

Peter, Apostle of Jesus Christ

By David Feddes

The overall theme of First Peter is suffering and glory. It speaks of the prophets predicting Jesus' sufferings and the glories that would follow. It speaks over and over again of the fact that Jesus died on the tree that we might die to sins and live to righteousness and be healed by his wounds. At the end of Peter, or very near the end, there's a verse that used to be quoted at all the profession of faith services when I grew up, and in those services they would always say to the person who had just professed their faith, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11). So there was always this word that you're going to suffer, and there's going to be glory, because that's how the God of all grace operates. That's a theme that runs all through First Peter, and so I've titled the overall series on First Peter "Suffering and Glory."

First Peter and Second Peter are among the catholic epistles, also called the general epistles. The general epistles are not addressed to just one particular church but to a more general audience. And they're also not written by the apostle Paul. There are a lot of letters in the New Testament written by Paul, but the general epistles are written by a variety of writers: James, the brother of our Lord; Peter, who wrote these two letters as well as contributed greatly to the Gospel according to Mark; First, Second, and Third John written by the beloved disciple John; and then the book of Jude. Those are the general epistles, and Peter's letters are considered among them.

Who's who

- **Who is Peter?** An apostle of Jesus Christ.
- **Who are you?** Elect exiles, chosen, set apart, obedient and cleansed
- **Who is God?** Father, Son, Spirit

Today we're going to focus on the very first phrase of First Peter: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." He begins by saying, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: grace and peace be yours in abundance" (1 Peter 1:1-2).

I was planning to move lickety-split through the first chapter of Peter and wound up saying, well, I'm going to have to do one sermon on the first phrase, and then another sermon on who Peter is writing to, and another sermon on what Peter says about God. Because when Peter says hello, he says more than a lot of theologians say in their fat volumes. He says as much in these verses right here as many people can say when they're talking all day—what he says about himself, what he says about the people whom he's writing to, and the God whom he's writing on behalf of.

So we're going to focus especially on who Peter is. But in these first few verses, it's kind of a who's who. Peter's an apostle of Jesus Christ. You who read or hear his letter are elect, you're chosen, you're also exiled, strangers in the world and scattered. You're chosen by God according

to his foreknowledge. You're set apart by the Holy Spirit. You're people who are meant to be obedient to Jesus and cleansed by Jesus' blood. That's who you are. And who is God? God is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It's all there in two verses of saying hello.

So let's focus today on who is Peter. He's an apostle of Jesus Christ, and as we think about that, I want to highlight twelve things about Peter, because it is so very important that we not just dive straight into the letter, but that we have a sense of who is writing and speaking to us on behalf of Jesus Christ. We're going to see Peter as a brother, a fisherman, a husband, a human, a sinner, a friend, a believer, the rock, the eyewitness, the preacher, healer, pioneer, hero, martyr. You can't just listen to Peter and say, oh, there was some guy named Peter that lived way back when and we're reading something he wrote. You've got to hear who is really speaking and writing here.

Brother

Peter was a brother. In fact, that's how he met Jesus in the first place. Peter's original name was Simon, and Simon was a brother of Andrew. Andrew was a guy who followed John the Baptist and took to heart John's message of repentance. And then one day John pointed at somebody else and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). And so Andrew thought, well, why would I follow John any longer? And off he went and followed Jesus instead. And then Andrew went and told his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ, the Anointed One), "and he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:41-42).

He came to know Jesus first through his brother. And Peter goes on to become much more famous and in some ways more important than Andrew, but never forget that oftentimes it's the less famous person who had a huge role in bringing somebody else. Some of the great men that you've heard of in history were introduced to Jesus by their mother. There have been great preachers who were liberals who were converted by people in their own congregation. Abraham Kuyper was converted by two women in his congregation who told him about the real way of being born again and saved through Jesus Christ after he had all the knowledge supposedly and was preaching to them, and they knew something big was missing from his preaching. So it may be a brother, it may be a mom, it may be a buddy. Many times the great people of history were brought to Christ by somebody you almost didn't even hear of. So whether you're great, unimportant in your own eyes, or somewhere in between, the Lord can use you. But Peter was part of a family. He was a brother.

Fisherman

And he was not only a brother, but he was in partnership with his brother Andrew and with a couple of their buddies James and John. Those guys had their own little fishing business going on near the Sea of Galilee, and so these guys are fishermen. When you think of Peter, of Simon, you're not first of all talking about a nice office worker with soft hands and clean fingernails. You're dealing with a guy who smells like fish and has maybe some fish blood and fish guts on his clothes. That's how Peter is, operating in partnership with his brother Andrew and with James and John. They're friends, and Peter has been introduced to Jesus.

