

Peter's Repentance

by Andrew Murray

The sermon teaches us that even a devoted believer can still have a strong flesh and self-life that hinders the power of God from working in their life, and that it is the work of our blessed Lord Jesus to disclose the power of self and to teach us to deny ourselves.

Scripture: Matthew 14:28, Matthew 16:15-17, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 19:27, Mark 14:30, Luke 5:4-5, Luke 22:32, Luke 22:61-62, John 13:36, 1 Peter 4:14

Topics: "Transformation through Christ", "Repentance"

Description

Andrew Murray preaches on Peter's repentance, emphasizing the transformative moment when Peter, after denying Christ, wept bitterly upon realizing his failure. This moment marked a turning point in Peter's life, leading him from self-reliance to true dependence on Christ. Murray highlights that Peter's journey from devoted disciple to a man of self and ultimately to a transformed leader filled with the Holy Spirit offers hope for all believers. The sermon underscores the necessity of humility and the rejection of self in order to fully embrace the power of God in our lives. Ultimately, it is through Christ that we can find deliverance from the self-life that hinders our spiritual growth.

Transcript

"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61, 62).

That was the turning point in the life of Peter. Christ had said to him: "Thou canst not follow me now" (John 13:36). Peter was not in a fit state to follow Christ, because he had not been brought to an end of himself. He did not know himself, and he therefore could not follow Christ. But when he went out and wept bitterly, then came the great change. Christ previously said to him: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Here is the point Where Peter was converted from self to Christ.

I thank God for the story of Peter. I do not know a man in the Bible who gives us greater comfort. When we look at his character, so full of failures, and at what Christ made him by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is hope for every one of us. But remember, before Christ could fill Peter with the Holy Spirit and make a new man of him, he had to go out and weep bitterly; he had to be humbled. If we want to understand this, I think there are four points that we must look at. First, let us look at Peter the devoted disciple of Jesus; next, at Peter as he lived the life of self; then, at Peter in his repentance; and last, at what Christ made of

Peter by the Holy Spirit.

PETER THE DEVOTED DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

Christ called Peter to forsake his nets and follow Him. Peter did it at once, and afterward he could rightly say to the Lord:

"We have forsaken all and followed thee" (Matthew 19:27).

Peter was a man of absolute surrender; he gave up all to follow Jesus. Peter was also a man of ready obedience. You remember Christ said to him, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets." Peter the fisherman knew there were no fish there, for they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing; but he said: "At thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:4,5). He submitted to the word of Jesus. Further, he was a man of great faith. When he saw Christ walking on the sea, he said: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee" (Matthew 14:-28). At the voice of Christ, he stepped out of the boat and walked on the water.

And Peter was a man of spiritual insight. When Christ asked the disciples: "Whom say ye that I am?"

Peter was able to answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Christ said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:15-17). And Christ spoke of him as the rock man, and of his having the keys of the Kingdom. Peter was a splendid man, a devoted disciple of Jesus, and if he were living now, everyone would say that he was an advanced Christian. And yet how much there was wanting in Peter!

PETER LIVING THE LIFE OF SELF

You recollect that just after Christ had said to him: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Christ began to speak about His sufferings, and Peter dared to say, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." Then Christ had to say: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:22-23).

There was Peter in his self-will, trusting his own wisdom, and actually forbidding Christ to go and die. Where did that come from? Peter trusted in himself and his own thoughts about divine things. We see later on, more than once, that the disciples questioned who should be the greatest among them. Peter was one of them, and he thought he had a right to the very first place. He sought his own honor above the others. The life of self was strong in Peter. He had left his boats and his nets, but not his old self.

When Christ had spoken to him about His sufferings, and said: "Get thee behind me, Satan," He followed it up by saying: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). No man can follow Him unless he does that. Self must be utterly denied. What does that mean? When Peter denied Christ, we read that he said three times: "I know Him not" (Luke 22:57). In other words he said, "I have nothing to do with Him; He and I are not friends. I deny having any connection with Him." Christ told Peter that he must deny self. Self must be ignored, and its every claim rejected. That is the root of true discipleship. But Peter did not understand it and could not obey it. And what happened? When the last night came, Christ said to him:

"Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mark 14:30).

But with self-confidence Peter said: "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I. I am ready to go with thee, to prison and to death" (Mark 14:29; Luke 22:33).

Peter meant it honestly, and he really intended to do it; but Peter did not know himself. He did not believe he was as bad as Jesus said he was.

We perhaps think of individual sins that come between us and God. But what are we to do with that self-life which is all unclean-our very nature? What are we to do with that flesh that is entirely under the power of sin? Deliverance from that is what we need. Peter knew it not, and therefore it was in selfconfidence that he went forth and denied his Lord.

Notice how Christ uses that word deny twice. He said to Peter the first time, "Deny himself" (Matthew 16:24); He said to Peter the second time, "Thou shalt deny me" (Matthew 26:34). It is either of the two. There is no other choice for us; we must either deny self or deny Christ. There are two great powers fighting each other-the self-nature in the power of sin, and Christ in the power of God. Either of these must rule within us.

It was self that made the devil. He was an angel of God, but he wanted to exalt self. He became a devil in hell. Self was the cause of the fall of man. Eve wanted something for herself, and so our first parents fell into all the wretchedness of sin. We, their children, have inherited an awful nature of sin.

