

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of May 6, 2018

THEME: "Peter, the Apostle"

FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

Sunday Read John 1:35-42

"When Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." Peter was led to the Lord by his brother Andrew. Andrew had heard John the Baptist introduce Jesus as the Lamb of God and immediately became a follower of Jesus whom he along with the man who was with him recognized as the long awaited Messiah. Eager for his brother to meet Jesus, Andrew went and got his brother Simon Peter and brought him to see Jesus. Jesus, probably before any proper introduction, called out to Simon the son of Jona, and called him Cephas, or a stone! Not only did Peter see that Jesus supernaturally knew him, but his father as well. It is interesting that Jesus at first sight diagnosed Peter's basic personality traits. And Jesus knows each of us in the same way! What a life changing experience for this fisherman from Galilee! That was the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, a new dispensation in God's plan for planet earth. We are still in that period of time which is the age of the Gentiles, and for followers of Christ, the Church Age. After Jesus had completed His earthly mission as the sacrificial Lamb and had conquered death with His victorious and glorious resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to be the power of God to build the Church. It is the Holy Spirit working through people to introduce others to Jesus just as Andrew did with his brother Peter. In the same way, God wants to use each of His followers today to bring others to Christ. That adds a fresh excitement to every day we live!

FISHER OF MEN

Monday Read Mark 1:16-18

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." It wasn't very long after Peter had committed to becoming a follower of Christ that Jesus gave him the opportunity to get involved totally in the ministry of reaching souls by sharing God's truth. It turned out to be a three years training in doing God's work by watching Jesus pour the love of God out to the world around Him. With many deeds of compassion on needy people and the proclamation of Scriptural truth and a new gospel of the love of God, Peter and the other disciples were able to see how the work of God should be done. It may well be that the greatest thing they learned is where Jesus seemed to get that special power to do such great and supernatural things. The disciples had noticed that Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer and then they saw the results! So convinced were they that prayer resulted in great things happening that they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. We get a clue to the source of His amazing power in Mark 9:29: *"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."* Among the many lessons Jesus taught them about reaching lost souls for Christ, it may well be that the greatest lesson was that prayer is the key both to being alert to an open door for witness and for the wisdom to say the right things when opportunities come.

FIGHTER FOR THE CAUSE

Tuesday Read John 18:1-11

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." Peter was not only a fisherman, he was a fighter, an attribute that had to be harnessed because he had to learn the difference between physical confrontation and spiritual warfare. When enemies of Christ, blinded to the reality of God's truth by the deceptions of the devil, came to arrest Jesus, Peter instinctively fought them off by this aggressive act against the servant of the high priest. Jesus calmly replaced the ear without stitches and the man was totally healed. I wonder what that servant thought and whether or not he ever became a follower of Christ? I wonder what Peter thought. We do know this: spiritual battles cannot be won by physical might; it takes spiritual power, a power provided by the Holy Spirit. That was the final point made by Jesus when He assigned His follower to be His witnesses in Acts 1:8. *"But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses."* The fight to reach lost souls and free them from being held hostage by the devil's attempt to keep them blinded by his tricky deceptions and distortions is a team effort with God Himself. We Christians are asked to be the light and the planters of seeds so the Spirit can use His convincing power. That requires faithful and diligent and daily prayer!

HEAVENLY COMPANY

Wednesday Read Matthew 17:1-4

"And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." It would be very interesting to hear how Peter would respond if he were asked what was the most memorable experience of his life; there were so many to choose from. I think the one described in today's Bible reading might be near the top of the list, if not at the top. This is a scene where he, along with James and John, were given a glimpse of heaven. They actually got to meet Moses and Elijah, saints from centuries before. Yes, there is life after death; just ask Peter! The skeptics would say Peter's imagination was going wild; but Peter would have a calm assurance that he was speaking the truth. What Peter actually saw, we today accept by faith, and faith is the key to understanding what would otherwise remain a mystery. How good of God to put into writing in the Holy Scriptures the things that are beyond the minds of men.

HUMAN WEAKNESS

Thursday Read Matthew 26:69-74

"Now as Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou art also one of them: for thy speech betrays thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." As strong a personality as Peter had, he was still subject to human frailty. This man, who claimed in Matthew 16:22 that anyone trying to bring harm to Jesus would have to go through him, did quite the opposite when the rubber met the road. Yes, Peter was watching when Jesus was going through the ordeal of a mock trial with all the false accusations. When the pressure was put on about his being one of the followers of Christ in this time of apparent danger, Peter wilted! Worldly pressure can be great at certain times when it may seem more appealing to go along with the crowd. There will be times of testing! How much better to yield to the ever present indwelling Holy Spirit for courage to stay strong!

EARTHLY PURSUITS

Friday Read John 21:1-3

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They said unto him, We also go with thee." It is hard to imagine how Peter felt after His Lord so victoriously arose from the grave and triumphed over death. There had to be mixed emotions: great joy that his Master was alive, but grief that he had denied and cursed him in that difficult time. Before that final week, Peter had been one of the most loyal followers of Jesus, but abandoned Him at a critical time. In this time of great triumph, Peter probably suffered a personal embarrassment, if not agony. Was that the reason that we read here of his return to fishing, that he had left to follow our Lord? Perhaps! Maybe he felt that he blew his chances of being used of God to do His work. How could God ever trust him to be faithful to a calling? Would he be able to stand up against the worldly pressure that surely would come in this hostile world? It seems likely that Peter was filled with questions about himself and possible doubts that God could ever rely on him.

HEAVENLY PRIVILEGE

Saturday Read John 21:15-17

"Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep." How about Jesus! Yes, Peter may have doubts about himself, but not our Lord! If there were ever a circumstance proving the love and grace of God despite our human weakness, this is it. After Peter had gone back to fishing with what had to be a lot of self-doubting, Jesus showed up! And not only did He show up, He miraculously provided a memorable catch after Peter and his friends had a frustrating night of

failure during which they had caught no fish. Jesus made it possible for them to have a record-setting haul at a time when the opposite would have been justified, at least from a human viewpoint. Not only did Jesus make it possible for a great catch of fish, He treated them to a meal, and then enlisted Peter back into service with great responsibilities. Yes, God forgives!