

The Gospel According to Peter Was Peter the Pope?

People need heroes. Part of life is looking up to someone, being inspired by them, and rising to greater levels of accomplishment in whatever field they represent.

There are golfing heroes who inspire; basketball and football heroes who inspire; entertainers and authors who become heroes and inspire; political and civic heroes who inspire; medical, rescue and military heroes who inspire...(can you even look at that 911 photo of the twisted cross of steel and the firemen raising the flag without a tear welling up in your eye?). Heroes, we all consciously or unconsciously have them. And beyond all these I've mentioned there are the religious leaders that inspire often millions.

If you have never picked a character in the Bible as a hero – someone you wish to be like and admire greatly – I hope you'll consider Peter. He is becoming my hero. Why would I say that? Because –

- **If you ever want to be bold** – Peter was a model of boldness at Caesarea Philippi when he boldly told Jesus that HE – the Lord of Heaven -- was incorrect. That is bold.
- **If you ever want to be fearless** – Peter was a model of fearlessness at Gethsemane when he single handedly with only a short sword started to fight with a crowd numbering well over 600 soldiers and guards. That is fearless.
- **If you ever think of being a leader** – Peter is a model of leadership from the first day he was called by Jesus at the shore. I imagine it was only moments later that he took over as commander and chief of the

soon to be Twelve and remained so throughout Christ's ministry. That is leadership.

- **If you ever want to be forgiven** – Peter is a model of forgiveness at the moment he looked up into the eyes of Jesus at Gallicantu. After all his denials he wept bitterly and cried out in his heart for forgiveness. How do I know that? Because Jesus looked at him in love and forgave him that dark night. That is forgiven.
- **If you ever want to be restoration** – Peter is a model of restoration to ministry at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus stood on the shore and clearly, completely, and tenderly forgave Peter for all his denials. That is restored.
- **If you ever want to be greatly used** – Peter is a model of incredible success. Standing nearly alone before his entire world on the 50th day after the Cross -- Peter turns the tide of the whole world, God's Way! He single handedly (with only the help of the Holy Spirit that is) started the greatest movement the world has ever seen. His message of calling individuals to conversion is Christ, is now the most repeated message, for the longest period of time – in the history of this planet. Peter founded upon Christ what we know today as the church of Jesus Christ. That is success.
- **If you ever want to be humble** – Peter is a model of humility. Despite all the incredible achievements walking for 3 years at Christ's side, to Pentecost and beyond -- Peter walked away from the miracle of Pentecost as just a servant that God used; he took the Gospel to Cornelius, and started the Gentile Church we are a part of and walked away from that event again – as just a servant that the Lord chose to use. And that is the way Peter humbly stayed -- to the last recorded words of his life. That is humility.

Peter is a hero, in fact he is actually above that – he is a true superhero to millions around the world this day.

But Peter, when found by Jesus, had all the marks of a bully. He was loud, brash, direct, and hard to intimidate. He was probably strong and big. He also was quite good at what he did, and seemed successful. He was a natural leader, and drew people's loyalty. But he was also selfish, unclean, and hard headed. All that together makes a bully. But Jesus changed Peter. And from that moment on, whenever Peter was in Christ's Presence he was different. But sometimes in weakness, Peter would go back to what he was like before.

Then Peter was given awesome spiritual responsibility. All that strong personality added to big influence and power make for a very dangerous combination. It is so good that Peter did not want to be anything but Christ's

servant. Peter is really one of the greatest examples of humility in God's Word because he gave up so much potential power and prestige – for so much pain and suffering as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Remember what Peter wrote at the end of his life? It is one of the most moving and powerful tributes to a man who was dominated by a passion to serve. Peter declares that he is no better, no greater, and no more powerful than anyone else. He was just a servant.

Let's turn there this today. 1st Peter 5.1-4.

Today the largest church building, owned by the largest representation of Christianity is called -- Saint Peters.

Today there stands a man in that largest church building called a Pope. He is a man who claims to be a direct successor to a long line of Vicars of Christ – of which Peter was supposed to have been the 1st. Did a man who is one of my greatest earthly heroes actually start what is today called Roman Catholicism?