But then one day Jesus comes along, and he sees Simon and Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they're fishermen. And Jesus said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). And Peter and Andrew left everything. They left their nets and followed Jesus. Jesus continued a little further down and saw James and John, the fishing partners, and called them to become fishers of men as well. That's how they got started in this business of serving Jesus and of walking with him. They came as fishermen.

Husband

Peter was a married man. One of Jesus' first miracles was to help out Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus went to the home of Simon and Andrew. Evidently Simon and Andrew and their spouses lived together. That was more common back then, where you might have more than one family sharing a common dwelling, especially if you weren't all that rich, and you might even have the store or the business as part of the building. But at any rate, Jesus goes to their house and finds out that Simon's mother-in-law is down with an illness, and Jesus helps her up, and the fever leaves (Mark 1:29-31).

Later on Peter goes on various missions and travels on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we read that his wife was traveling with him on those missions (1 Corinthians 9:5).

Human

So he's a man who comes from a family, has a brother, has a wife, and he's a very human person. For many of us, I think when we read the Bible, that's one of the things that's most appealing about Peter, because you kind of have to chuckle sometimes when Peter is in action.

Peter is a man who responds very quickly and boldly to Jesus. When he sees Jesus walking on the water, like all the other disciples at first he's afraid. But then after he believes it's Jesus, he says, well, why can't I do that? So he asks Jesus to invite him out of the boat, and Jesus does, and Peter walks on that water until he sees the storm. Then fear overtakes him again, and he starts going down until Jesus rescues him (Matthew 14:28-31).

Sometimes he says dumb stuff. Jesus tells him that Jesus is going to be suffering and eventually be killed, and Peter says, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:22). He doesn't get it, he doesn't understand Jesus' mission, and he's even willing to correct Jesus and straighten him out.

When he's with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration and Jesus is shining with this overwhelming glory, and Moses and Elijah have come down from heaven for a conversation with Jesus in that brilliant glory, Peter's contribution is, "I will put up three shelters for you guys" (Mark 9:5). Well, that was brilliant, wasn't it? You're here with visitors from heavenly glory, and Peter's little lean-to is going to contribute to the situation.

When Jesus is going around washing his disciples' feet on the night before Jesus died, Peter says, "No, you shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8). And Jesus says, well, unless I wash your feet you don't have any part in me. And then Peter says, "Not just my feet but my hands and my head

as well!” (John 13:9). He’s blurting these things, and a lot of the things he’s blurting, I think a lot of us can relate to and say, yeah, he’s maybe not a great genius at times, but neither am I. He’s acting and reacting kind of the way I might have if I had been there.

Later on, when Peter is a more seasoned apostle and after the resurrection of Jesus and he’s been filled with the Holy Spirit, he still doesn’t have too high an opinion of himself. When he goes to the household of Cornelius to bring the gospel to that Roman officer’s family, Cornelius falls on the ground in front of him, and Peter says, “Stand up. I am only a man myself” (Acts 10:26).

When you read on in First Peter, Peter by now has had all kinds of revelations of Jesus Christ and has heard him personally and has done mighty things, and when he’s going to tell the elders what to do, he says, “I appeal to you as a fellow elder” (1 Peter 5:1). Those of you who are elders here—in some ways that’s a very important office in the church. But at the same time, do you really think of yourself in the same breath as the apostle Peter? But he appeals to elders as a fellow elder, because Peter, for everything that’s true of him, is just a man. He’s human.

Sinner

In fact, he’s a sinner. Peter is fishing, and Jesus offers a little advice and says, why don’t you try the other side of the boat? And Peter: okay, thanks, carpenter, for your excellent fishing advice. We’ve been fishing all night and haven’t caught a thing, but a little helpful advice from a carpenter to chuck the net on the other side of the boat—that’s going to work great. But okay, if you say so, I’ll do it. So he puts it in on the other side of the boat, and he’s got so many fish in the net that the net is starting to tear. And at that point Peter is no longer thinking about what a catch; he just falls on the ground and he says, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8).

When Jesus is being arrested on that Thursday night, Peter’s initial response is to whip out his sword. He’s trying to knock a head off probably, but instead he knocks off the ear of the high priest’s servant (John 18:10). Then later that night Peter denies three times that he ever knew Jesus Christ (Luke 22:60-62). And even after that, after he’s witnessed the risen Jesus, after he’s been filled with the Holy Spirit, even then Peter has his faults, sometimes great faults.

