



“Lord, To Whom Shall We Go?”

*Learning from the Willing
Spirit and Weak Flesh of Peter
How to Be More Faithful
Disciples of the Eternal Word*

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Peter as Disciple



- Today we'll be visiting the sites where Christians have venerated as the places where Peter died and was buried.
- It's a fitting occasion for us to pray about Peter's interactions with the Lord Jesus, in order to get to know better the one called by Jesus to be his disciple and then sent out as his apostle.
- Sometimes Peter can be a controversial figure in Christianity because of the claims of the papacy. But that can obscure the witness of his life as a believer and follower of Jesus.
- Today we can pray together over seven traits that characterized him and ought to characterize every Christian.

1. Peter Drew His Identity from Jesus



“You shall be called Cephas” (Jn 1:35-42)

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

1. Peter Drew His Identity from Jesus



“I tell you, you are Peter.” (Mt 16:17-20)

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

2. Peter Believed in and Confessed Jesus



“You have the words of eternal life.”
(Jn 6:60-71)

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

2. Peter Believed in and Confessed Jesus



“I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” (Acts 3:1-10)

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, “Look at us.” And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

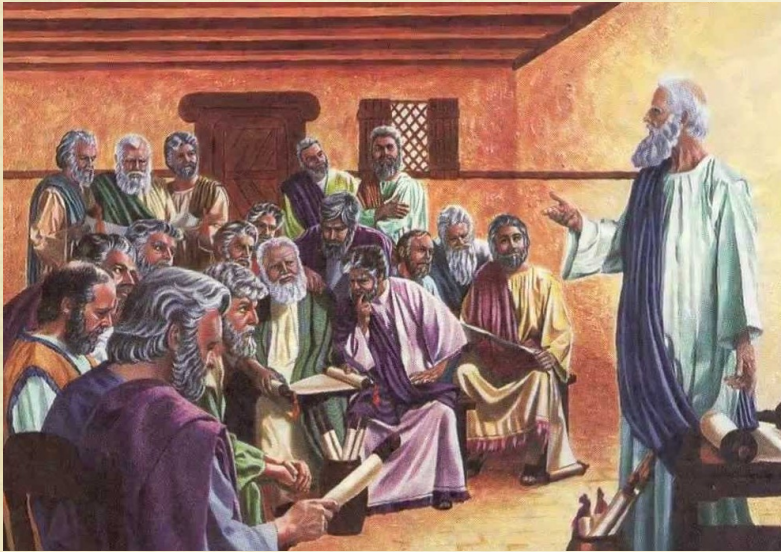
2. Peter Believed in and Confessed Jesus



“We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:5-21)

When they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.** This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” ... Seeing the man that had been healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ... So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for **we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.**” And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people; for all men praised God for what had happened.

2. Peter Believed in and Confessed Jesus



“By my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of God and believe. (Acts 15:7-11)

And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

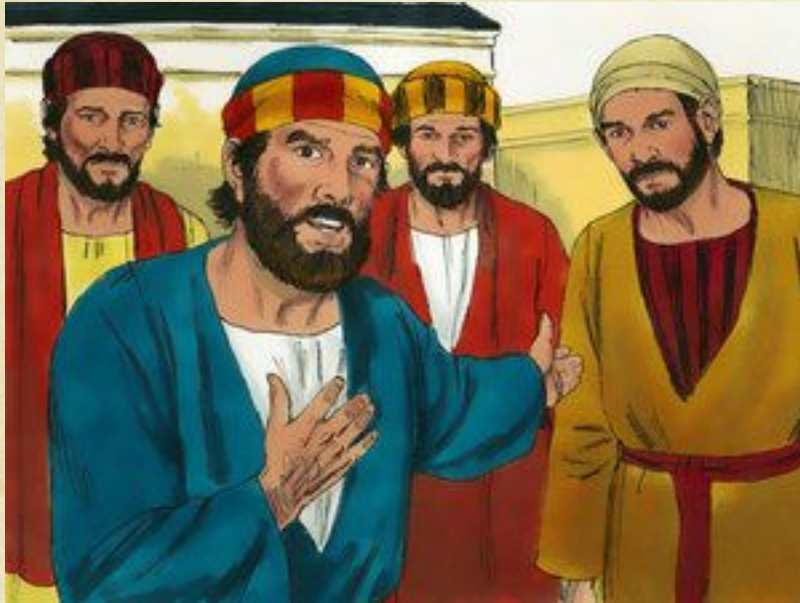
3. Peter Left Everything to Follow Jesus



“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” (Mt 4:18-22)

