

# From Simon to Peter #13 - on the Wrong Wave Length

by J. Glyn Owen

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*Jesus' messianic vision and Peter's arrogance and ignorance lead to a confrontation that teaches us the importance of following Jesus and not trying to lead him.*

**Duration:** 23:44

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:17-18, Matthew 16:21-26

**Topics:** "Simon to Peter"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the danger of transitioning from a spiritual state to a carnal one. He emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the certainty given by God and our own human ignorance. The speaker then discusses how Jesus dealt with a disciple who was influenced by carnality. He highlights that Jesus, as the Messiah and Son of the Living God, has the authority to discipline and correct His followers. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for continual growth in knowledge and understanding of God's Word through reading, meditation, and the ordinary means of grace.

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## Transcript

You will find the basis of our meditation this morning in St. Matthew's Gospel in chapter 16, and we read verses 21 to 23. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again on the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.

But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. This is such a contrast to the episode we were considering last Lord's Day morning when Jesus was heard to say to Simon, son of Jonah, Thou art Peter. Indicating the emergence of an entirely new man in the place of the old.

New man he was. But at this point, at any rate, he is a very immature boy, very ignorant of many things, albeit very certain of one thing. And it is necessary for us this morning to see the certainty that Simon Peter enjoyed alongside the evident ignorance that characterized his life.

He was certain of the fact that Jesus was none other than the Messiah, son of the living God. That certainty had been given him by God himself. That alongside of that certainty there was a whole territory of ignorance.

And this episode is born out of the application of that ignorance to a given situation. Just a word of application as we pass this by. This is always true.

Never let us think that because we are sure of one thing we are necessarily sure of everything. It is possible in the Christian life as it is in life generally to be absolutely certain of certain things whilst at the same time to have a whole territory of experience concerning which we are really ignorant. Wise is that man that holds his certainties without attempting to allow his uncertainties to rule the roost.

Now there are three things here that we can only look at briefly this morning. The first is this. It's the disclosure by Jesus of what was divinely considered indispensable to his messianic vision.

From that time Jesus began to show unto his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed. And on the third day betrayed, at this point Jesus turns to his disciples and now begins to unravel the significance of this over-mastering must that directs his going. Jesus is not going around in circles.

He is moving in the direct and progressive line of God's perfect will. He knows where he's going. And now that the disciples have come to know who he is, he will tell them how he is going to perform his messianic mission.

Now that they have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, the son of the living God, now they must be told how his work is to be accomplished. Jesus did not claim to be the son of a prophet. He did not claim to be in the line of the ordinary prophets of Israel.

But one thing is quite clear. He foresaw the way along which he should travel. He saw the city where he was to die.

He recognized the parties concerned in his murder and bloodshed, and he names them. He must go into the holy city, so-called Jerusalem. He must go to the holy men, so-called, the scribes and the elders.

The three parties mentioned here are the parties that comprise the Sanhedrin, the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes. He must go to Jerusalem. He must suffer at their hands.

He sees this. But the same must as brings him to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, takes him into Jerusalem also to accomplish the salvation that as Messiah he had come to perform. He must rise again.

Now it's necessary for us to see that that must is related to all the separable actions in this statement. He must go to Jerusalem. He must suffer.

He must be killed. He must die on the third--rise again on the third day. And so he unburdens his heart to the disciples, tells them of this divine must.

The necessity arises, of course, simply from the fact that God has chosen to save sinners. May the wonder of this come upon us afresh this morning. Did not God so love the world, there would have been no need for Calvary.

And Simon's wishes could have been granted, let Jesus go another way. What made it a must was this God had set his heart upon saving you and saving me. And if we are to be served, then someone must bear the price of our salvation, pay the awful debt in our place.

And the anointed one who was to do that was Messiah, Son of the living God. Therefore, he must needs go to Jerusalem. The disclosure of what heaven deemed indispensable.

Calvary was no accident. Calvary was in the plan. Calvary was at the heart of things, divinely understood.

Because God would save the Lord. And this was the only way. Now, we move on and we come next to the disapproval by Peter of what he found personally incomprehensible.

