

PETER: A PERSON WITH A DIVINE HEAVENLY CALLING

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE ONE: THE PROCESS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY MUST BE THE PROCESS OF THE GROWTH OF THE DIVINE LIFE AND THE CONFORMATION TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST

PREFACE

Two crucial elements for the Constitution of the New Testament Ministry are the process of the growth of the divine life and the conformation to the person of Christ. These messages will consider first the conformation to the person of Christ in Peter, and second the growth in the light in John. From the standpoint of the New Testament, we will consider Peter's whole life and how the Lord perfected him. We will also talk about Peter's sufferings. He was like a sandwich: James was above, Paul was below, and he was wedged between the two of them. This caused him to have an incredible life, pressing him to the point that his person was conformed to the person of Christ.

In the beginning of Acts, Peter was a very spiritual man who was greatly used by the Lord. At that time he was very confident, because the Lord Himself told him, "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens." (Matt. 16:19) The first time he preached the gospel in Acts, three thousand people were saved; when he preached the gospel again, five thousand were saved. He performed miracles to the extent that even the sick were carried into the streets and placed on cots and mats, in order that when Peter came, at least his shadow might overshadow some of them. (Acts. 5:15)

He was very bold when he spoke to the lame man, “Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene rise up and walk.” (Acts 3:6) Peter was spiritual to the point that seemingly he could not be more spiritual. Yet the Lord had to work even more deeply in him, causing him not only to become a person full of life, but also a person fully conformed to Christ.

REVELATION, LIFE AND PERSON

In the New Testament, Paul’s Epistles have the most revelations, John’s Epistles have the most life, and Peter’s Epistles have the most human virtues produced by the divine attributes. In Peter’s Epistles, you can see that Peter was a very sweet person. We can see his whole life: the beginning of the Lord’s calling, his fervent love toward the Lord, the continuous revealing of the Lord and numerous workings of the Holy Spirit. Not only so, the Lord used him and allowed many circumstances to come to him. But eventually, all of Peter’s functions became seemingly worthless: we do not find him in the later part of Acts; even from the standpoint of church history, he was not much used by the Lord and he did not have much of his own operation.

Peter was so different from John. After Paul passed on, John was an elder in Ephesus, and he also took care of the churches of the Gentiles. In the later years of Peter’s life, he seemingly did nothing. But when you read First and Second Peter, you may say, “Lord, I marvel that on the earth there could be such a sweet person like Peter. This man could have such a rich constitution of the divine attributes.” The constitution of the divine attributes in Peter produced the conformation of the person of Christ. The combination of the person of Christ and Peter’s gift produced his ministry: He became an extremely lovable servant of the Lord.

PAUL: A PERSON FULL OF REVELATION

Paul was an admirable person. Even the way he got saved was transcendent. When Paul was on the way to Damascus, he saw a light from heaven and heard a voice. He prayed for three days, and he neither ate nor drank. When Ananias was sent by the Lord to search for Paul, the Lord said, “Look, he is praying!” Paul was very transcendent; we should learn and experience many things from him. In church history, there was seldom a person with Paul’s portion. This is the reason why all the central revelations in the New Testament are from Paul’s Epistles.

JOHN: A PERSON FULL OF LIFE

The Lord gave John the name “Boanerges”, that is “Son of Thunder”, because he had an impatient temperament. John had known the Lord since he was young; he followed the Lord for his entire life, he was raised by the Lord and perfected by Him. The Lord also gifted him with purity; the world seemingly could not contaminate him, neither could evil have authority over him. John somewhat gives one a sense of indescribable purity and unmatched love toward the Lord. Therefore, the Lord especially preserved his body so that, even when he was around ninety years old, his mind was very clear. At this age even his body was healthy and full of life to the point that on the Lord’s Day, when he heard behind him a loud voice he “turned” to see the voice. He was also extremely mature in his spiritual life.

PETER: A PERSON FULL OF CONFORMATION TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Most of us are not like Paul who received such a high revelation, neither are we like John who is full of life. But we may be able to be “Peter”. Almost all of us can learn from Peter, because he was not complicated. He was not only simple, but also fervent and genuine. God could use much of his character. Brothers and sisters, yes, we are scum of all things and we are nothing, but it is by the Lord’s mercy that we are saved. The Lord drew us to love Him, and He unveiled us to see and love the church. But we still have to ask ourselves: can the Lord use us, can God’s attributes work on us, and can Christ’s person be formed in us? We should learn Peter’s simplicity, Peter’s fervency, and Peter’s genuineness. Even we also should learn Peter’s quick temperament; he caused trouble, yet did not cover himself up. This is Peter’s natural disposition that the Lord liked. You may never imagine that in the book of First Peter, such a natural Peter became a person who is stable, mature, virtuous, full of life, who is one with God, and who lives a life of God mingled with man. Concerning conformation and maturity, you find them in Peter’s Epistles. There you can see that Peter had grown into a completely different person than the one in the Four Gospels.