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

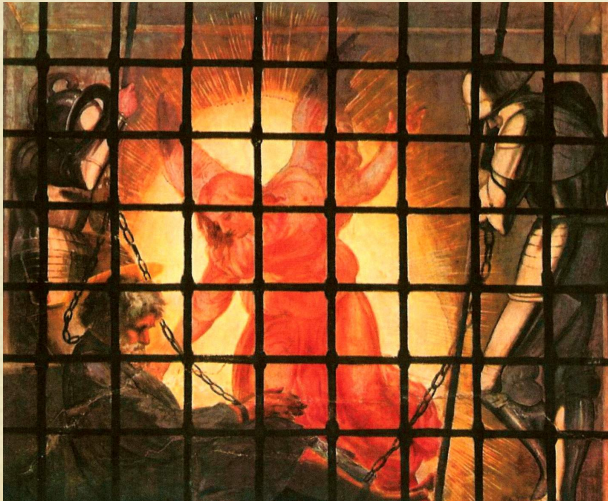
3. Peter Left Everything to Follow Jesus



“We have left everything to follow you.” (Mt 19:23-30)

And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

3. Peter Left Everything to Follow Jesus



“Wrap your mantle around you and follow me.” (Acts 12:6-11)

The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, **“Wrap your mantle around you and follow me.”** And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. And Peter came to himself, and said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

4. Peter Trustingly Obeyed the Lord Jesus



“Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.’
Jesus said, ‘Come.’”(Mt 14:22-33)

Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.”

4. Peter Trustingly Obeyed the Lord Jesus



“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” (Lk 5:1-7)

While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simons, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

4. Peter Trustingly Obeyed the Lord Jesus



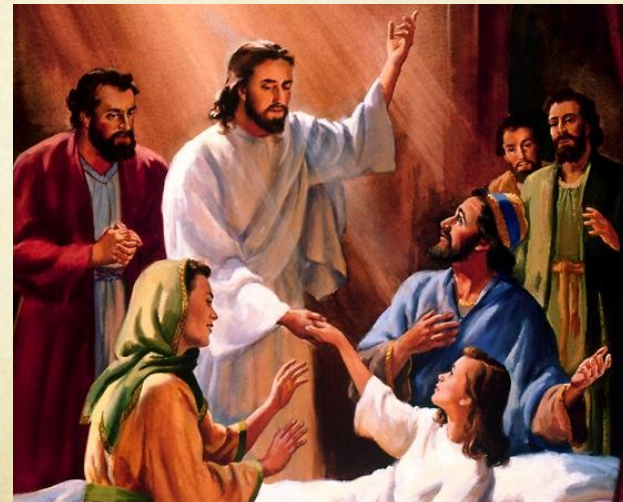
“We must obey God rather than men.”
(Acts 5:27-32)

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

5. Peter Sought To Be With the Lord Jesus



The Lord Jesus not only called Peter to be one of the twelve, but with James and John, one of the three to be with him at some of the most powerful moments of his life: the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:21-24, 35-42), the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36), his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46)



5. Peter Sought To Be With the Lord Jesus



“Let us make three booths.” (Lk 9:28-36)

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” – not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man,
O Lord.” (Lk 5:8-11)

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**” For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” (Jn 13:6-9)

He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Lord, save me!” (Mt 14:30-33)

But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

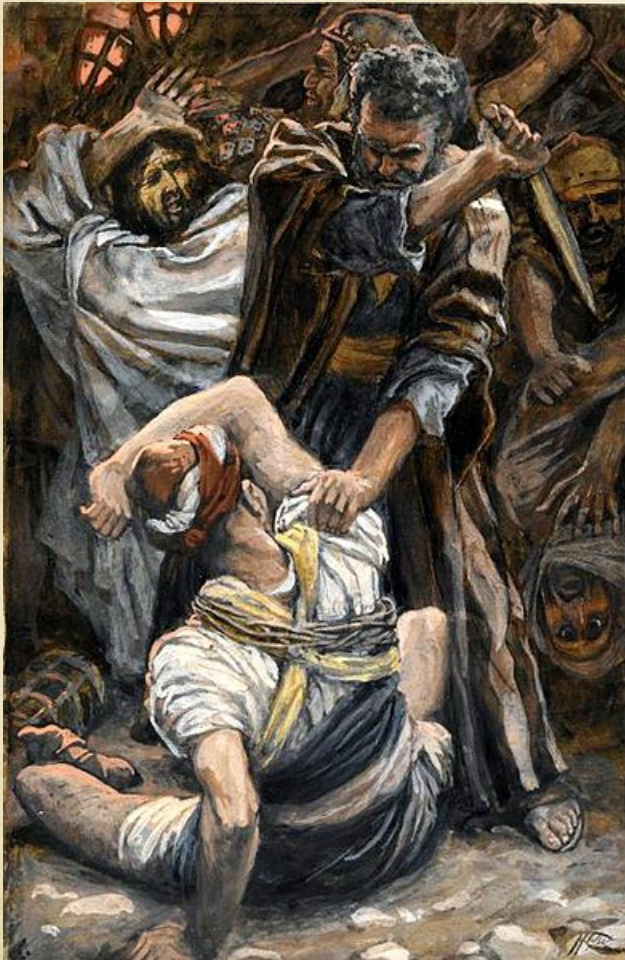
6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.’” (Mt 16:21-23)

