

Transformed Characters **Peter Transformed – “Humble Yourselves”** **1 Peter 4:12 – 5:11**

From the accounts in the gospels we know Peter to be impulsive, proud, strong-willed and a coward. But reading the first 15 chapters of Acts and Peter's two epistles reveals a remarkably different man. Because of that contrast, Peter's example of transformation and his writings is a great inspiration to us. If Peter could positively change that much, then we, too, can experience significant growth and transformation in our own lives.

From Disciple Simon...

Simon Peter was anything but a rock. He wasn't dependable the way a Christian leader should be. Without God's Spirit, he often spoke or acted in a way that would be inappropriate for a Christian. His actions belied an underlying insecurity in spite of his outward confidence.

Most notoriously, perhaps, was his bragging in the Garden of Gethsemane before Jesus was arrested. Jesus told His disciples that all of them would “fall” and be “scattered.” “Peter answered [bragged] Him, ‘Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away’” (Matt. 26:33).

And yes, Peter would then shortly after shamefully deny Jesus avowedly. All four Gospels tell of Peter's disgraceful denial of Jesus. Perhaps the main reason for this emphasis is to reassure us that God will forgive even the worst of sins and sinners. But it also shows Peter's fear, cowardice and lack of commitment at times. In his denial Peter even “began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear”, perhaps relapsing into habits from his pre-believing life (Matt. 26:73-74).

We learnt last week that Peter went through the most humbling experience imaginable. He well understood the gravity of having forsaken and even denied Jesus three times. He had “wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). All of us have let Christ down many times, although in less dramatic ways. So it was a very emotional time for Peter when Jesus had to ask him three times, “Do you love Me?” (John 21:15-17). Each time Peter answered in the affirmative, and Jesus responded with, “Feed/Tend/Feed My lambs.”

A sobering message for all of us is that Jesus could and would both lovingly restore us and firmly recommission us for His purposes here.

...to Apostle Peter – an Amazing Transformation!

After Pentecost, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter became more humble and dependent on God. His reliance on prayer (Acts 3:1; 4:31; 6:4; 10:9) revealed this new and deeper spiritual humility. His sermons in Acts 1 and 2 showed a person who has an added dimension of sobriety, maturity, wisdom and inspired insight into the Scriptures. Peter was bold, focused and powerful in his preaching. No longer did he try to hide his allegiance to Christ but testified openly and fearlessly even when he and John were arrested and questioned by the Jewish religious authorities.

Peter's humility and loving-kindness are also evident all through his two epistles.

- Peter wrote, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be *clothed with humility*, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore, *humble yourselves* under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6).
- Peter begins his second epistle with "Simon Peter, a *bondservant* and apostle of Jesus Christ" and speaks of Jesus as "*our God* and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1).

Who would have thought that Simon – independent, self-willed, strong-willed, presumptuous, brash and bragging Simon – would become a role model of a humble servant-leader, having a shepherd's heart? His two epistles are filled with beautiful instruction on how to live the Spirit-filled life.

But soberly, even as an apostle appointed and anointed by God, Peter was not yet and certainly not always a rock of steadfastness and godly character. We see evidence of Peter's need for further transformation long after he received the Holy Spirit. Consider how Peter shrank back from eating with gentiles when men from the Jerusalem church were present – and this was many years after Pentecost (Gal. 2:11-13). However, much to Peter's credit, he evidently took Paul's correction well and repented of that.

The process of transformation isn't completed at conversion or baptism and will not be completed this side of eternity. But transformation is real and God is still at work in us. Hence in spite of all of Peter's impulsiveness and inconsistencies, Jesus would prophetically name him for what (supremely by the grace of God) he would become – *Cephas* (Rock). Peter did become a rock-solid pillar in the Church and part of its foundation.

Who would have expected Simon to become a primary example of rock-solid transformation, truly living up to his new name Peter? And who would have expected Simon to become one of the world's greatest teachers of love, hope, humility and respect for and submission to authority?

Our own transformation requires the greatest miracle of all, but God's Word is reassuring. God who began this good work of transformation in us will Himself bring it completion (Phil. 1:6). If people like Simon (Apostle Peter) and Saul (Apostle Paul) could become so deeply and remarkably transformed, then we know there is hope for all the rest of us. All glory be to God!

Source:

From Disciple Simon to Apostle Peter - an Amazing Transformation.

<http://www.ucg.org/united-news/from-disciple-simon-to-apostle-peter-an-amazing-transformation>

Humble Yourselves.

<http://www.purespiritualmilk.com/humble-yourselves-1-peter-51-10/>

Questions for Cell Discussion

Question 1

According to 4:12-14, 16, 19, what do you observe should be the Christian response to suffering? Why do you think Christians should respond in these ways?

Question 2

In 5:3, 5, 6, what common attitude does Peter exhort the elders, the younger people and the church as a whole to have? Why is this attitude important?

Question 3

Who is the Christian's adversary? How does pride and anxiety provide opportunity for this adversary to devour Christians? How can Christians respond the next time this adversary strikes?

Question 4

God's Word assures us that He who begins this good work of transformation in us will complete it (Phil. 1:6.) He only asks that we humbly listen, trust and obey Him as He leads, guides and empowers us. Share and pray over these with the group:

- specific areas in your life in need of deep Spirit-enabled transformation
- specific ways you're working with God for transformation in these areas

