Indians of Ecuador*
- Sympathy is no substitute for action. *David Livingstone*
- If you found a cure for cancer, wouldn't it be inconceivable to hide it from the rest of mankind? How much more inconceivable to keep silent the cure from the eternal wages of death. *Dave Davidson*
- Let my heart be broken with the things that break God's heart. *Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision*
- If God's love is for anybody anywhere, it's for everybody everywhere. *Edward Lawlor*
- Missionary zeal does not grow out of intellectual beliefs, nor out of theological arguments, but out of love. *Roland Allen*
- The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time. *Carl F. H. Henry*

Questions

Once Peter understood, what did he want to do? Who is the real rock? What was so special about Peter's shadow? How did God reveal to Peter the expanded mission, and how did he react? What do we learn from Peter's increased understanding about the way in which God works? How does this give us hope?

Discussion

The motivation for mission is essential ideas about life and its meaning within this universe that you want to share. Peter's transformation reveals what God can do, despite apparently unpromising material like all of us! "How easy it would have been, after his disastrous fall, to have written him off from the service of the Lord. As we saw, however, that was not God's intention for this flawed hero. Indeed, after his restoration, Peter would devote his life to one mission: to share spiritual food with Jesus' flock—both inside and outside the sheepfold." (Sabbath's lesson).

The statement of Jesus to Peter has been much debated. One thing is sure—that the church is based on Jesus, not on any human being. Not to deny the importance of the role of different people in building up God's church, yet it must remain an organization that has its basis and focus on God. In fact the problems of the church occur when this perspective is forgotten.

Peter's problem from the beginning was his self-reliance. His success only came when he learned to trust completely in God, and not to take control and do what he thought was right. How often this has been repeated, even by leaders in the church. It's all too easy to forget, and to use human methodologies and ideas. Most of all we need to

keep our focus on the issues in the great controversy—which has as their heart the Devil’s desire to do (things) his way, in conflict with principles of truth and right. Only as we become fully convinced that God’s ways alone are true and right—not because he says so, but because they inherently *are*—will we too find the confidence to live true and meaningful lives.

Comment

“In 1 Peter 3:15 is the evidence, I think, of his great change, among other things. What do you think of his advice about giving an answer to people who ask you for a reason? Let me read it first from the Revised Standard. (Oh, let’s see. Where shall we start? In verse 15: ‘Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.’

“Was he called to account for the hope that was in him, in the courtyard? Was he prepared to make a defense? Did he do it with gentleness and reverence? He totally failed.

“I brought along my Living Bible. I know some of you have it. Because I think Dr. Taylor did a brilliant job of translating this whole paragraph. In 1 Peter 3:13, going back that far, and remembering who wrote this. In fact, imagine the feelings that may have passed through Peter as he dictated this to Sylvanus. Because Sylvanus may have thought that Peter must have always been a wonderful saint, to write like this. And Peter might sense this and say, ‘Sylvanus, I’ve got to tell you. Do you know what I did thirty years before [I’m] dictating this to you?’ Maybe Sylvanus had never read the gospel account of how Peter was asked in the courtyard if he knew this Christ. And he cursed and swore to prove that he didn’t even know this Christ. And now Peter is saying this. But isn’t it marvelous that he was able to? Let’s start with 1 Peter 3:15. Yes.

“‘Quietly trust yourself to God. Quietly trust yourself to Christ your Lord, and if anybody asks why you believe as you do, be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle and respectful way.’ Do you have a better translation than that? Do you have any others, thinking that is Peter? See, in the Revised Standard you go back to 13, he says, ‘Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?’ He didn’t feel that way before. ‘But if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. (So) have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. (And) always be prepared to make a defense (for if) anyone asks you why you believe as you do, be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle and respectful way.’ And Peter could not do that in the courtyard, but now he’s prepared to do it.” A Graham Maxwell, *Picture of God in all 66*, tape James-Peter.

Ellen White Comments

The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness. The apostle Peter became a faithful minister of Christ, and he was greatly honored with divine light and power; he had an active part in the up-building of Christ’s church; but Peter never forgot the fearful experience of his humiliation; his sin was forgiven; yet well he knew that for the weakness of character which had caused his fall only the grace of Christ could avail. He found in himself nothing in which to glory. {COL 160}