

From Simon to Peter #21 - Forewarned but Not Forearmed

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon highlights the importance of taking the Bible seriously and being broken and humble, as seen in the life of Simon Peter, who failed to heed God's warnings and suffered the consequences.

Duration: 42:54

Scripture: Matthew 26:34, Matthew 26:69

Topics: "Simon to Peter"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the theme of transformation from Simon to Peter. He highlights the objectivity and honesty of the scripture writers in portraying the faults and failures of important figures. The sermon specifically looks at the story of Peter's denial of Jesus and his subsequent realization of his sin. The speaker emphasizes the importance of watching and praying, walking by faith, and witnessing as a follower of Christ to avoid falling into sin.

Transcript

We are continuing this morning with the theme that has now been occupying us for some months, a theme which we have entitled, From Simon to Peter. And the subject this morning has been billed as forewarned but not forearmed. Our message will be based on passages that you'll find particularly in Matthew chapter 26 and in the other Gospels which serve to bring before us the same main theme.

Once again we come to a narrative which serves up to show up, to show and to bring to the fore the objectivity and honesty of the scripture writers. You have noticed this phenomenon I'm sure, over and over again. They never blush in showing up the faults and the failures even of the most important people in scripture.

There is only one person in scripture who is presented as flawless and faultless and sinless, only one. And I've no doubt but that the honesty of the writers is such that had they seen a solitary flaw in him, they would have recorded it. Here, the leader of the twelve, Simon Peter, again appears before us in a fairly humbling light.

Great man that he was to become in the fullness of the time by the grace of God, he trudged wearily toward that goal and he faltered and he failed and he sinned over and over again before he became the

leader that we encounter in the book of the Acts of the Apostles and the great writer of the epistles that bear his name toward the end of our New Testament. And the New Testament speaks of his sins. The genius of our Lord's ministry is not to be confined or limited in any way to his high priestly work.

Our Lord was high priest and he was king and he was also Andy's prophet. He as high priest made atonement for the sins of men and now intercedes for us at the right hand of God. As king, he rules over all things so that we can say that all things work together for good to them that love God.

He is king and we can only say that because our Lord is king. But he's also prophet. He is the infallible teacher and counselor.

Do you remember Isaiah's word? His name should be called wonderful counselor. Now in this context, as well as referring to his essential death upon the cross to be followed by his resurrection, Jesus has been the counselor. And he has been advising his disciples as to certain things they should do and should expect and certain things they must be very careful not to do on any account.

He is not only the redeemer of the sinner, he is the redeemer of the father and he is the teacher of men. Now we need to remember this because at this point Jesus was forewarning. Forewarning in order to forearm his disciples.

He wanted to tell them certain things because he wanted them to be prepared he was going to be slain. And he knew that this was going to cause tremendous commotion of mind and of heart. And he wants them to know the kind of thing that's ahead of them.

And especially as far as Simon Peter was concerned. You see, if God has a special place for you in his purposes, so does the devil have a more sinister purpose for your life. It's always the same.

If God has a plan, the devil has a counter plan. And the greater your place in the purpose of God, the more terrifying the trials and the temptations that the devil will bring about. And so Jesus had a special purpose in advising and counseling Simon Peter.

But the remarkable thing is this, the tragic thing is this, that Simon Peter seems as if he were blind and deaf and utterly insensitive to everything that Jesus is telling him. So that even though he was forewarned, when the tragic hour arrived he was utterly unarmed. Now I want to consider in turn three things that emerge in the course of this great chapter.

Only three things because they relate to our main theme this morning. I would like us to consider in turn the warnings that Simon Peter disregarded, then the wretchedness of his ensuing experience. And I want to say just a few words in concluding about the witness that Peter bears as a man who walked this way, who failed miserably and then was retrieved.

The witness he bears to us today. First of all then, the warnings that Peter disregarded. My friend, are you disregarding a divine warning this morning? I would say that this is the most important question for us to ask ourselves and to ask one another in the name of the Lord.

