

SERIES ON THE APOSTLE PETER
SERMON #2: THE IMPULSIVE DISCIPLE

by Mark Aites

(Based on Hobb's lessons on Peter; and material from H. Leo Boles)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Series -- Peter.
2. Last week: introduced Peter: "Peter's First Test."
 - 1) In the onset of the lesson: his introduction to Christ (**John 1:35-42**).
 - 2) We then studied for our lesson **Luke 5:1-11**.
 - 3) If you recall, Peter, James, and John had been fishing all night long, but had caught nothing.
 - 4) Jesus arrived and wanted to speak from a boat, so Peter took Him a little from the shore.
 - 5) The Lord instructed that the nets be lowered, and the catch of fish was so great --nets were breaking; help was called for; both boats were sinking under the weight of the fish.
 - 6) Peter was confronted by deity, and openly confessed his sinfulness.
 - 7) We observed that this was necessary for discipleship.
 - 8) Peter learned that hard lesson; and as a result, he along with Andrew his brother, and the sons of Zebedee forsook all to follow the Christ.
 - 9) **Matt. 16:24**
2. In today's lesson we are going to look at Peter as the impulsive disciple.
 - 1) **Impulsive** - to act on impulse.
 - 2) Webster: "A sudden spontaneous inclination or incitement to some unpremeditated action."
3. This morning we want to observe Peter's impulsive nature in four accounts.

DISCUSSION:

I. HIS ATTEMPT TO WALK ON WATER (MATT. 14:22-33).

- A. Background: Jesus had just fed the multitude of the 5,000.
 1. On that occasion, the people had tried by force to make Him a king (**John 6:15**).
 2. Because of this, Jesus "*made His disciple get into the boat.*"
 3. The original word is a strong word indicating that He compelled or forced His disciples to get into the boat.
 4. The disciples were heading then to the other side of the sea; but Jesus remained.
 - 1) He dismissed the multitudes.
 - 2) He then went "*up on a mountain by Himself to pray*" alone.
- B. We then learn of the fear of the disciples.
 1. **vs 24** indicates that it was a rough night on the sea, being tossed by the waves.
 2. When Jesus approached the boat, He could see they were having difficulty rowing (**Mark 6:48**); but was walking and would have passed by them.
 3. When He approached them it was the fourth watch of the night.
 4. H.Leo Boles: "A 'watch; is a period of the night spent by soldiers, in keeping awake, to guard against enemies, or to prevent the escape of prisoners..." (*Gospel Advocate Commentary*)
 5. "According to Roman usage, these four watches would have been at 6, 9, 12, and 3."
 6. So when the disciples saw Jesus coming on the water, it would have been in the

early morning, sometime around or after 3 A.M.

- C. When they saw the Lord they thought that He was a ghost; lit. an apparition or phantom.
1. They were really frightened for the text says *“they cried out with fear.”*
 2. Boles adds an interesting note: “The Jews believed in spiritual apparitions (1 **Sam. 28:15**).” They believed that the spirit of a dead man in the form like a person was manifested. Their belief was similar to the superstition of some today who believe in ‘ghosts.’ To see one was an omen of evil; no wonder the disciples ‘cried out with fear.”
 3. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, and told them: *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” (14:27).*
 4. This opens the door for the impulsive disciple.
- D. Note **Matt. 14:28**
1. One cannot know Peter’s thoughts or reason for such a request --but it shows his impulsiveness.
 2. Jesus said *“Come.”* --And the text indicates that Peter did walk on the water; but not for long.
 3. Peter began to look around, and see the wind blowing.
 - 1) In the boisterous winds --probably could see the caps on the waves.
 - 2) He became afraid; began to sink.
- E. Perhaps some of us can relate to Peter.
1. We start off with good intentions; but we quickly lose our faith.
 2. Peter made his mistake when he took his eyes off the Master.
 3. Even today, at times we may take our eyes off of Jesus and begin to sink spiritually.
 4. **Heb, 12:1-2**
- F. Peter, as on other occasions, started out with the best of intentions; and soon because of his imperfections found himself in need of help.