A PERSON WITH A DIVINE HEAVENLY CALLING

Dear brothers and sisters, if you want to be a servant of the Lord, if you want to be used by the Lord, if you want to be constituted with God’s divine attributes, and if you want to be an operating gift, you yourself need to have the basic experience of God’s calling. If you have the calling, then you can stand up and testify, “I am a person with God’s calling. God called me and God also commissioned me. God called me and God also promised me. My existence is different from other people, the value of my life is different from other people, and the significance of my life is different from other people. My pursuits, my labors, my meetings, my serving are all different from others. I am a person with God’s divine, heavenly calling.”

LEARN TO BE A PERSON WITH A COMMITMENT

Nearly forty years ago when I came to the United States, there were two characteristics of the Chinese in the United States. Number one was opening restaurants and number two was opening laundry mats. Their names were all “Charlie”, and they all were despised by Caucasians. At that time I had a feeling that I was different from those Chinese who just wanted to make a living in the United States: my living was different, my attitude was different, and my actions were different; I wanted other people to respect the Chinese when they saw them. Although no one called me, and neither did my country commission me to be an ambassador or representative of the Chinese, I wanted people to respect the Chinese. On campus I would never let people think the Chinese were poor academically. At work I would never let people feel the Chinese were incapable. Because I have Chinese blood in me, naturally I love the Chinese and I respect the Chinese.

THE LORD’S CALLING CHANGES OUR EXISTENCE

Similarly, brothers and sisters, you are a God-man, you have the divine life within you, therefore you also have a “blood relationship” with God. Wherever you are, you want to represent God and testify God. In fact, not all Christians are like this. Therefore, the Lord came to call you, to separate you from among many people. There are promises within His calling and there are commissions. This is similar to the process people pass through to start a career: going to college is a promise, after graduation there will be a commission; others may be trained in a specialty so that they can do a certain job.

We who have received grace have an existence that is different from the worldly people’s existence. Even our existence is different from many Christians’, because we are the people who have God’s calling. In this calling we have promises. In this calling we have commissions. In this calling our status has changed. In this calling our position has changed. In this calling the meaning of our life has changed. This calling causes us to be mingled with God and to have a union with God.

**FROM THE TIME WE MET THE LORD
TO THE TIME WE FOLLOW THE LORD,
WE NEED THE CONFORMATION OF GOD'S CALLING**

This divine, heavenly calling is not once for all. From the time God met you, He wanted to gain you; this is just the beginning. The conformation of this calling is a long process. From the first time Peter met the Lord - when the Lord spoke to him and also gave him some promises (John 1:40-42) - all the way until the Lord really gained him - when the Lord caused him to unreservedly to follow Him (Luke 5:1-11) - was approximately one year or so. In this period, he might still have been in the Lord's presence, even talking intimately with the Lord, but he had not committed himself to the Lord. He still had his own choice: "Yes, I met the Lord, the Lord also spoke to me. I met the Lord, I also enjoyed the Lord, but I am still free, I love to do whatever I want." No, brothers and sisters, a called person is a person who has lost his freedom. Once the Lord calls you, the Lord wants to gain you, and you are a person who has lost his freedom. Then you should say, " Lord, if I go this way, it is in Your calling, if I go that way, it is also in your calling; my living is in Your calling; my decisions are also in Your calling."

For Peter to pass the key point of the calling, it took him more than a year. The Lord could not use him during this year, and the Lord did not use him. The reason is that, although he met the Lord, saw the Lord, heard the Lord's word and had fellowship with the Lord, he did not have the definite calling from God. Not until this calling conformed him could he say, " Lord, I am not free anymore."

Brothers and sisters, our thoughts are free, our hopes are free, our requests are free, our desires are free, and our plans are also free. Although you have heard so many messages, you know so much truth, you have prayed so many prayers to the Lord, you have consecrated so much before the Lord, yet you are lacking the Lord's individual, specific calling.

When this individual, specific calling comes, your life is decided. Now you have not only heard this calling, seen this calling and touched this calling, you also have gained this

calling. From now on, whatever you want to do, will to do, decide to do, you are not free any more. This time you want to say, “Lord, my existence is totally changed. My existence is completely joined to how You lead in me. My existence is also completely joined to how You work on me.

JUDAS: ONE NOT ANSWERING THE LORD’S CALLING

If the process of the conformation of this calling took more than a year with Peter, it probably will take longer with us. Today we may hear the Lord’s word again and again, but we may not have the assurance to say, “Lord, I am a called person.” We are still people full of our own choices. When people ask us, “Do you want to follow the Lord?” We will say, “Yes.” When people ask us, “Should you follow the Lord?” We will say, “Yes, we should.” When people ask us, “How do you follow the Lord?” Then we say, “Let me consider.” Brothers and sisters, this kind of “consideration” is the biggest problem in the church.