What do you do with the divine warnings? Gloss over them? Put your hand over the Bible page that addresses you and challenges you and says thou shalt not? This is a very serious question. If this book is the book of God, then the warnings of the Lord need to be taken seriously. What are we doing with them? There was at least a two-fold warning which has particular reference and relevance to our present study,

that is, warnings addressed to Simon Peter.

The first was that concerning Satan's very insidious plan for the disciples generally, but especially for Peter. I have to refer to it this morning because it is relevant and germane to our subject. We've dealt with it before, so I don't need to go into it in any detail.

I'm referring to that incident when Jesus turned to Simon and said, Simon, Simon, Satan has desire to have you, in the plural, you, all of you, the disciples. Satan has desire to have you that he may sift you, all of you, as wheat. And then he changes from the plural to the singular and he says, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

But he doesn't stop there. He goes on and he says, and when you were converted, you strengthened your brethren. Now, you notice the point.

He says, Jesus, Satan has a most sinister plan for all of you. My friends, you know, I would not be at all surprised if Jesus stood in this pulpit this morning, he would say exactly the same to us. Let there be no man, let there be no woman here in the convocation hall this morning who thinks that he can escape the snares and subtleties of Satan.

If you think that, you're living in a fool's paradise. Satan has desire to have you, all of you, that he may sift you as wheat. Get the grain for himself and leave only the chaff for your Lord.

That's what he's after. Get the best of your time, the best of your talents, the best of your money, the best of everything for him and leave only the chaff for your Lord. But then he turns to Simon Peter and he says, but now, Peter, and he doesn't enlarge upon it.

Oh, our Lord was the master psychologist. You see, if he enlarged upon the danger for Peter, Peter would be unnerved, and an unnerved Peter might have done all sorts of wretched things, and yet he gives him this sufficient warning. But Peter, he says, I have specially prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

As if to say, I'm not going to say too much about it, Peter, but listen, your faith is in danger of failing. You have a special, a special danger here, and in order to counter that special danger, I, Peter, have prayed for you. But what happened? How did Peter take it? What did he do? Wouldn't you be grateful if the Lord spoke to you like that? And now don't speak too soon, because you and I may be doing exactly what Simon Peter did.

What did Peter do? What was his reaction? He disposes of his Lord's counsels and warnings with a carnal, cocksure boast. Here are his words. Who are this? I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

As if to say, what are you talking about dangers for me? There's no possibility of my letting you down. You can tell these folk if you like, these others that are around me. They're a very feeble lot.

But, but, but, but me, Lord, you know me. I'm ready for anything. I'm ready for suffering.

I'm ready for persecution. I'm ready for death itself. I'm ready, and you can count on me.

Now you notice what's happening. He dismisses the divine warning with that faultless affirmation, and baseless, of his own self-sufficiency. Now we cannot doubt his sincerity.

Let none of us do this. We've no right to do it. No basis for doing it.

I've no doubt whatsoever that Simon Peter was utterly sincere when he said that. This is the kind of man he was. You see, he was so impetuous, but he was sincere.

He meant it. Not the point is this. Even if we can't doubt his sincerity and his good intentions, we must expose his willful rejection of the divine counsel and his total ignorance of himself.

Oh, Simon Peter, are you suggesting for a moment that you know yourself better than your Lord knows you? You see, that's what we do when we turn down the divine counsel. We're saying, in effect, just as Peter said here, it's all right, Lord. Don't have your worries about me.

I can cope. You know, my friend, we can't cope. And the man or the woman that thinks that he or she can is a miserable wretch, self-deluded.

Good intentions are not good enough because the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves, and his prohibitions are given us in the awareness of who and of what we are, not in ignorance. Take another illustration of the warning he disregarded. The second one relates to Peter's desire to follow Jesus into the events that follow the episode in John 13 that we were considering last in this series, the events of John 13 or the events of the feet-washing particularly.

Now, Jesus realized that Simon was wanting to come with him, well-intentioned, you see, loyal in his heart and in his spirit, within certain limits, but impetuous still. He wanted to come with him and he wanted to follow him. Jesus knew that.

And so our Lord said to him, now look, Simon, listen, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me later on, afterward. That is John 13, 36. Now, please let us get that because there's a lot of misunderstanding about Peter following or not following.