II. HIS ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE WITH GOD’S PLANS (MATT. 16:13-23).

- A. Background: Jesus had left the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.
1. He left the town of Bethsaida and traveled into a region known as Caesarea Philippi.
 2. This was a region about 75 miles NW of Jerusalem.
 3. On this occasion Jesus begins to probe His disciples about His identity:
 - 1) Who do people say that I am?
 - 2) And who do you say that I am?
- B. Once again Peter takes the lead and impulsively makes the correct response:
1. *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*
 2. If you recall, Andrew told Peter that they had found the Messiah and introduced Him to Jesus (**John 1:40-42**).
 3. Peter confessed Him as *“The Christ,”* the anointed One of God.
- C. Jesus commended Peter for His response and even blesses Him for it (**Matt. 16:17-19**).
1. Jesus promises Peter the *“keys of the kingdom of heaven.”*
 2. **Keys** - is a figure of speech. It is symbolic in that keys provide us with the ability to open doors.

3. This was certainly prophetic of the keys given on the day of Pentecost when Peter gave the entrance requirements to enter the church (**Acts 2**).
 4. Thus we see that at this point, Peter had done well; or more appropriately, spoken well.
- D. But now Peter “*opens mouth and inserts foot.*”
1. Jesus began to tell His disciples about the things that He was about to suffer (**Matt. 16:21**).
 2. Peter reacts boldly and impulsively at this news
 3. Mark’s account indicates that Jesus spoke about these things *openly*.
 - 1) The original is in the imperfect tense --indicates that Jesus had begun to speak about these things, and had kept on speaking about it.
 - 2) Apparently it was more than Peter could handle. He had remained as quiet as long as he could.
 4. **16:22**
 - 1) The verb rendered “*took Him,*” lit, means to take hold of one face to face.
 - 2) Peter evidently took hold of Jesus and stood face to face with Him.
 - 3) If this term actually indicates that Peter was facing Jesus, then what follows is significant.
 5. As the Lord was getting ready to respond to Peter’s rebuke, the text says that He *turned*:
 - 1) This would indicate that the Lord responded to Peter with His back towards him.
 - 2) This adds significance to Jesus’ response: “*Get behind Me, satan.*”
 5. Earlier in the chapter it was Peter who confessed Jesus as the Christ.
 - 1) Now because of his impulsiveness, Peter again falters.
 - 2) He was in error for trying to interfere with God’s plan for redeeming man.
- E. Perhaps at times we find ourselves in a similar condition to that of Peter’s.
1. The Lord tells us His will and His way of doing things.
 2. But we think that we know a better way.
 3. Even righteous Abraham of long ago learned this lesson when he tried to help the Lord with the promised child --had Ishmael, born of Hagar.
 4. **Jer. 10:23.**

III.HIS ATTEMPT TO HONOR MOSES and ELIJAH (MATT. 17:1-8).

- A. Background: about a week has passed since Christ had sternly rebuked Peter.
 1. Jesus takes what we refer to as “the inner circle” onto a high mountain; the inner circle being Peter, James, and John (**cf. Mark 5:37; 14:33**).
 2. The mountain referred to here is likely Mt.Hermon.
- B. Here Jesus is transfigured before them.
 1. The term in the original is the same from which we get our term *metamorphosis* (**cf. Rom. 12:2**).
 2. It refers to a change in form. -- (caterpillar into the butterfly)
- C. The appearance of Jesus changed. --His face shined like the sun, and His garments became white.
 1. His garments were as one translation puts it, “glistening.”
 2. It means that the garments were dazzling.
 3. Vines Expository Dict. of N.T. Words: “It signifies to flash like lightning, to gleam, to

be radiant.”

- D. Not only did the Lord’s appearance change; but to make this scene all the more intense, Moses and Elijah appear.
 - 1. These men were two very notable figures of the past; Moses representing the law, and Elijah representing the prophets.
 - 2. These two appear and begin to engage in a discussion with Jesus regarding His “decease”
 - 3. **Decease** - a term which also means “exodus; a way out.”
 - 4. They were evidently talking with Jesus about His imminent death.
 - 5. This scene and discussion opens the door once again for our impulsive disciple to speak.
- E. This occasion is similar to **Matt. 14** when Jesus was walking on the water and Peter and the disciples were afraid.
 - 1. Peter once again appears to speak out of fear.
 - 2. The original word actually means, “that they were frightened out of themselves.”
 - 3. In our modern vernacular, we would say they were “scared out of their wits.”
 - 4. Peter was so overwhelmed that he evidently felt like he had to say something. -- Again showing his impulsiveness.
- F. Peter suggests the idea of erecting 3 tabernacles; one for Christ, Moses, and Elijah.
 - 1. Some believe that Peter may have drawn his idea from the Feast of Tabernacles.
 - 2. One author notes: “A tabernacle was a tent (**Num. 24:5**). The Israelites for a long period dwelt in them. The Jews had a ‘feast of tabernacles’ in memory of their once living in tents (**Lev. 23:34**).” (Hobbs)
 - 3. H. Leo Boles: “A tabernacle also means a tent pitched for the honor of God, in which the divine glory was present (**Exod. 25:8-9**). It seems that Peter suggested an abode or place to worship three 3 glorified beings.”
- G. Peter’s rebuke this time comes from above.
 - 1. **Matt. 17:5-6**
 - 2. Once again we see that Peter’s impulsiveness has an unexpected response.
 - 3. And again Jesus tells him not to be afraid.
- H. At times, perhaps through our own impulsiveness, we may state things which are incorrect.
 - 1. To be sure that we are accurate and truthful in what we say, we need to study.
 - 2. **2 Tim. 2:15**.