Here we come to one of the most audaciously arrogant deeds ever to be contemplated, let alone executed, by even the most arrogant of men. Turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, he says to him, or let me read the whole verse, verse 22, And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, God forbid, Lord, this shall never happen to you. You talking about dying? You talking about going to the holy city and there laying down your life and suffering? Never.

Now, let me just mention in passing the apparently noble intention of Simon. No word, no question is raised about Simon's noble intentions. This does not excuse the situation at all.

But his intentions are nowhere a question. He thought he was doing the right thing, but he thought ignorantly. And all his calculations and all his schemings and all his suggestions were born out of sheer ignorance of certain things.

Assuming that he was wiser than his Lord, Peter takes upon himself the role of the natural, mature counselor of the Son of God. You know, it's arrogant, isn't it? The very mention of it hits us between the eyes. That this fisherman, this recent disciple, this recent convert, this man whom we shall hear blaspheming fairly soon now, this man thinks that he's wiser than the very Lord Jesus Christ Messiah and begins to tell him, no, no, no, not that way.

You go the way I tell you. He would protect Jesus from the pressures of the hour and from the kind of thing that he has announced as indispensable. Now motives.

There's no question of a false and a wrong motive here, but now look at the evidently ignoble implications that any mere man should assume such authority as to qualify him to correct the Son of God speaks of arrogance as well as ignorance. In the first place, I want you to notice that Peter's action here is a veritable contradiction of the terms of his great confession. And if the New Testament stopped here, I suppose we would all question Peter's conversion, Peter's Christianity.

Oh, we were so sure that he was a man of God last Sunday morning. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And Jesus gives to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, telling him that what he binds on earth shall be bound in heaven, what he looses on earth shall be loosed in heaven. But where is he today? All this is a veritable contradiction of the significance of that confession. Now, I must put it to you very briefly this morning.

I'll put it like this. If Jesus is Messiah, then he's prophet, teacher. He's priest and he's king.

Here, Peter is denying that he is prophet. The supreme teacher of God, the authoritative revealer of the Father. He's putting himself in his master's place.

It's a denial of his confession. He's denying that he's king. Simon is trying to dictate to him and say, no, no, no, you've made a mistake, you do as I tell you.

Now, he didn't put it like that, but that's the implication. You revise your plans as I suggest to you. That's the implication.

In other words, there is missing here today, at this point, there is missing the realization that Jesus is the supreme prophet of God, is the one Lord and king of all men, and especially of his church. It is an implicit contradiction of what last time and the time before, as far as our consideration is concerned, we heard Simon say so openly and so gloriously. Secondly, Peter's actions stemmed, and I repeat, from ignorance as well as arrogance.

I must now come back to something we indicated earlier. Oh yes, he was quite sure that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, but there were certain things that he did not know. He was ignorant of what Messiahship meant.

Here he was the child of his age and not the child of scripture. We've always got to distinguish between these two things. We are brought up in a certain tradition, you in yours and I in mine, and we inherit certain ideas, about the Bible even, and about an understanding of the Bible.

And sometimes it takes many a long year to unlearn things that are purely traditional. And to learn what is really biblical and spiritual. Simon Peter stood at that point.

Oh, he knew that Christ was Messiah, that Jesus was Messiah, Son of the living God, but his concept of Messiahship was false. Now the only point that I have time to mention this morning is this, and it's the central one of course, in Simon's concept of Messiahship there was no place for suffering and death. No place for a divinely planned suffering and a divinely ordained death.

Therefore it was unbiblical. And it was out of this ignorance of what Messiahship meant, that Simon turned to his Lord and said, You, I confessed you yesterday to be the Messiah, Son of the living God, are you suffering? You dying? Never. And he puts his humanly protecting arm around the Son of God and says, Never to you, God forbid.

Thirdly, it appears as if Peter's action at this point was a somewhat arrogant attempt to apply such authority over the Son of God as the same Son of God had called him to exercise over men. Jesus had given him authority, the authority of the key. And I say to you, Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven.

Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven. But you notice what Simon is doing. He's now trying to exercise authority, not over men, but over the Son of God.