There was a time in Antioch where Peter had been ministering to people and enjoying eating with Gentile believers, non-Jewish believers. Then some people came from Jerusalem who frowned on eating with non-Jewish people, and Peter was very afraid of what they might think of him. So he withdrew, and he wouldn’t eat with non-Jewish people anymore. And the apostle Paul said that’s out of line with the gospel, that’s behaving like a hypocrite, and he got up and he told Peter off right in front of everybody else (Galatians 2:11-14). And Peter got back on the right track again, but it was a time when he was hypocritically avoiding non-Jewish Christians.

So when we think of Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, he is not just a man but a sinful man who needed, like everybody else, to be saved by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Friend

Peter was a friend of Jesus, and Jesus had different levels of friendship during his time here on earth. He had disciples, he had women who were close to his ministry and supporting his ministry whom he was friends with, and he had the Twelve who were specially selected to be witnesses. And then among those Twelve he had three—three that were especially close to him: Peter, James, and John.

It's very likely that James and John were Jesus' cousins. We know that John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus, but James and John's mother Salome, if you reconstruct different parts of the Bible that talk about them, is likely the wife of Zebedee, and Salome is a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. So Jesus is very close to John, to James, and then to Peter.

When Jesus went into a girl who had died, the daughter of Jairus, he took only the girl's parents and Peter, James, and John (Mark 5:37-40). When Jesus went up on that mountain to pray and then to be transfigured and made glorious and splendid, he took along Peter, James, and John (Mark 9:2). The night Jesus was betrayed, he went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, and his disciples were with him, but then he said, okay, you guys stay here, and then he took Peter, James, and John further with him, and they were closer to him when he was praying in agony in that garden (Mark 14:33). They were the inner circle of the inner circle. There was nobody closer to Jesus Christ than Peter, James, and John.

Believer

Peter was a believer. That is one of the crucial key things about him. Jesus asked his disciples, how's it going, what are people saying, who do they say that I am? And there was a whole variety of different ideas that people had about Jesus that were floating around. And then Jesus said, now you, who do you say I am? And Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Those are the words of a believer. There are a lot of opinions about Jesus being a great guy or a wonderful teacher or this or that. Peter got to the core of it: you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He believed that. He recognized who Jesus is.

On another occasion a lot of the crowds that had been following Jesus started thinning out, and people who had been his disciples weren't following him anymore. And Jesus turned to his own closest followers and said, how about you? Do you want out as well? And Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69).

Today there are many people who were churchgoers or grew up in churches, and when you see them falling away, you might say, well, is there really any truth to this Jesus thing? But not if you're like Peter. Not if you're like Peter. You say, there are all these fads, these people doing this and that, but who else has the words of eternal life? Who else is the Holy One of God? No matter what anybody else does, I believe, and I know that. And so I can't leave Jesus.

So you see he's a brother, a fisherman, a husband, a human, a sinner, a friend, a believer. And he's also these mighty things that characterize a true apostle of Jesus Christ. He is the rock, the eyewitness, the preacher, the healer, the pioneer, the hero, the martyr.

Rock

After Jesus asked Peter that question and Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said to Simon, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-19). Cephas is Aramaic for rock; Peter is Greek for rock. He says, your name was Simon, but you are the rock.

And just keep in mind, Peter at that point is still not fully rock-like, a mighty, solid, unchanging person. But we sometimes get things backward. We think Jesus passes out a label as though he's just patching a little label on what we already are. Jesus didn't call Peter "rock" because Peter was a rock. Peter became a rock because Jesus called him rock. When Jesus speaks a word and declares you to be somebody, that is who you become, even if you weren't that before he said it.

Keep that in mind, because we're going to be reading again and again in First Peter statements of Peter—actually statements of Jesus through Peter—about who we are. And you say, boy, I don't know, I sure don't feel much like that. Well, keep in mind that God doesn't say stuff to tell you that you're already this, so much as he's declaring it to be so, and you become that because of his word to you. Jesus said, you are the rock.

Sometimes this passage has been taken to say Peter had successors who were themselves the rock, the successors of Peter, the popes who are meant to rule over the church. That's not an accurate understanding. You can read this passage a thousand times, and you will never read the words, "I am appointing successors to the end of time who will be ordained as the successor of Peter and as the vicar of Christ on earth." Even Peter himself, as I've already mentioned, had to be corrected at times by his fellow apostles, so he did not have an absolute authority over all the church. That's an error to think that way.