IV.HIS ATTEMPT TO SAVE CHRIST (JOHN 18:2-12)

- A. Background: Jesus and His disciples had crossed the brook known as the Kidron and were in the garden of Gethsemane.
 - 1. It was here that Jesus spent some of the most intense moments of prayer in His earthly ministry.
 - 2. In **John 17**, the Spirit of God records for us the words as Jesus poured out His heart in prayer.
 - 3. Piecing events together with parallel accts: Judas was coming into the garden with the chief priests, the Pharisees, and the Jewish temple guards.
 - 4. At this time Jesus was inquiring of His disciples if they would stay awake with Him; and announced that the betrayer was at hand (**Mark 14:41-42**)
 - 5. Parallel acct, **Luke 22:47-48**

6. Both Matthew and Mark's account reveals to us that Peter's action was initiated when the guards laid hands on Jesus.

B. Once again Peter has an impulsive reaction.

1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the parallel accts tells us that one of those who was with Christ, took a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest.

2. The apostle John however identifies the one who took the impulsive reaction.

1) It was Peter (**John 18:10**).

2) And John identifies the servant whom Peter attacked as Malchus.

C. **John 18:11**

1. A portion of the rebuke is also found in Matthew's acct: **Matt. 26:52**

2. Peter failed to understand something which Jesus told Pilate: that His kingdom was not of this world (**John 18:36**).

3. Wars and battles in defense of following Jesus were never intended; spiritual wars yes, physical wars, no.

4. The rebuke that Peter received, as before, was stern; but justified.

5. Peter acted once again out of fear; acting impulsively, not thinking before taking action

D. Many of us at times will do the same thing.

1. We take action on matters without really thinking them through.

2. And violence is never a solution.

3. **Rom. 12:17,19**

CONCLUSION:

1. As we look at Peter's actions in each of these accts we would say that he was prone to act impulsively.

2. But if we had been in the same situations, maybe we would have done the same thing.

3. We look at Peter and say that on 4 occasions he faltered.

4. Again if we are honest with ourselves, we will remember occasions where we have faltered as well.

5. The encouragement in this is the realization that even though Peter stumbled often, he went on to be a noted apostle of the Lord.

6. In the 1st 12 chapters of Acts his life stands out for our reading and edification.

7. Perhaps at times we say to ourselves, Lord I'm just not the Christian I should be.

1) I make so many mistakes.

2) I fall and come short of your glory.

3) I need your continuing forgiveness.

4) I look at these other Christians and think how much more faithful they must be.

8. And then think of **Isa. 53:6**

9. Peter provides us with hope and encouragement. After each time he faltered, he continued to try.

10. Christians: maybe you realize your own shortcomings; and perhaps you need the forgiveness of God, and desire the prayers of the church.

11. Take heart: no matter what shortcoming Peter had: the Lord was always willing to forgive him (**2 Pet. 3:9**).

12. If you are not a Christian; I hope you would recognize that one does not have to be perfect or sinless before he can follow Christ.

1) I knew a dear man who wanted to respond to the invitation; but he wanted to wait until

he thought he could live the perfect life.

- 2) My friends it can't be done: we can try, but we will still stumble.
- 3) Don't use excuses to keep you from responding; Jesus will receive you; a sinner condemned and unclean.
- 4) PLAN OF SALVATION; Believe (**John 8:24**); repent (**Luke 13:3,5**), confess Christ (**Rom. 10:9-10**); and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**).