And I've heard Peter being blamed for a lot of things for which Peter should never be blamed. Jesus told Peter not to follow. Therefore, when Peter followed afar off, the wrong thing was that he followed at all.

He should never have followed. He shouldn't have been there because Jesus told him not to. Now, you know, I know it makes a lovely text and those of us who are preachers love texts that are appealing.

Peter followed afar off. It makes a wonderful text. But, you see, the fault was that he should not have followed at all.

He had no right to be following because Jesus had told him not to follow. He would tread the winepress of the wrath of God alone. It was written of him.

Peter has obviously learned some lessons from the feet washing, as we see from other evidence here, but once again he shows his indomitable self-will with trust, self-confidence and a refusal to take his Lord's word seriously. You remember how he replied to that? Let me give it to you. Lord Jesus, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you, John 13, 37.

When Jesus retorted by forcefully foretelling Peter's pending threefold denial before the cock would crow, John 13, 38, both Matthew and Mark say that he went so far as to insist over and over and over again that on no condition he proved disloyal. Now you know what is happening. Jesus says, don't follow me now, you shall follow me hereafter.

He says, Peter, most of you don't know me. I not only mean to follow you, but I can follow you and whatever you say, I'm ready for it. He simply asserts and reasserts his dogged determination despite the prohibition.

You know many Christians do this. The Bible tells them not to have certain things to do with the world especially. This is an area where this kind of sin abounds.

Don't do this, don't do that. But we say, but Lord, I can do it and I'll not fall. I can try it and I'll not sin.

I can get away with it. Don't you believe it? Peter, believing his own estimate of himself, of his wisdom and capacity to cope with any eventuality, despite his Lord's warning, defiantly set his sails to follow in the proscribed way. And he had no right to do so.

Now that rejection of Jesus' warnings was a fatal folly on all counts. It was especially so, however, in the light of Peter's history of sheer impetuosity and indiscretion. One of the saddest things about Peter up to this point is this.

He seems to have been quite unable to see what his past history had to say about him. You see, Peter's history makes a picture as your history and mine makes a picture. This is why it's so good sometimes to remember the way the Lord has brought us and the way we've walked.

And if you and I honestly look back over the weeks and over the months, honestly I say, in the light of God's word, we'll see a picture emerging of ourselves, what kind of people we are. And if we've got any little grain of wisdom, we should learn something about ourselves. This is why it's good to keep a diary, preferably in a language that other people can't read, of course.

It's the joy of being Welsh in Canada. Or you are Arabic people, you know, you're very greatly blessed. You can keep a diary and you can be honest, and very few people can understand Arabic.

But when you write down honestly how things have been with you, and then you can look back and you can read it and you can assess the situation. History tells a story. It reveals a man, it reveals a woman.

But you know the sad thing about Peter? He never saw himself. He never saw the wood for the trees. In all the that have happened to him, even though they make one impressive picture of a self-willed, arrogant, impetuous man, who's in constant danger because of his self-will and arrogance, Peter never saw it.

You see, he was so well-intentioned, he knew that his motives were good, so he did not take himself seriously. He seemed to have learned nothing, for example, from his Lord's sharp disapproval after Caesarea Philippi, when he tried to dissuade his Lord from going to the cross, and Jesus had to say to him, get thou behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. Peter shrugged it off and said, it's all done now.

And he didn't learn from it. Neither did he learn from the fact that he wanted to stay on the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration, forgetting his commission, forgetting the fact that the Lord had put the keys of the kingdom into his hands. There was work to be done, there were souls to be served, there was a church to be built.

He wanted to build his camp there on the top. We've been in camping territory this morning. Well, here's Peter's camp, and he wanted to stay there and forget everything.

You see, that's impetuosity, self-will, ignorance. And then again, the same goes about the episode of the feet-washing. It goes from one extreme to another, self-willed, thou shalt never wash my feet.

And then when he sees how terribly dangerous a thing it is to say that, all right, Lord, he says, not only my feet, but my hands and my head, all of me, bath me. Poor Simon. And yet he never saw himself.

