

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor
Fresh Starts and New Beginnings Series

PETER: FROM FISHERMAN TO FISHER OF MEN

Mark 1:16-18; Matthew 16:13-19; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

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INTRODUCTION: Today is the third sermon in our series called Fresh Starts and New Beginnings. I am preaching on various followers of Christ, and we are learning how Jesus transformed their lives. Today, we will talk about Simon Peter.

There are 3 points to today's sermon, and I bet they sound familiar:

- Peter was given a new life.
- Peter was given a new calling.
- God offers us the same.

Two weeks ago, I shared with you about Mary Magdalene. Last week I shared about Matthew. The Lord called both of them out of their everyday lives, into a whole new world. He gave them a fresh start. We are going to see how he did the same with Peter.

Each week, I've asked who needs a fresh start and a new beginning. All of us. I am certain everyone feels that way.

Before I begin talking about Peter, I want to remind you of something I shared with you about Matthew in last Sunday's message. It was the hope of Jewish parents for their sons to be discipled by a rabbi. The boys would learn scripture and other things about God and, in a manner of speaking, they would audition for a rabbi. The rabbi would in turn say, "Follow me," or "Return to your father's trade." It's likely that the followers of Christ had already been turned away by another rabbi. So Jesus' calling to them was extra special.

1-PETER WAS GIVEN A NEW LIFE

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:16-18

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

I like the “at once” notation. It was the chance of a lifetime to follow a rabbi and these men had no problem letting go of their trade.

EXPLANATION: Fishing was a major occupation during Biblical times. In our part of the world, it is mainly a hobby but in coastal areas, it’s still a major occupation. In Biblical times, it was a means of commerce as well as a way to provide a meal.

Simon, Andrew, James, and John were all fishermen before Christ called them. Philip, Thomas, and Nathaniel may also have been. Without modern boats and modern equipment, fishing was a strenuous job. It required men to haul and mend heavy nets, row cumbersome wooden boats, and maneuver sails. Often, fishermen worked through the night because as some of you know, fish are drawn to the surface as the air cools. These fishermen used dragnets, spears, and harpoons as well as fishing line and hooks. Catching the fish was only part of the job. They had to sort, prepare, and transport their hauls to the market.

These guys may have known some of the Old Testament prophecies and preaching from their childhood education. However, in Acts, the religious authorities called Peter unlearned and ignorant. To them, his knowledge of fishing had no educational merit. So, we know that he did not have a theological degree. Of course, Jesus knew that. He knew exactly what strengths Peter had and what weaknesses. When Jesus called Simon, he used terminology that Simon would understand. He did not say, “Follow me, and I will make you a great teacher.” He did not say, “Follow me, and you will become an evangelist.” Peter would become both of those things, but that’s not the words Jesus used. As the King James version puts it, Jesus said, “Follow me and you’ll become a fisher of men.”

Incidentally, when I was a child, my Sunday School lesson had a memory verse. Mark 1:17 was the first verse I remember.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a newcomer to the Air Force, I heard people speaking in terms I did not understand. Over time, I learned the dialect. When I see young people today coming onto the National Guard base, I have to remind myself there was a time I was just like them. I have to say things on their level. And even though I've been in for a long time, I'll still find myself in meetings where people are talking about technical things I don't understand.

If a doctor uses medical terminology to describe something to a patient, the patient may not understand. If a lawyer uses legal jargon, his client will probably be lost. It's a turn-off for me for someone to not be able to speak on a level I understand. Simon did not have a clue about teaching and preaching, but he understood fishing. Jesus spoke the language of a fisherman and drew Simon into a new life.

APPLICATION: There is a good lesson here for all of us. As Christians, we have our own language that others don't understand, don't we? We must make a point to speak in ways that others understand.

So we see here that Jesus called Simon in a way that he understood and...

- Peter was given a new life.

2-PETER WAS GIVEN A NEW CALLING

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this

rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Verse 19 requires explanation which I don't have time for today. However, I did want to read it as part of Jesus' quote.

EXPLANATION: The name Simon is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Simon which means “to hear.” It was a common name among Israelites, and there are other Simons mentioned in the Bible. Taglines are often attached to the name to distinguish one Simon from another. For example, Simon the zealot or Simon the leper. In the King James version of this passage, Jesus refers to Peter by his full given name, Simon Barjonas. Barjonas, son of Jonah, would be what we call his surname or last name.

There are several times in scripture where we read about Peter's mishaps, but in this instance, he got the answer right. In response, Jesus renamed the disciple. He called him Peter, which means rock, and he prophesied about a successful future in ministry.