To find out I have brought with me a special, expert witness. The only human that can ever testify to whether Peter founded what we call the Roman Catholic Church – is Peter HIMSELF. And so by way of an absolutely perfect transcript of what Peter himself actually said, and taught – this Bible, God's Word – we are going to interview Saint Peter this morning. I'll let you decide whether Peter ever founded what we call Romanism.

So what do you think Peter? His replies¹ are all taken from his own speeches and writings as we have them in the Holy Scriptures. (We have used only the approved Confraternity edition of the Scriptures in giving St. Peter's replies).

As a fisherman to normal people like us, can you explain how a person can get to Heaven, Peter?

- Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).
- To him all the prophets bear witness, that through his name all who believe in him may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).
- Set your hope completely upon that grace which is brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Peter please explain to me who mediates my needs to God? Do I need someone to get me saved? Are there many ways to God?

¹ These questions and answers are adapted from an article by John Phillips that was published in Moody Monthly April, 1982.

- “Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

How do we address our prayers Peter? Do we come through you, the Lord Jesus’ mother, or some of the other great Apostles or Prophets?

- Pray to God” (Acts 8:22)
- Invoke as Father him who without respect of persons judges according to each one’s word” (1 Peter 1:17).

Peter, can I buy God’s grace in any way – through the Church, though others, or by something I can do?

- Thy money go to destruction with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. Thou hast no part or lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness...and pray to God, that perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:20-22).
- You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

What about traditions and laws that seem to grow over time – how many traditions do you expect us to keep as believers in Christ, Saint Peter?

- Why then do you now try to test God by putting on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:10-11).

Peter, please explain what happens after we die? Is there anything to fear if we have been born again? Did Jesus tell you about fires to refine and purge away sins?

- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has begotten us again, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto a living hope, unto an incorruptible inheritance--undefiled and unfading, reserved for you in heaven. By the power of God you are guarded through faith for salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last time. Over this you rejoice” (1 Peter 1:3-6).

And Peter, how are we born again? Is it through baptism, or a sacrament that we become part of God’s family?

- For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Peter, how important would you say that the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, are to us as Christians?

- The word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25).

Peter, tell us what Jesus meant when He picked you and said He would build His Church – was it to be built upon you? Do you or any of the other Apostles know what Jesus meant?

- 1 Pet. 2:4-7 "And coming to Him as a living stone (Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone". And as St. Paul said: 1 Cor. 3:11 -- Other foundation can no man lay....

Peter, what are priests to do as they serve in Christ's Church?

- You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may proclaim the perfections of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Should there be priests in the Church? And if so who should they be?

- Be you yourselves as living stones, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:15).

Do we have to do any amount of good works to help balance out our account with God? Can we help atone for any of our sins?

- Christ...has suffered for you...who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sin, must live to justice; and by his stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:21, 24).

Who can we count on to open the way to God for us? Who does God listen to about our salvation and needed grace?

- Christ also died once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Peter, what is the best way for us to think about and commune with Jesus? What image should come to our minds -- should we think of Christ as a baby in His mother's arms, as hanging dead upon the Cross, or what?

- Jesus Christ...is at the right hand of God, swallowing up death that we might be made heirs of eternal life; for he went into heaven, Angels, Powers and Virtues being made subject to him" (1 Peter 3:22).

Peter, now that you are near the end of your life, do you think that Jesus made you higher than the other Apostles or other servants of the Lord?

- Now I exhort the elders among you--I, your fellow elder" (1 Peter 5:1).

Peter, since Christ spoke with you directly about His Church at the start – is there a Vicar of Christ? Who is the true Sovereign Pontiff? Who will reward faithful Church leaders?

- And when the Prince of the shepherds appears, you [The presbyters] will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4).

Will everyone eventually be saved and allowed into Heaven because God is so loving?

- But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by that same word have been stored up, being reserved for fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7).

Peter is my hero.

Peter is one of the greatest humans to ever walk this planet.

He showed what God can do with a bully,
And what God can do with a failure,
And what God can do with a success.

Peter only needed to be around Jesus and then he would be a model of boldness, fearlessness, leadership, forgiveness, restoration, success, and humility.

But Peter was not a Pope while he lived, and certainly shouldn't be made one after he died.

Worship Jesus!