

The Coward – The Prostitute, The Murderer, and The Coward (P3)

When we think of *cowards* we do not usually think of the disciples of Jesus Christ. But they all had their moments of fear and cowardice—especially the one named Simon bar Jonah. He was the one whose name Jesus changed to Cephas (Aramaic for rock) or Petra (Greek for rock) or Peter as we know him. (John 1: 42) Today we are going to examine his life of ups and downs—faith and fear; courage and cowardice— to find ourselves.

Background. Simon was the older brother of Andrew, who first introduced him to Jesus. (John 1:41-42). He was a fisherman by trade and partners with Andrew, James, and John, all of whom became disciples of Jesus. (Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18)

Simon Peter was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5). He was called more than once by Jesus to follow Him. And we learn from his words and actions, he could be outspoken and spontaneous. He was also part of Jesus' inner circle among the disciples along with James and John. But a coward?

Let's consider some of the events in Simon Peter's life with Jesus that tell his story. Keep in mind he was eyewitness to most of Jesus' miracles from raising the dead to creating food from nothing to feed thousands of people.

Fear (Cowardice)

Jesus had already performed many miracles. While He slept in the boat, a storm overwhelmed them and the disciples cried out for Him to save them. He rebuked the wind and waves because all of nature must obey the one Who created it. (Matthew 8:23-27) Now we come to the first specific incident involving Simon Peter. After Jesus had just fed the 5000+, this even

took place.

Walking on Water (Matthew 14:22-32)

- Fear of the storm
- Doubt the ghost was really Jesus
- Faith enough to step out onto the waves
- Fear overpowered him when he took his eyes off Jesus

After Peter had just testified that Jesus is the Christ, son of the living God, this occurred.

Peter rebuked Jesus (Matthew 16:15-23)

- Jesus told His disciples for the first time He would be put to death
- Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him. (v22)
- Jesus rebuked Peter strongly calling him Satan – “You are a hindrance to Me.”

Peter was present at the Transfiguration with James and John. If that did not seal his faith, what would? From this point forward, he witnessed many more miracles and teaching. Then they had the Last Supper (Passover meal). Now back on the Mount of Olives,

Jesus tells His disciples they will all abandon Him that night. (Matthew 26: 31-35)

- Peter declared his loyalty even if the others run away
- Jesus told him of the 3X denials
- Peter makes a stronger declaration – even to death he would not forsake Jesus

The Coward Comes Forth

- When Jesus was arrested we read, “then all the disciples fled.” (Matthew 26:56)
- 3X denials (Matthew 26:69-75)

The Coward Exposed

“And then the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.” Luke 22: 61-62

The Coward Restored

“Now when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”... Peter was hurt because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You ... And when He had said this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”” from John 21: 15-19

Peter (Petra the rock) earns his name (Preaching at Pentecost)

Jesus told Peter how he would die—not a pleasant way—yet Peter full of the Holy Spirit became one of the pillars of strength for the new church with no fear of the Romans or Jews.

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”” Acts 2:38

The best part of our story, as it was with Peter, is how it ends. **Humbled** Peter allowed Jesus to redeem and restore him. Salvation and service—those were the best ending for Peter’s story and they are for ours as well! Peter was crucified upside down according to historians.

The Coward in You and Me

- When we **doubted** Jesus
- When we **abandoned** Jesus

- *When we **denied** Jesus*
- *When we got exposed*

The best news for us as Christians is this: Despite our failures to stand for and represent our Savior and Lord as we should, He said this:

*“for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will
not fear; what can man do to me? “Remember your leaders,
those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the
outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.
Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”
Hebrews 13: 5b-8*

For Christ's sake,

Walter