ILLUSTRATION: In the field of psychology, there is something known as the Pygmalion effect or the self-fulfilling prophecy. The gist of the Pygmalion effect is that what we think affects how we act and how we act then influences what we think and what others think about us, and the cycle begins again.

EXPLANATION: Of the twelve disciples, we probably know the most about Peter. If I asked each of you in our congregation today, it's very likely you would remember at least one story.

- Maybe you remember how he walked on water.
- Maybe you remember how he denied Jesus three times.
- Maybe you remember the day after the resurrection when he decided to return to fishing.

When we read passages of scripture like this one, it's sometimes hard for us to remember the timeline. We know Peter as one of Christ's inner circle. We know

him as one of the predominant leaders in the early church. We know Peter as the great Christian man he became, but Peter was not always like that.

Jesus knew who Peter had been. He also knew the mistakes that were still yet to come. Jesus knew that during a crucial 24-hour period in his ministry, Peter would fail miserably, and he knew that his failure would have the potential to completely derail his faith. Jesus who created us understood what it took psychologists a long time to figure out. He stepped into Peter's thoughts with this word of encouragement. He wanted Peter to remember not who he was but who he had been called to be.

APPLICATION: There is some good application here. Jesus knows our every fault - past, present, and future, just like he knew Peter's. And God will use us anyway, just like Peter. When I preached through the book of Acts, twice, I noted how Peter matured over time. Jesus did not give up on Peter.

- Peter was given a new life.
- Peter was given a new calling.

3-GOD OFFERS US THE SAME

Just as Peter had a fresh start and a new beginning, God offers the same to us.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

EXPLANATION: The definition of reconcile is to reestablish a close relationship. Sin separates us from our Father, but through Jesus, we are once again brought close to him. The Bible says we are a new creation in Christ. Like Peter, Jesus does not want us to live under the condemnation of our past. As followers of Jesus, our sin no longer defines us.

Peter was a fisherman, and Jesus gave him a new life and a new calling, even a new name. Did Peter automatically become a perfect person when he stepped out of that boat? Of course not. Peter still made his share of mistakes, but Jesus did not concentrate on Peter's mess-ups, and he did not want Peter to concentrate on them either.

No matter how you classify yourself, whether you are a mom or dad, a teacher or an electrician, a doctor or a janitor, if you are a Christ-follower, then God has also made you new. No longer who you once were, you are called by his name. You are a Christian, and, like Peter, you have a new calling.

A calling is not something reserved for pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. God has called every believer to be an ambassador of Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: An ambassador is an authorized messenger or representative. When we think of ambassadors, we often think of government officials who represent the United States to foreign governments and people. For example, at one time, the elder George Bush was the US ambassador to the United Nations. I listened to an archived phone conversation he had with President Nixon. In his report to the president, he made it clear that he was representing Nixon and not speaking for himself. The famous child actress, Shirley Temple, was the US ambassador to Ghana and Czechoslovakia. Of course, there are other kinds of ambassadors. We'll hear of celebrities who are ambassadors for certain brand names.

ILLUSTRATION: No matter who they are representing, an ambassador's mission is to promote the one they represent. Before my dad was called into the ministry, he was a salesman for Nabisco. He was a total salesman for Nabisco. There were no Keebler products in our house. It would have a fundamental disconnect for Dad's

income to come from Nabisco but have competitors' products in our home.

As ambassadors for Christ, our primary job is to represent Christ to a lost and dying world. Our calling is to help other people come to Christ in order to be reconciled with God.

ILLUSTRATION: Recently a friend of mine was in a conversation:

Someone said to him, "So you are a Christian?"

My friend said, "Yes."

The person said, "Wow, really?"

My friend said, "Yes."

The person said, "But you are so nice."

My friend replied, "Thank you, I think."

You see the Lord has had so many bad ambassadors that he has not been well represented.

- Peter was given a new life.
- Peter was given a new calling.
- God offers us the same.

INVITATION: Jesus called Simon the fisherman to become Peter the fisher of men. Jesus calls you and me to a new life in him as Christian ambassadors to a lost world. What kind of representative have you been? Do people look at your life and see a difference? Every one of us influences people in one way or the other. We are either drawing people to Jesus or pushing them away. Are you living up to your new name? Are you fulfilling your new calling? The altar is open if you want to pray. If you do not know what it means to be reconciled to Christ, then come forward. Let me tell you more about how you can be made new.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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