For instance, suppose someone wants to look for a job after graduation. I might ask him, “Where are you looking for a job?” He might answer, “I found a job in certain city.” I might ask, “Do you feel you should go there?” He might say, “There is a church there.” I would think in my heart, “How could this person become such an advanced Judas?” Some low class Judas might say, “Although there is no church, I can be with other Christians.”

Some even lower class Judas might say, “Even if there is no church, there’s nothing to be afraid of, I’ll raise up a church.” Brothers and sisters, I have not seen one person raise up a church while he still loved the world. At the most he would gather a group of Christians to socialize together. Some people are entertained in the world, some are entertained in stocks, and some even are entertained in the church. The existence of these kinds of people is not based on God’s calling, but according to their own need. Eventually, these kinds of people become a “Judas” who betrays the Lord.

PETER: A PERSON WITH A DIVINE HEAVENLY CALLING**A. Peter Was a Person Who Saw the Man Jesus**

- 1. He was brought to the Lord*
- 2. He Gained the Lord's Promises Subjectively*
- 3. He Experienced His Own Weaknesses*

Brothers and sisters, if you want the calling, you must see the Lord and have a good relationship with the Lord. In the Gospel of John, when John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," Peter's brother Andrew seemingly got the key. After he heard, not only he went, he also brought Peter along. When Peter was brought to the Lord Jesus, he subjectively gained the Lord's promise, and experienced his own weaknesses. The Lord's calling must have these three steps. No one can be short of these three steps. First, you are brought to the Lord. Second, the Lord Himself speaks to you. Third, you notice there is a big distance between the Lord's word and you. Seemingly the Lord spoke much to you, yet it was difficult to gain the reality of these words.

In the Gospel of John we read, "One of the two who heard this from John and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah." (John 1:40-41) This indicates that these two brothers' hearts were pure. They had been searching for the Messiah whom God had promised. When Peter was brought to Jesus, he was just a common fisherman.

When Peter saw Jesus, he was probably stunned, "I finally met someone noble, and there is salvation for me. There is also salvation for Israel. We have met the Messiah." He therefore waited for the Lord to speak a sermon about the Messiah. Yet the Lord said nothing, but looked at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas." Cephas is interpreted, "Peter" and also "a stone". Therefore, First Peter says, "Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious, you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house..." (I Peter 2:4-5a).

When Peter first met the Lord, the Lord did not mention Himself and neither did He mention what He did or what His desires were. When Peter came to the Lord, the Lord saw through who he was. It was as if the Lord was thinking, “You think you found Messiah. No! You are just a fisherman. In the past your thought had been, ‘Whoever finds the Messiah, his future will advance rapidly.’ You want to be a priest, but you cannot be one, because you are not from the tribe of Levi. You want to be a tax collector, but you cannot be one, because you do not have that kind of environment and capability; also your conscience has no peace. The only way to succeed is to play religion, and this is the shortcut.” There was a possibility that Peter thought he could be a revolutionary centurion, and he would have a hundred people under his command, then the Lord would promote him. Peter’s concept may have been to become a king and gain his kingdom. But the Lord said, “You are Simon, the son of John. Your name shall be changed, you shall be called ‘Peter’, and you shall become ‘a stone’.” After Peter heard this, he did not feel right: “This is not what I want. I intend to follow the Lord, hoping to advance rapidly; I intend to follow the Lord, expecting to become an elder quickly; I intend to follow the Lord, looking forward to being useful one day.”

Although Peter saw the Lord, touched Him, heard His speaking and enjoyed Him, according to Peter, the Lord’s value was not what Peter was hoping for; the Lord’s value was not worth submitting his whole life and the meaning of his life to Him.

I would like to ask you, brothers and sisters, are you not the same as Peter in the early days following Him: “Have you met the Lord?” “Yes.” “Have you touched the Lord?” “Yes.” “Have you enjoyed the Lord?” “Yes.” “Did you have fellowship with the Lord?” “Yes.” “Have you been in the Lord’s presence during your prayer?” “Yes.” Although you met the Lord and heard the Lord’s promise, although you were not called “Simon” anymore, and you were called “Peter”, that is, “a stone”, yet you do not know the value of the Lord. Therefore, you cannot consecrate everything about yourself to Him. At least at this point, like Peter, you are willing to be His good friend.