My dear Christian brother and sister, listen. Do you know yourself? Have you taken, first of all, what the Bible says about you seriously? And then, have you seen that corroborated by your history and accepted it? This is true about me. There is a sheer streak of dishonesty about us men and women who say we believe the Bible, and we simply don't believe the Bible.

And this is what is turning off our 20th century young people, who, whatever their thoughts, want to be honest. And I know men and women here in Canada, as the other side of the Atlantic, who swear that they believe the book and want to obey it, and simply do not do so, and have enough blind spots to turn the whole world against our Lord. Men and women, this is a serious day.

You and I have no time to trifle with God, either about His day, about our loyalty to the Church and to His Son, nor any other serious issue. And we're doing it, many of us. We're not taking it seriously.

His prohibitions, His thou shalt nots, we are not taking seriously. You know what we're doing? We're telling the Lord that we're wiser than He is. The warnings He disregarded.

If the Lord has seen fit to incorporate a warning into holy writ, He has done so because He knows you and knows me better than we know ourselves. Now come with me to the second thing here, the wretchedness of the experience that ensued. Peter lived through the arrogance that dared presume that he knew himself better than his Lord.

The path of disillusionment, as always, was very stony, very cruel, very harrowing, very breaking. Isn't it sad that we all somehow have to go this way? And it's just because we don't take the Bible seriously. You know, friends, you and I would say many a heartache, many a divine chastisement upon us, if only we took the Lord's Word seriously the first time we read it.

And many of us come under the rod of God and His chastisement simply because we are very much the same as Simon was. We rebel. Now, three outstandingly humbling episodes bring Peter's knowledge of himself to fruition.

In order for him to come to know himself and thereby to be broken. Because, you see, God can do nothing with a man until he's really broken. I say that reverently.

A trouble with us is not that we haven't got enough self-will. A trouble is with us that we've got too much. And we've got to be broken.

And you believe me, my friend, as sure as I'm standing on this rostrum this morning, if you're a child of God, God will break you sooner or later that you should come to yourself. And He will break me. Because He loves us.

You must be broken. Standing corn can be no use as food. It has to be crushed.

And it has to be broken before it can become a meal for someone. And the trouble with men and women in the church, even the evangelical church, is this. We are like standing corn, erect and cocksure.

We've not been broken. And we're arrogant one with the other. And with the Lord, we have to be broken.

And you believe me, the mill of God grinds slowly. But grind it doth, and with that exceeding small. Now, what are these three episodes in which Simon Peter was broken? Well, look at them.

He has to fail. And the Lord allows him to fail. But notice there's a divine purpose behind even God allowing him to fail.

Now, the first episode was that in which he so miserably failed to watch and pray. This is invariably the first vital failure of preceding a major spiritual or moral disaster. Confiding in Peter, James and John, Jesus spoke of His overwhelming sorrow, you remember, and He bade them watch with Him in Gethsemane.

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Carry ye here and watch with me. I have no time at my disposal to try and expound the unfathomable depths of that sorrow.

Himself then moving beyond that point into the interior of the garden somewhere, He spent an hour or so in ardent prayer before God. And then He returned. And what did He find? Where was the cocksure Simon? Where was the proud, self-sufficient Peter? Where is the man? Where is the man who's ready to die, ready for imprisonment, ready for anything? Where is he? Oh, my dear people, I'm sorry we have to say it, but he was asleep, fast asleep.

And said our Lord, so you could not watch with me one hour. Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation. Three times our Lord went back to engage in His own ardent intercessions and supplications.

Three times He came back to these three men and found them sleeping three times over. They could neither watch with Him nor more than they could watch for themselves. Oh, men and women, I speak to you earnestly this morning, not without much wrestling with my own soul.

You who pledge your loyalty to your Lord, be sure of this, your dreamy drowsiness, your dreamy drowsiness and absence in the hour of prayer bespeaks of a terrible state of soul, and I cannot withdraw my words. We may say that we are true to Him and we're ready to die for Him, but I tell you, if you sleep in the hour of prayer, the landslide has begun. It begins for the individual, it begins for the church, it begins for the community.