But it's also an error to think, yeah, you know, Pete, he was just another guy. Not quite. Jesus said, you are rock, and I'm building on you. So let's not try to transfer what was said of Peter to all kinds of other people after Peter. If you want to be one of the true successors of Peter, it's not going to be what church hierarchy you're part of or what great title you hold. You are a successor of Peter if you listen to the words of Jesus Christ through Peter in his letters and in the Gospel according to Mark. When you hear Peter speak, and you believe and you trust like Peter, and you seek to live in the power of Jesus Christ like Peter, then you are in the apostolic succession.

That's a word that's sometimes used by various churches, and they say, well, so-and-so laid his hands on so-and-so who did that down through the generations, and that's called apostolic succession. No, apostolic succession is listening to the word of the apostles, taking it to heart, and building on the foundation of the original apostles. We know what they said. We have First

and Second Peter and Mark from Peter. We have the Gospel according to John and the letters of John. We have those things, so we can be their successors and build on them because we have it straight from their own testimony and their own mouths.

Eyewitness

Those apostles, and Peter in particular here, were eyewitnesses. And Peter makes no secret of that. In First Peter 5:1 he says, “I appeal to you as a witness of Christ’s sufferings.” And in Second Peter 1:16 he says, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” He says, we were with him on the holy mountain, we ourselves heard that very voice speaking from heaven, because we were with him (2 Peter 1:16-18). So Peter writes as somebody who was there when all these things happened in the life and healing and teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Peter saw Jesus walk on water and even walked on water himself. He heard Jesus’ voice for three years of teaching. He heard the Father’s voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 17:5). He saw Moses and Elijah. He saw Jesus’ glory.

Peter raced with John when they heard from women that the tomb was empty. John won the race, but John stopped outside the tomb, and Peter went running right on in, right next to where Jesus’ body had been laid, and found those clothes lying there (John 20:3-6). That’s what I mean by an eyewitness. He was in the tomb. He was in the upper room with the doors locked, and Jesus just came right into the room, risen and in power, and ate with Peter and the other disciples (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19). He was there when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21-22). He was there when Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15). Peter heard with his own ears the marching orders from the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you say, boy, I wish I had been there when Jesus was telling his disciples about all the Old Testament prophecies that pointed to him and all this other stuff. Don’t you realize that what Peter wrote down and what John wrote down was what Jesus told them? Peter wasn’t this great theological genius. You read in First and Second Peter and you will find again and again all these things drawn from Old Testament references. Where do you think he got that? After Jesus had risen from the dead, he spent another forty days talking with his disciples about how all those prophecies had been fulfilled (Luke 24:27, 44-45; Acts 1:3). When you’re listening to Peter and John and the other writings of the apostles in the New Testament, you’re hearing what Jesus told them, and you’re hearing it applied in different situations.

Peter said when he was speaking in the book of Acts, “We are witnesses of everything Jesus did... He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach” (Acts 10:39-42). So that is one of the key things about a true apostle: they were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ entire ministry from its beginning and especially eyewitnesses who saw and touched and ate with the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Preacher

And because Jesus commissioned them, of course Peter is a preacher. Read in the book of Acts and you get some of his sermons. When we get into this letter, you get some more of the mighty statements of Peter. But here on Pentecost, Peter declares, “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:36-38). He gives that sermon, and three thousand people are brought to the Lord in one day.

When he’s standing before some of Jesus’ fiercest enemies, he says, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He makes these great declarations. Peter was a mighty, mighty preacher in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Healer

And not only that—like his master Jesus, Peter had great powers of healing. The book of Acts gives a variety of examples of that, and then it gives kind of a general description: “People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed” (Acts 5:15-16). His shadow hits some people, and they’re healed. So don’t just say, yeah, Peter was just another guy. Yes, he was human all right, but when somebody’s walking along and their shadow is bringing healing, there’s something very amazing going on straight from the power of God.

Peter goes into the temple with John, and he meets a man there who has been crippled from birth. Whether it was a problem in the delivery process of the baby or whatever happened, this person could never walk his entire life, and so he’s a beggar, asking people for money. And Peter and John are walking by, and Peter says to the man, “Look at us! Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:4-6). And the man is standing up and leaping and jumping around and praising God.

Later on Peter goes to the town of Joppa, and there’s a man named Aeneas who for the last eight years has been paralyzed. Peter says, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat” (Acts 9:34). And he gets up and walks.

