

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” 1 Pet. 1:1,2.

The truly amazing thing is that Peter was still – at the time of writing this epistle – I say, the truly amazing thing is that Peter was still *“an apostle of Jesus Christ.”* The selecting, discriminating, beauty of God’s grace – i.e., how God arbitrarily passes over one, and selects another for salvation and service – shines forth in Peter’s life. Let us consider some – of the many – deeply sinful events recorded by the Holy Ghost, for our benefit, in Peter’s life; – (any one of which could have cost him his apostleship) – so that we may learn from these events the true meaning of the glorious doctrine that expounds the attribute of God known as SOVEREIGN GRACE. All the while, as we study this great theme in the Gospel, let us bear in mind one of the principal reasons the Holy Ghost wrote the Bible; to wit:

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and THEY ARE WRITTEN for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (i.e., God’s Elect man); but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; JUDGE YE WHAT I SAY.” (1 Cor. 10:11-15)

In other words, you should take very careful, and prayerful, and judicious heed to this frightening, yet glorious matter. For example, we will take a close look at Peter denying Christ three times when the Lord Jesus was arrested, and bound, and beaten, and bleeding – and within hours of His crucifixion. Another Puritan writer from the Golden Age of Puritanism in England, Robert Traill (1642-1716), said:

“What will not that man do whom God leaves? Peter abhorred the thoughts of denying Christ, and resolved rather to die than do it, and YET DID IT, because he was then left of God. You are from hence called to admire the arbitrary grace of God – and the sovereign grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – in passing by one, and in taking up another, by preventing utter ruin when some of His people were very near to it; none in all the world can tell how many times they have been just on the brink of Hell, and our Lord Jesus Christ hath put forth His hand and supported them, that they fell not quite in. Peter was in this case; and truly, if we weigh the matter in a just balance, there was but one thing wanting that Judas had; Judas did not betray his Master for any hatred he bore Him, nor did he betray him with a design of having Him killed; for we find that the man was surprised when he saw that Christ was condemned, and brought back the money again, to the high priest. The poor wretch only betrayed Him for the lucre of a little money; he thought to cheat the chief priest of so much money, he would put Christ into their hands, and supposed that He would get out again, and there would be an end to it.”

(Recall that on many occasions when they sought to arrest and kill the Lord Jesus, how that He easily passed through their midst and went His way, because His time was not yet come; e.g., when He spoke in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth: ***“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they***

might cast Him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.”
Lk. 4:28-30.)

*“The design of Judas in betraying Christ was not so naughty as people commonly imagine; and really, sirs, abstracting from the circumstances of men, how little difference was there between Judas’s going to the chief priests, and speaking a few words, and making a bargain about the taking of Christ; and Peter’s denying and foreswearing that ever he knew Christ; and yet Judas stumbled and fell, and was never recovered; but when Peter fell, grace rescued him, and plucked him back, and made him again an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word is to be observed that this Apostle himself used concerning Judas (on the Day of Pentecost), **Acts 1:25**. From which ministry and apostleship Judas by transgression fell. Peter might have remembered, and no doubt but he did remember, that in the justice of God, he also fell from his office by transgression, and it was only his Master’s grace that prevented the same dreadful issue. Instead, we have the blessed words which are the first words opening this wonderful epistle; to wit: **“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”** Amazing Grace – SELECTIVE and SOVEREIGN. Peter, the denier of Jesus Christ, is Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ! Look closer. How came this man to be raised again? When Judas went out in utter despair and hanged himself; to wit:”*

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he (Jesus) was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me.” (Mat. 27:3-10)

(Note here, that it was not Jeremiah the prophet who prophesied the selling of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, but Zechariah the prophet, at **Zech. 11:12**; but in the arrangement of the books of the Old Testament scriptures, the Jews had but one book of all the prophets, – from Isaiah to Malachi – under one name, **“Jeremiah”** – such was their respect, admiration, and honor for Jeremiah, above all the prophets.) Now compare the recorded conduct of Peter on the eve and dawn of the Crucifixion, with that of Judas; to wit:

“What think ye? (said the high priest to the rabble.) They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his (Jesus’ blessed) face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began

he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” (Mat. 26:66-75)

It is difficult to imagine a greater sin than that of Peter's, all as faithfully and fully recorded by the Holy Spirit in the books of **Matthew chapter 26**, **Mark chapter 14**, **Luke chapter 22**, and **John chapter 13**. And there were several great and sad aggravations of Peter's denial of His Master. So much so, that Robert Traill – who studied the matter and wrote upon the subject extensively – said:

“Now who would think that ever this man should be an apostle of Jesus Christ, that had denied his master so dreadfully. Christ warned him of it, and he did not believe Him. It is a sad matter, sirs, when men continue to have good thoughts of themselves in spite of all the awful warnings of the word of God; to wit: ‘Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night ...But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. BUT HE SPAKE THE MORE VEHEMENTLY, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee IN ANY WISE.’ Mk. 14:27-31. Peter would have fared never the worse, if he had said, Yes, I am one of them, and I count it my glory to belong to such a master. But rather than this, he repeated his great sin, WITH CURSING AND SWEARING, in the sight and hearing of the Lord Jesus – WHEN THE SUFFERING SON OF GOD WAS AT HIS LOWEST; to wit: ‘And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.’ Lk. 22:60,61.”