B. He Became a Called Person

1. He experienced the initial work of the Holy Spirit: His mother-in-law was healed

When we mention Peter's mother-in-law having a fever, the common explanation is that this scene signifies religious people who are overly zealous for the Lord. The Lord rebuked the disease, because religious zealousness needs to be rebuked; afterward Peter's mother-in-law immediately rose and served them. I think Peter must have had a lot of feelings that day, "My mother-in-law almost died of a high fever, she was speaking nonsense. The Lord came to rebuke the high fever, and the fever left her." Now he has experienced the initial work of the Holy Spirit; if the Holy Spirit does not work on people, people cannot be called. For instance, you felt empty after accomplishing something great, you felt empty after entering a prestigious college, you felt empty after having some recreation, and you even felt empty after giving a good message and helping the brothers and sisters. Why did you feel empty? Because you did not have the Lord when you did all these things. This emptiness indicates that the Holy Spirit is beginning to work on you.

2. He was willing to let the Lord have a place to start

Luke chapter five records that a crowd of people pressed upon the Lord. In a sense, even Peter was pressing upon the Lord. Perhaps he was thinking in his heart, "What was I doing all these years? What kind of life did I live in the past year or so? Now I am doing the same thing as others. People are pressing upon the Lord, and I am pressing upon the Lord." Then, the Lord saw two boats lying by the lake, and the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing the nets (Luke 5:2). "Fishermen washing the nets" implies the routine cycle of human life - birth, aging, disease, and death. To be a man, you have to earn money, then, after a period of time, sickness comes and finally death. People fish every day, mend their nets every day, and wash their nets every day; and then do the same thing on the next day. This

scene shows us that people live a no-alternative, routine daily life. Then, the Lord got into Peter's boat, and asked him to put out a little from the land. The Lord sat down and, from the boat, He taught the crowds. If we had an experience like Peter, at this point, we might say something like this, "Lord, I lived a vain life in the past a little more than a year ago. I was in so many meetings, attending quite a lot of small group gatherings, prophesying a lot also. I did this and I did that. Other people pressed upon the Lord, I pressed upon the Lord; other people listened to preaching, I also listened to preaching. But, oh Lord, the relationship between You and me is not healthy." When the Lord got into his boat, Peter was very happy; it was like he was saying, "Lord, I am willing to give You a place in my boat. I am willing to be a consecrated person." At this point, Peter not only experienced the initial work of the Holy Spirit, he also let the Lord have a starting place in him.

3. He heard the teaching

The message that the Lord gave on the boat was probably especially for Peter. The Lord worked in every aspect in order to gain him. He worked inside of him and outside of him. Seemingly, it took a great effort for the Lord to cause him to have no choice but to answer His calling.

4. He experienced a miracle because of his submission

After the Lord finished His teaching, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said, "Master, through the whole night we toiled and caught nothing; but based on Your word I will let down the nets." Even though he did according to what the Lord said, he had no assurance within him at all. When they did let down their nets, they enclosed a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear apart. When they pulled up the net, fish filled both boats and they began to sink. This was Peter's subjective experience of a miracle because of his submission to the Lord's word.

5. He realized who he was: “Lord, depart from me!”

When Peter saw this miracle, he did not say, “Lord, I want to follow you.” Rather, he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord.” After the Lord did this miracle, suddenly he felt, “How did I live in the past year or so? I met the Lord, I saw the Lord, and the Lord spoke to me. The Lord even changed my name; my name is Peter, that is, a stone. But how did I live in the past year or so? What kind of existence did I have? I was hopeless, I could not follow the Lord, I did not want to follow the Lord, and I was also not worthy to follow the Lord.” Therefore, he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord.” Brothers and sisters, according to our situation, we are totally unworthy of the Lord’s calling; we are completely unqualified for the Lord’s calling. But only when we have such a realization can the Lord call us.

6. He gained the commission: “From now on you will be catching men alive”

After Peter finished speaking, the Lord Jesus said, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive.” When the Lord called him, He seemingly said, “Surely you are not qualified, and you have a lack. But now you see Me and see what I have done. You saw what I had performed to your mother-in-law. The Holy Spirit already worked in you; you also gave Me a place and let Me come into your boat; you also heard my teaching, submitted to Me and gained the riches. This time I want to tell you not to be afraid; from now on you will be catching men alive.” The Lord called Peter this way so that this became Peter’s lifelong commission. At this time he could rise up and testify, “I am a person having God’s calling. Not only have I met the Lord and do I have the Lord, I also have the Lord’s promise. Although I experienced weaknesses, the Holy Spirit still worked on me. Although I am in my weaknesses, I am still willing to give a place to the Lord, I can still hear the Lord’s teaching, and I can still see a little miracle. I know I am a sinner, I feel I am not worthy, I fall short and I am not able to follow the

Lord. But, the Lord told me not to be afraid and from now on I will be catching men alive. This kind of calling has become my lifelong commission.”

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