We cannot, we dare not sleep at prayer time. The failure to watch and pray. We don't believe the devils abroad.

Oh, yes, oh, we believe the Bible from cover to cover. And if you dare preach in that pulpit that you don't believe in the Bible, we'll soon dispense with you. Ha ha, all right.

But do we believe? If we do, my friend, we must do something about it. You see, it's inconsistent, isn't it? I speak, I speak with a heart of compassion this morning, but with a heart of concern. The doctrine of sin and of the devil is not here simply for the mind to grasp, but for life.

The failure to watch and pray is followed by the failure to walk by faith. Wakened out of his sleep to the shrill realities of that momentous hour of which his Lord had foretold, Peter was entirely unnerved when he saw, who would you think, the temple guards coming into the Garden of Gethsemane? We call them soldiers, guards they were. Kind of soldiery, of course.

And Peter was quite unnerved. What are these fellows doing in the Garden with their staves and their lanterns? What are they doing here? And then suddenly it dawned. He saw Judas at the head.

Judas proceeded to his master, kissed him, and saluted him. And then they were about to put their hands upon the Lord himself, and Simon couldn't take it. And in an hour when a man is unnerved like this, you see, he always falls back upon what he deems really in his heart to be a strong point.

The last line of defense, my strength. Well, now, what does Peter do? Oh, naturally, he's got a sword. Jesus, who had spent the hours in prayer and intercession, has nothing to do with a sword.

No intrigue, no lines of defense, no regiments even of angels to stand between him and the foe. He bears it because, he bears himself to them because it is the will of God. But Simon Peter, you see, who's been sleeping, is unaware of spiritual realities.

And so what does he do? He gets hold of his sword, and there's blood flowing, and one of the temple guards loses his ear. There's something laughable about this, but you know there's something terribly serious about it. In the hour when a man is unnerved, he always falls back upon that which he really deems to be the strong thing in his life.

For a man like Peter, masculine and strong, of course it was to fight his way through. It was to take a sword. It was to make a battle for it.

He was a big bovine man, so it would seem, full of physical strength and fury. So let's make a fight for it. They mustn't take my lord.

But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. And whenever a man condescends to carnal methods of any kind, physical or intellectual or what have you, it only means that he's lost sight of the spiritual realities and power that Jesus knew. If you have to engage in intrigue of any kind to get your way, believe it my friend, you've lost sight of the spiritual power of prayer.

The failure to watch and pray leads to the failure to walk by faith. You know this thing has been duplicated over and over again in the history of the church. When we fail to watch and pray, a landslide begins, and we fail to walk by faith, and instead of faith in God, we bring in some prop or other.

It's always through my friends, and yet we don't learn the lesson. Oh, the evil of sin in our hearts is such. We can never, never learn, it would seem.

Can I say a word about the other here? The failure to watch and pray, the failure to walk by faith, and then the failure to witness as a disciple. Peter disobeyed his lord's command not to follow, and he decided to pursue the temple guards as they led the prisoner from the garden to the city, and he followed them, we read, afar off. He didn't come too near to his lord, but he followed him afar off, and in the courtyard he could see what was going on over yonder.

He could see, if not hear his lord being interrogated, but he himself was cold and shivering, not only from the elements in the early morning hour, but from a fear of soul. You do shiver when you're afraid, don't you? And your teeth begin to chatter. Haven't you had that? Now it was early morning, and it may have been very cold, but there was more than the outside cold, more than the cold of the elements.

There was a shuddering of the soul, the fear of the soul. He was passing through a way that he'd never been before. He saw a fire of cold, and instinctively he draws near to it to warm his hands and warm his body, and hoped that this would make something, make things just that little bit better.

And then, as he was warming himself, there came this shaft. Aha, says a little girl, you were also with Jesus, the Galilean? Don't know him, says Peter, don't know him. Just a few moments passed, and they must have been like a millennium to Peter, when somebody else probably came along and said, aha, but you were with him.

Your speech betrays you. Ah, I don't know him, says Peter. And at that time a similar question is put, and then he begins to invoke an oath upon himself and say, I veritably do not know what you're talking about.