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.”

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (Jn 18:10-11)

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?”

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Lord, why cannot I follow you now?
I will lay down my life for you.”(Jn 13:36-38)

Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward.” Peter said to him, “Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times.

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 26:36-46)

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go yonder and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“I do not know the man!” (Mt 26:69-75)

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.” And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It

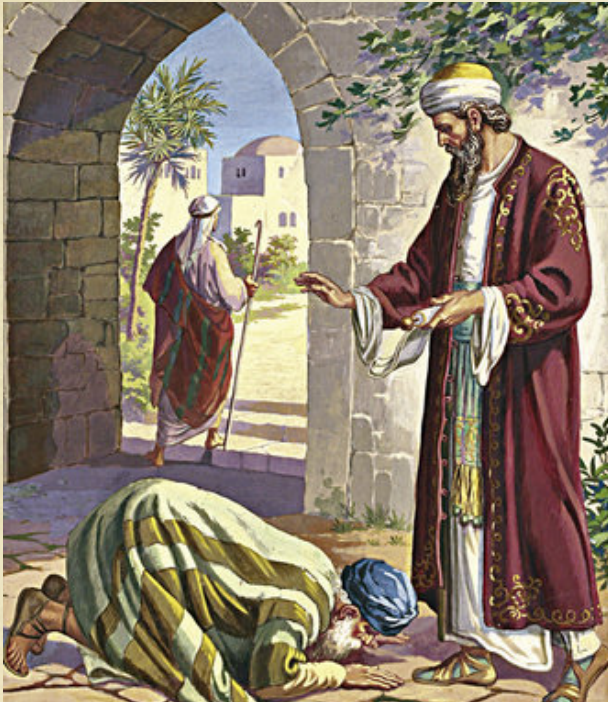


“When Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned”

(Gal 2:11-14)

But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” (Mt 18:21-35)

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; ... And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ... When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

6. Peter Believed in the Lord's Mercy and Recognized His Need for It



“Stand up; I too am a man.”(Acts 10:24-26, 34-48)

And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ... And Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ... While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ... Then Peter declared, “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

7. Peter Loved the Lord Jesus



**“Lord, you know everything;
you know that I love you.” (Jn 21:1-19)**

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.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” 19 (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Following Peter in Following the Lord



- Today as we prepare to follow the first Christians who used to risk their lives during the age of persecutions to get to, and pray at, Peter's tomb, we can recall that Peter was by no means the smartest, bravest, most capable man alive to be summoned by Jesus to be his disciple, apostle, one among the three closest to Jesus, and one singled out by him for a special mission among the Church he was founding.
- God, we know, often chooses the foolish to shame the wise, the weak to shame the strong, those who count for nothing to reduce those who are something (1 Cor 1:27-28)

Following Peter in Following the Lord



- Peter was, however, someone who, despite his conspicuous shortcomings:
 - Centered his life on Jesus
 - Believed in and confessed him
 - Left everything to follow him
 - Trustingly obeyed him
 - Sought to be with him
 - Allowed himself to be washed by his mercy and
 - Loved him enough ultimately to give his life for him in the very place we'll be visiting later today.

Following Peter in Following the Lord



- He knew that Jesus:
 - Was the Messiah and Son of the Living God
 - Had the Words of Eternal Life
 - Chose him, despite his sins, to be a fisher of men capable of miraculous draughts
 - Gave him power to do the humanly impossible as long as he kept his eyes on him
 - Built a booth for him where he sought to abide (Jn 15:4)
 - Would strengthen his weak flesh
 - Had sent him to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Good News, baptize, and teach, knowing that the Lord was with him always.

Following Peter in Following the Lord



- Like Elisha with Elijah, we can ask the Lord to give us a “double portion” of Peter’s spirit as heirs of the treasure of faith he received from the Lord and sought to transmit by his words and ultimately by his life.



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