He's trying to bind the Son of God. Jesus, in giving Simon the power of the keys, had not abdicated his own sovereignty in favor of Peter. Far from it.

He was not thereby making heaven subject to earth or binding the Godhead to the whims of a man. How many people understand the gift of the keys in that way? As if from now on, all heaven is subject to Simon

Peter. Heaven have mercy upon us.

If that were so, there would have been no Calvary to start off with because at this very point, he would have diverted the Son of God from going to the cross. There would have been no salvation if that had taken place. No, no, no.

The Son of God has not abdicated his right to rule. He has not put the throne of God at the whims of a man, albeit the foundation member of the church. The gift of the keys was not given to exercise lordship over the Son of God, but in an entirely different sphere.

These ignoble implications of Peter's action all point to the important fact that not all knowledge comes at once. We live in an age when we've got so many slots, and we put our coin in the slot and we get the whole thing out suddenly, quickly, all at once, quick return. You know, life is not like that, really.

Simon's certainty that Jesus was Messiah was given him by the revelation of God. But now, there's a whole tract of ignorance that can only be rectified as he lingers in the presence of his Lord till his ascension, as he reads and meditates the scriptures and avails himself of the ordinary means of grace, as he disciplines himself to learn the Word of God and apply it to his life and to life's situation. There is something frightening about this.

Yesterday's submission gives place to today's rebellion. Yesterday's spirituality has led to today's carnality. Attuned to heaven yesterday, he's attuned to hell today, the same man.

And all because he was not able to distinguish between the certainty that was given him of God and the remaining ignorance which was his to be sorted out in due time. My good friend, you and I need to learn this lesson, to take with both arms the certainty that God gives us by his Word and by his Spirit from his revelation, but at the same time never to dogmatize on the basis of our own misconceptions and human ignorance. That brings me to the last thing that I have time to mention this morning, the discipline exercised by Jesus upon a carnally influenced disciple.

How can you deal with a man like this? How can you deal with a man like this? And now can I say one thing in coming to the main thing I want to mention in closing? It is only Messiah, Son of the Living God, can deal with a man like this. No man could correct Simon at this point. None of the other twelve could have corrected him because, you see, he had received the revelation and the commendation of his Lord, and so he was spiritually bolstered.

He was spiritually sensitive to his privileges. And therefore if any man had said a word to Simon Peter, my, there would have been a battle in no time. Who do you think you are? I've been given the power of the keys.

I heard the Master say this to me and that to me. He's spoken to me in such terms. Don't you talk to me like that.

But a situation such as this can be retrieved for the simple reason that Jesus is Messiah, Son of the Living, not the dead God, but the Living God, and is able to discipline his arrogant, ignorant, wayward disciple, whose motives may still define that whose deeds are most ignoble and unworthy. What did Jesus do? I can only mention them. One, Jesus tells Peter that such authority as had been given him was meant not for him to lead his Lord, but to follow him.

Listen to the words. He turned and said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan. Get thee behind me, Satan.

Such authority as may have been given to Simon to lead men does not qualify him to lead the Messiah, the Son of God. Here we must learn always to follow, never to attempt to lead. Is this a temptation to you and to me? Do we not want to constrain our Lord sometimes to come our way rather than follow in his? Of course we do.

There is so much of Peter in all of us. But you see, the fact is this, that it is only insofar as we learn to follow him, not go ahead of him, but follow him, that we have any right whatsoever to lead men. Now I say that as much to myself this morning as to anyone else.

Though you have called me to be your pastor, I have no right to expect any man to follow me unless I am sure that I am following my Lord. The mere fact of office is nothing in and of itself. It requires the certainty that one goes ahead of us and we follow in his footsteps.

And insofar as the Lord's servant follows his Lord, then he has a right to expect. Only then. And it's true of us all.

Jesus tells Peter then that such authority as had been given him was meant for him to follow his master, not to try to lead him. Secondly, the attempt to lead rather than follow Jesus revealed an alien influence upon the very recipient of yesterday's divine revelation. Get thee behind me, Satan! For you're an offence or a hindrance to me.

For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

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