There’s a woman named Tabitha, or in Greek Dorcas, or in our language Gazelle. She is loved by everybody who knows her because she specializes in doing nice things for people and helping out widows and people who are going through all kinds of hard times and making clothes for them and bringing them encouragement. And then she dies. But Peter is in town, and Peter says, “Tabitha, get up” (Acts 9:40). And she gets up.

So when you hear the words “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” you’re hearing a letter from a man whose shadow healed people, who raised somebody to their feet who had been crippled since birth, another paralyzed for eight years, and another who was dead. That’s impressive,

wouldn't you say? I haven't done that lately. This is Peter the healer. And I should add what Peter said when he raised that man to his feet who had been crippled for eight years. Then he says, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?... By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong" (Acts 3:12, 16). Don't forget, he's an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it's the mighty power in the name of Jesus Christ that's accomplishing all this.

Pioneer

Peter's also a great pioneer. The gospel is going into Samaria, and Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, is carrying it there. But the people of Samaria haven't yet received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. So Peter and John go to Samaria, and they pray and lay their hands on the Samaritans, and the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). As you may know, the Samaritans and Jews were not big buddies, to put it mildly. But Jesus had fellowshipped with and helped and healed Samaritans, and so Peter, as a faithful follower of Jesus, did too.

And then Peter receives a vision where he's supposed to go to a Roman officer, somebody who's part of the occupying enemy power and non-Jewish. And Peter doesn't really want to do it very badly, but he knows that he's being sent there by God. So he goes, and he says to Cornelius, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism" (Acts 10:34). Peter is a pioneer of carrying the gospel across cultural barriers and boundaries.

When the Jerusalem council meets to decide whether they're letting Gentiles, non-Jewish people, in, the question is: how tough should we make it on them? Do they have to do everything that traditionally Jewish people were required to do or not? That's the question of the council, and Peter argues, and others with him argue, that they should make it easy and not put up needless obstacles for non-Jewish people to follow Jesus as well. So he is a pioneer of carrying the gospel to people of many different cultural backgrounds.

He wasn't making \$40,000 per speech when he did that. He wasn't writing long treatises on how bad your cultural group is or how racist yours is. He just said, "God doesn't show favoritism. Whoever you are, come to Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:34-35). And they found reconciliation through that pioneering ministry of Peter and his fellow apostles.

Hero

Peter was a hero, and among other things heroes are brave. He had moments when he chickened out, but once he was filled with the Holy Spirit he was a mighty hero. The Bible says that when he was telling these people, the very people who had killed Jesus, that they needed to repent, "when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Peter said to his opponents, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29). Peter sometimes got in great difficulty for that, but he knew that he was with God. He knew that you need to suffer if you want to enter into the glory. He knew the path that Jesus had walked, and he walked it too. He was a mighty hero, and ultimately a martyr.

Martyr

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter was out fishing. Jesus appeared on the shore and helped Peter and his friends catch another big load of fish. Then Jesus had breakfast with his disciples. Then he three times asked Peter, "Do you love me?" He was helping Peter to get back on track after that threefold denial. And then three times Jesus said, "Feed my sheep" or "my lambs" (John 21:15-17). And after Jesus had restored Peter to his position as an apostle, he said, "When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go" (John 21:18). Peter knew what that prophecy meant. He was going to be dying in much the same manner as his master had died.

And so for the rest of his life, Peter knew how it was going to end. He knew that he was going to be crucified. And between the time Jesus said that and the time it actually happened, Peter was threatened, he was beaten, he was jailed twice, he was rescued from prison by an angel. Is this an ordinary résumé? This is a guy who, on the night before he was supposed to have his head chopped off, slept like a baby. You try that. "Oh, they're going to lop my head off in the morning—ah, what blissful slumber." The angel has to kick him a few times to wake him up because Peter is sleeping so soundly. So the angel comes and wakes him up, the chains fall off, the prison doors open, and Peter heads on out (Acts 12:6-10).

But even with those miraculous rescues, Peter knows that it's not because he's going to get the easy path. He knows that if the Lord rescues him, then he's got more to do, but he knows how it's going to end. And by the time he writes Second Peter, he says, "I know that I will soon put my body aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me" (2 Peter 1:14). He knew what Jesus had told him. He never forgot it, and he knew he was going to have his arms stretched out.

But at the time of his execution, Peter said, "I am not worthy to die in the same way as my master." And so he was crucified upside down and murdered under the evil Roman emperor Nero. That's how Peter's life on earth ended. He sealed his testimony with his blood and his suffering.