PETER'S REPENTANCE

Peter denied his Lord three times, and then the Lord looked upon him. That look of Jesus broke Peter's heart. The terrible sin that he had committed, the terrible failure that had come, and the depth into which he had fallen suddenly opened up before him. Then, "Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Oh! who can tell what that repentance must have been? During the following hours of that night, and the next day-when he saw Christ crucified and buried, and the next day, the Sabbath-oh, what hopeless despair and shame he must have felt!

"My Lord is gone; my hope is gone; and I denied my Lord. After that life of love, after that blessed fellowship of three years, I denied my Lord. God have mercy upon me!"

I do not think we can imagine the depth of humiliation Peter sank into then. But that was the turning point and the change. On the first day of the week, Christ was seen by Peter, and in the evening He met him with the others. Later on at the Sea of Galilee, He asked him: "Lovest thou me?" (John 21:17). Peter was made sad by the thought that the Lord reminded him of having denied Him three times, and said in sorrow, but in uprightness: "Lord, thou knowest. all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17).

PETER TRANSFORMED

Now, Peter was prepared for deliverance from self, and that is my last thought. You know Christ took him with the others to the footstool of the throne, and told them to wait there. Then, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and Peter was a changed man. I do not want you to think only of the change in Peter, in that boldness, that power, that insight into the Scriptures, and that blessing with which he preached that day. Thank God for that. But there was something deeper and better which happened to Peter. His whole nature was changed. The work that Christ began in Peter when He looked upon him was perfected when he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

If you want to see that, read the first epistle of Peter. You know wherein Peter's failings lay. When he said to Christ, in effect: "Thou never canst suffer; it cannot be"-it showed he did not have a conception of what it was to pass through death into life. Christ said: "Deny thyself," and in spite of that he denied his Lord. When Christ warned him: "Thou shalt deny me" (Matthew 26:34), and he insisted that he never would, Peter showed how little he understood what there was in himself. But when I read his epistle and hear him say: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (I Peter 4:14), then I say that it is not the old Peter, but that it is the very Spirit of Christ breathing and speaking within him.

I read again how he says: "Hereunto were ye called, to suffer, because Christ also suffered" (I Peter 2:21). I understand what a change had come over Peter. Instead of denying Christ, he found joy and pleasure in having self denied, crucified, and given up to the death. And therefore, we read in Acts that when he was called before the Council he could boldly say: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and that he could return with the other disciples and rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name.

You remember his self-exaltation; but now he has found out that "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price" (I Peter 3:4). Again he tells us to be "subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (I Peter 5:5).

Dear friend, I implore you, look at Peter utterly changed-the self-pleasing, the self-trusting, the self-seeking Peter, full of sin, continually getting into trouble, foolish and impetuous, now filled with the Spirit and the life of Jesus. Christ had done it for him by the Holy Spirit.

And now, what is the point in my having thus very briefly pointed to the story of Peter? That story must be the history of every believer who is really to be made a blessing by God. That story is a prophecy of what everyone can receive from God in heaven.

Now, let us just glance hurriedly at what these lessons teach us.

The first lesson is this- You may be a very earnest, godly, devoted believer, in whom the power of the flesh is still very strong.

That is a very solemn truth. Peter, before he denied Christ, had cast out devils and had healed the sick. Yet, the flesh had power; and, the flesh had room in him. Oh, beloved, we have to realize that it is because there is so much of that self-life in us that the power of God cannot work in us as mightily as He desires that it should work. Do you realize that the great God is longing to double His blessing, to give tenfold blessing through us? But there is something hindering Him, and that something is a proof of nothing but the self-life. We talk about the pride of Peter, and the impetuosity of Peter, and the self confidence of Peter. It is all rooted in that one word, self Christ had said, "Deny self," and Peter had never understood, and never obeyed. Every failing came out of that.

What a solemn thought, and what an urgent plea for us to cry: Oh God, do show this to us so that none of us may be living the self-life! It has happened to people who have been Christians for years; it has happened to people who have perhaps occupied prominent positions-God found them out and taught them to find out about themselves. They became utterly ashamed and fell broken before God. Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow and pain and agony that came to them, until at last they found that therewas deliverance! Peter went out and wept bitterly. There may be many godly people in whom the power of the

flesh still rules.

And then my second lesson is - It is the work of our blessed Lord Jesus to disclose the power of self.

How was it that Peter-the carnal Peter, selfwilled Peter, Peter with the strong self-love-ever became a man of Pentecost and the writer of his epistles? It was because Christ placed him in charge, and Christ watched over him, and Christ taught and blessed him. The warnings that Christ had given him were part of the training. Last of all, there came that look of love. In His suffering, Christ did not for-get him, but turned around and looked upon him, and "Peter went out and wept bitterly." And the Christ who led Peter to Pentecost is waiting today to take charge of every heart that is willing to surrender itself to Him.

Are there not some saying: "Ah! that is the problem with me; it is always the self-life, selfcomfort, self-consciousness, selfpleasing, and self will. How am I to get rid of it?"

My answer is: It is Christ Jesus who can rid you of it. No one else but Christ Jesus can give deliverance from the power of self. And what does He ask you to do? He asks that you should humble yourself before Him.

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