

Subject: *What God Can Make of You*

Scripture: *1 Peter 1:1-2*

We are beginning a journey through the first letter of Peter. In this message I want to introduce the book and look at the first two verses which is a message all in itself. The title of this message is “What God Can Make of You.” In the first verse Peter identifies himself and his readers. He is “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” and they are “the strangers scattered” in different places in Asia Minor (Turkey). This identifies who they were when Peter wrote this letter, but they weren’t always identified in that way. First, let’s look at Peter the apostle, and then we will look at those who were strangers scattered in Asia Minor.

1. What God made of the writer (Peter)

Who was this man and what did make of him? What does the Bible tell us?

Peter was first known as Simon Barjona (Simon the son of Jona). He was a native of Bethsaida (“house of fishing”) in Galilee. He had a brother Andrew and a wife. Later, he lived in Capernaum near the Sea of Galilee. Later on, Christ changed his name from Simon to Cephas (Greek, Peter) which means “stone, rock.” Christ not only changed his name, but also his heart.

John 1:40-42 ⁴⁰ One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.

Later, he became one of Christ’s apostles and a member of His inner circle (with James and John). Peter was clearly the leader among the apostles and was often their spokesman. His name appears as the head of each listing (Mt. 10; Mk. 3; Lk. 6; Acts 1).

He was impulsive and never at a loss for words. After denying Christ it is remarkable that God used him to preach on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were converted (Acts 2) and to write two epistles in the NT (1 and 2 Peter). After cutting off the servant’s ear when they came to arrest Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, it is amazing that God used him to write in this first letter to be submissive to government

It is remarkable what God made of Peter’s life. God took an ordinary man and made him an extraordinary man. He took a fisher of fish and made him a fisher of men. He took a man who denied Christ and made him a preacher who proclaimed Christ as Lord and Savior. He took an uneducated man and made him a writer of two books of Scripture. It was all by God’s grace and His powerful work in Peter’s heart. One of the big factors in Peter’s life was the truth God revealed to him.

Matthew 16:13-17 ¹³ When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ¹⁴ And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

John 6:63-68 ⁶³ *It is the spirit that quickens (makes alive); the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* ⁶⁴ *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* ⁶⁵ *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* ⁶⁶ *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* ⁶⁷ *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?* ⁶⁸ *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

As you read and study Peter's sermons in the Book of Acts and the two letters that Peter wrote you realize that God revealed a whole lot more truth to him. It is impressive what God made of Peter's life by opening his spiritual eyes, changing his heart, teaching him truth, and shaping his character.

2. What God made of the readers (strangers scattered)

These people were believers who had been persecuted and had been scattered to different places in Asia Minor. They were displaced and away from their homes. Their lives had been uprooted and they were suffering for their faith. These were the days of the Roman Emperor Nero. The Roman government was growing impatient toward Christians. The Jews were persecuting Christians. Peter began this letter reminding these believers that this world was not their home. They were strangers (aliens). They were temporary residents on earth. Heaven was their home and their destination. They were citizens of heaven and just passing through this world. This word "strangers," *parepidemos*, is found only 3 times in the NT, here in 1:1, and also in...

1 Peter 2:11 *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

Hebrews 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

William Mounce comments: "All three uses (of the word "strangers") infer that believers have an alien status as temporary residents of earth; our permanent citizenship is in heaven. This means that we must never become too comfortable with life here on this earth, for it lasts only a short while; life in the heavenly kingdom is permanent and will last forever."

The theme of First Peter is Christian living in a hostile world. The key word in First Peter is suffering. It occurs 16 times, some of which refer to Christ's sufferings and some to the suffering of believers for their faith. Peter challenged believers to follow the example of Christ and suffer patiently (2:20), for the sake of righteousness (3:14), for well doing (3:17), with rejoicing (4:13), as a Christian (4:16), and according to the will of God (4:19). Christ's sufferings are mentioned in every chapter. And we know that Peter himself suffered and died for his faith in Christ. According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down at his own request (Jn. 21:18-19).

What can make a person willing to suffer and even die for Christ's sake? When he knows that this world is not his permanent home and he realizes the great privileges that God has given him in Christ. That's how Peter begins this letter as we will see next time.