I don't know this man. May the curse of God be upon me if I know him. And the cup grew, and he remembered.

He remembered the command that made him a rebel. He commanded, remembered the command that brought to his memory the fact and the realization to his mind that he was a self-willed sinner. And we're told that he went out and wept bitterly.

Can you see the pathway, my friends? Forgive me for spending so much time on it. You see, I believe there is a progress here in evil which is found in most of our lives, if not in all of them, the failure to watch and pray. That's the basic.

I've yet to meet a man or a woman that sinks into sin who really knows what it is to watch and pray. Fail to watch and pray, and anything can happen then. The failure to watch and pray, the failure to walk by faith.

The failure to walk by faith, and then the failure to witness as a follower of Christ. I become ashamed of him. I want to save my own skin.

I'm more concerned with what I am or what comes to me than the truth itself and my loyalty to him. The man who was prepared to talk about prison and death denies him with oaths and with such as the almost inevitable wretchedness to which men and women slide who fail to watch and pray. So then we pass through the warnings he disregarded and the wretchedness to which he gravitated.

And I'm only saying a word about this, the witness that Peter bears to successive generations. Ah yes, Jesus died as it was foretold and as he had decided to do, had purposed to do, but he rose again. And he's alive forevermore.

And he was no longer risen from the dead than he appointed that someone should go and tell Peter especially that he was alive. And then later he himself appeared to him directly, personally, face to face, privately. 1 Corinthians 15.5. Then many times he appeared to Simon Peter along with other people with a ten, then with a nine first, then with a ten.

Then John 21 and other incidents in the Gospels when Jesus appeared to Simon Peter. And when we come to the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see this man that was so broken would come to the end of his tether, would now see himself as a failure. We see him an altogether different man.

What has he got to say to us today? I think he wants to say three things. One, I believe he would bear witness today, for example, to the saving intention and wisdom of his Lord's prohibitions. I believe if Simon

Peter stood in this pulpit this morning he would say, you good people of Knox and those that are worshipping with you in Convocation Hall today, listen, if your Lord sees fit to say thou shalt not, he has good reason.

Time was when I thought it was unnecessary to listen to divine prohibition, but I learnt to rue the day. The second thing I believe Peter would tell us is this, I believe he would also bear witness to the fact that sincerity in our desires to be faithful to Jesus Christ is no substitute for obedience and submission to him. Now you say, I am sincere as Peter was sincere.

I mean the best, my friend. I think Peter would tell us, preacher and people this morning, mere sincerity is of no value at all unless I am prepared to obey what my Lord tells me and do what my Lord commands me. Sincerity loses its virtue when it violates a known command.

And lastly, I believe Peter would witness to us also of the patience and the persevering grace of his blessed Lord. I believe Peter would want to stand in this pulpit this morning and look into all your faces on this lovely day with the sun coming through and say, look my dear people, I know you may do as I did and you may fall as I fell, but listen, there is something which is bigger and greater than my sin and that's the grace of my Lord. He did not give me up.

He would not let me go. He did not abandon me to my sin and rebellion. He came after me.

Through him, he let the mess vessel be broken to shred. When I came to myself and to my senses, he made of me a new man, a man that could take in all the fullness of the Pentecostal blessing and who could start now to act as a rock man, the man he promised I would be at the very beginning. And a new chapter emerges and I became an altogether different person.

He is faithful that called you. And somebody needs to be told that this morning. I do.

Are you aware of self-will and arrogance and folly and dependence upon carnal methods in the Lord's work? You see yourself for what you are and I see myself for what I am apart from him. The temptation is to feel that he must abandon us. Never says people.

Never. He is faithful. Oh, may God grant us to learn from the folly of this great man and to look with him from whatever situation in which we find ourselves today that we may learn more about ourselves and learn this one thing about him.

He is wise in his counsels and he is full of grace in his pursuit of the errand that he may fulfill in every man and woman whom he's called to himself the original purpose of his calling. God grant it for his name's sake.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4801.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/from-simon-to-peter-21-forewarned-but-not-forearmed/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net