Apostle of Christ

So who are you going to listen to? That's an important question. There are a lot of voices out there these days. There are a lot of those who claim to be great heroes or champions for this or that cause. Who are you going to pay attention to? Who are you going to listen to?

Do you want to listen to one of Jesus' three closest friends? The man who, when others were fleeing away, said, "I'm not going anywhere. You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Do you want to listen to the rock, the one who was the eyewitness, the one who stood in Jesus' tomb and saw the clothes there—he knows what he's talking about. The one who was with Jesus after Jesus had risen from the dead. The one whose shadow brought healing to people. The one who crossed cultural barriers. The hero who said, "I'm going to obey God, not men." The martyr crucified upside down rather than change his story or deny that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.

You can hear lots of different stories. You can hear lots of different writers these days. There are books all over the place. There are media programs. There are claims to your loyalty. There are people who think they have a good argument for this or that. Who do you want to listen to?

I'm not asking you to memorize all twelve points of a twelve-point sermon. The question is this: who are you going to listen to? The apostle of Jesus Christ. The rock. The foremost apostle of Jesus Christ—not just an apostle, he really is the foremost apostle, the spokesman for all the apostles of Jesus Christ. And when he speaks, it is the voice of Christ. “We did not follow cleverly invented myths when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). When you listen to First and Second Peter, that's who you're listening to: to Peter the foremost apostle of Jesus Christ and to Peter's Lord.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the mighty heroes of faith that you called from obscurity to become mighty in you. Thank you that their words have been written and recorded, your words through them, that we have a testimony—a testimony of rock. And Lord, as we hear the words of Peter the apostle, let us hear the words of the one who sent him, our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. We pray in his name. Amen.

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- Jude

Peter, Apostle of Jesus Christ

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Who's who

- **Who is Peter?** An apostle of Jesus Christ.
- **Who are you?** Elect exiles, chosen, set apart, obedient and cleansed
- **Who is God?** Father, Son, Spirit

Apostle of Christ

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| • Brother | • Fisherman |
| • Husband | • Human |
| • Sinner | • Friend |
| • Believer | • Rock |
| • Eyewitness | • Preacher |
| • Healer | • Pioneer |
| • Hero | • Martyr |

Brother

- Andrew followed John the Baptist, who called Jesus, “Lamb of God
- Andrew left John to follow Jesus
- Andrew told his brother Simon, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Fisherman

Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew 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. (Mark 1:16-18)

Husband

Simon’s mother-in-law was down with a fever. Jesus helped her up, and the fever left. (Mark 1:29-31)

Peter’s wife traveled with him on his missions. (1 Corinthians 9:5)

Human

When he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. (Matthew 14:30)

Never, Lord! (Matthew 16:22)

I will put up three shelters. (Matthew 17:4)

You shall never wash my feet. (John 13:8)

I am only a man myself. (Acts 10:26)

I appeal as a fellow elder. (1 Peter 5:1)

Sinner

- “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8)
- Peter drew a sword and cut off the servant’s right ear. (John 18:10)
- Peter denied Jesus three times.
- Peter hypocritically avoided non-Jewish Christians. (Galatians 2:12)

Friend

- Only Peter, James and John went with Jesus to raise girl. (Mark 5:37)
- Only Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured. (Luke 9:28)
- Only Peter, James and John were near Jesus in garden. (Mark 14:33)

Believer

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)

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Rock

I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19)

Eyewitness

I appeal as ... a witness of Christ's sufferings. (2 Peter 5:1) We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)

- Saw Jesus walk on water—and walked on water himself.
- Heard Jesus' voice for three years; heard Father's voice from heaven; saw Moses, Elijah, Jesus' glory
- Stood inside empty tomb; ate with risen Lord; heard his marching orders

Eyewitness

“We are witnesses of everything he did... He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach.” (Acts 10:39-41)

Preacher

“God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ... Repent and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” About three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2)

Healer

People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered ... bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. (Acts 5:15-16)

Pioneer

- Peter and John went to Samaria, prayed, and shared the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)
- Peter led Roman officer to Christ: “God does not show favoritism.” (Acts 10)
- Peter urged Jerusalem Council to affirm non-Jewish Christians. (Acts 15)

Hero

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

We must obey God rather than men! (Acts 5:29)

Martyr

- Jesus said, “Feed my sheep” and told how Peter would die. (John 21:15-19)
- Peter was threatened, beaten, and jailed. Rescued twice by an angel.
- “I am soon to die.” (2 Peter 1:14)
- Peter was crucified upside down.

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