Some say that the Lord Jesus “*looked repentance into Peter.*” At any rate, things were patched up by the time of the Resurrection, because of the gentle message that the angel sent to Peter by the women at the empty tomb; to wit:

“But go your way, tell his disciples AND PETER that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” (Mk. 16:7)

It showed the Lord's special remembrance of Peter; it spoke forth certainly Christ's special minding of him; for the angel delivered nothing but what was the mind of Christ. Beloved. There is much about Peter to be admired; and I love to think of him as an old man, ready to die, and writing two of the most inspiring books in the Bible; to wit:

“Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.” (2 Pet. 1:13,14)

Those two books, **First and Second Peter**, are pure gold. But sometimes, I must admit, I think of Peter as a LOUD-MOUTH, HOLY BLOWHARD. For example, sometimes I just want to grab him and shake him when he does something like laying hands on the blessed Lord Jesus and taking Him aside to rebuke the Son of God! To wit:

“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 the third day. Then Peter took him,” – (the meaning is, that he took him aside from the company to deliver rebukes to the Son of God !) – ***“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.” (Mat. 16:21-23)

And this royal goof-off was immediately after Jesus “*said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*” Mat. 16:17-19. And in the rarified air of the Holy Mount of Transfiguration, Peter again played the part of a rookie, as they say, not ready for prime time or the big league – to mix a couple of metaphors; to wit:

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. THEN ANSWERED PETER,” – (way to go, Pete, jumping into a holy situation like that, running your mouth with silliness – answering when nobody asked you anything – here’s a suggestion for you – SHUT UP) – ***“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (Mat. 17:1-4)***

Thereupon, it certainly looks like Peter’s big mouth shut down the meeting. Here’s what happened; to wit: ***“While he (Peter) yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; HEAR YE HIM.*** (In other words, How dare you equate mere mortals like Moses and Elijah with my Son, who is God in the flesh? Meeting adjourned!). ***“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Mat. 17:8.***

Score another one for Peter the Holy Loud-Mouth Blowhard. Then there was the time in Antioch of the Gentiles, when Peter again showed his cowardice streak, and received a royal dressing down by Paul. Peter came off so badly from that encounter, that the Roman Catholics insist it was ANOTHER PETER. Indeed, if the Peter who tangled with Paul before a big preachers meeting in Antioch – all as recorded in the second chapter of Galatians – I say, if THAT Peter was the Apostle Peter (and he surely was) – then there go several phony, lying Roman Catholic doctrines right out the window – and including, but not limited to – the false doctrine which they call The Primacy of the Papacy, and the equally fallacious lie which they call the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope. Indeed, the lying Papists strive so hard to prove that the Peter of Galatians chapter two is NOT the Apostle Peter, that THAT fact alone proves that the Peter of Galatians chapter two comes off looking mighty bad – viz., a deceitful, false prophet, whose cowardly hypocrisy resulted in promoting the deadly doctrine of salvation by works rather than by grace alone.

Gill says:

“However, the Papists greedily catch at this lie that the Peter of Galatians chapter two was not the Apostle Peter, to secure the infallibility of the Popes at Rome, who pretend to be the successors of Peter, lest, should the apostle appear blameworthy, and to be reprov’d and oppos’d, they could not, with any grace, assume a superior character to his; but that Peter the Apostle, is here design’d is so manifest, that some of their best writers are oblig’d to own it, and give up the other as a mere conceit.”

Moreover, the Peter of chapter two is most certainly the Peter of chapter one; and the apostle Paul was very well acquainted with Peter, having been a house-guest with him for fifteen days, just after Paul's three-year stint in Arabia and Damascus immediately following Paul's conversion; to wit:

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, AND ABODE WITH HIM FIFTEEN DAYS.” (Gal. 1:15-18)

So, when Peter began to dissemble and backslide from the truth in Antioch, and Paul withstood him to his face, Paul certainly knew who Peter was while he was dressing him down; to wit:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I WITHSTOOD him TO THE FACE, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith OF Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith OF Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith OF the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”(Gal. 2:11-21)

Beloved. This glorious Confession of Faith arose out of the historic Confrontation in Antioch. Just think what effect this earth-shaking rebuke Paul gave Peter at the Council of Antioch had on the reputation of Peter! It was, indeed, a rebuke heard round the world. The cause of God and Truth in the earth went forth gloriously that day. Imagine that bombastic big mouth Peter getting by with taking the position that it was necessary to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. But see Peter in his old age, straight as an arrow in his doctrine of Election and at peace with Paul, calling him, *“our beloved brother Paul and the wisdom given unto him.”* 2 Pet. 3:15. Amen.