

JEFFERSON'S BIBLE IS A PAGE SHORT—3**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

Third, this message was proof of the Lord's kindness and mercy. The last time we saw Peter, he was cursing and swearing that he did not even know Jesus. Such a denial under those circumstances would have caused most of us never to want to speak to Peter again—at least not for a long time. But Jesus did not write Peter off as a casualty in the war with Satan. He still loved him; in fact He loved unto the end (John 13:1). Thus He came to restore, encourage, and save him from too much self-torture.

Fourth, this message was intended to show all penitent sinners that He loves them too. Peter's story is enjoyable reading for all who have disappointed the Lord and needed to start again (James 5:16). Christ's forgiveness is a very welcome sight to a penitent; a penitent's return is a very welcome sight to Christ (Luke 15).

Fifth, this message rewarded Peter's resiliency. A lesser man would never have come back to meet his fellows disciples' eyes of accusation. Barclay observed that there is no penitence so bitter and so deep in all the New Testament as when Peter fled weeping into the night after his third denial (Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:62). Peter bounced back.

Appearance #4: Two disciples on the Emmaus Road saw Jesus alive and walked with Him (Luke 24:13-32). When Jesus met these men, their shoulders were drooping with sadness and their minds were clouded with confusion. When He left them, their step had quickened and the gleam had returned to their eyes. They could not wait till morning to retrace their steps and tell their good news. The road that led to nowhere became the road that led to glory. John Drinkwater wrote,

Shakespeare is dust, and will not come
To question from his Avon tomb,
And Socrates and Shelley keep
An Attic and Italian sleep.
They see not. But, O Christians, who
Throng Holborn and Fifth Avenue,
May you not meet, in spite of death
A traveler from Nazareth?

These two recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread, which teaches us that there is much to be learned in meditative worship and much to be missed in its absence (cf. Psalm 73; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25).

Appearance #5: Ten Apostles saw Jesus alive when He entered a closed room (Luke 24:33-49; John 20:19-24). *Jesus offered communion.* Mark says that they were reclining at a meal and that Jesus ate with them (Mark 16:14). Jesus ate at least twice after His resurrection (Luke 24:42; John 21:13), which shows He was no mirage or spirit.

Jesus offered comfort. John adds that the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, and that Thomas was not with "the twelve" (John 20:19,24). Their nerves were so on edge that they were "terrified and affrighted" when Jesus appeared (Luke 24:37). Jesus immediately gave them a message of hope: "Peace be unto you." These were the last words Jesus had spoken to them before going to the cross (John 14:27; 16:33); now they are the first words after the cross (20:19).

Jesus offered purpose. They felt all was lost, but He showed them all was gained. God's will had been accomplished by the deeds of His enemies, and now they get to join the fight. Their part in the grand drama was really just commencing (Matthew 28:19-20; cf. 5:17-18; Luke 22:44-49). When George Fredrick Handel wrote *The Mes-*

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

SEEN IN THE CROSS

Text: _____

I. The _____ of Christ's Sacrifice

Notes:

II. The _____ of Christ's Sacrifice

Notes:

III. The _____ of Christ's Sacrifice

Notes:

GREAT PREACHING

A mechanic went to hear a visiting evangelist in a little town. The preacher preached that night on money and presented the sermon under three points.

First point: "Make all you can." The mechanic nudged his wife and said, "That man is the best I've ever heard. He is no nitwit. He knows what it's all about. He is one smart man."

Second point: "Save all you can." This excited the mechanic and he whispered again, "This beats anything I've every heard. He's smart enough to be President. This town has never had a preacher that could hold a candle to him." The preacher commended hard work and thrift, denouncing laziness and waste. The mechanic could not keep quiet. He whispered, "I've believed this all my life."

Third point: "Give all you can." "Oh, my," exclaimed the mechanic, "now he's gone crazy. He has quit preaching and gone to meddling."

Thought: Is it not strange that some people's conception of great preaching is a sermon that compliments them and rebukes others? Remember—your preacher did not write the Bible. He is not responsible for any word in it, but he is definitely responsible for preaching every word in it. And when it is preached, people judge themselves by their reaction to it. *-Leroy Brownlow*

siah, he collapsed on his desk and said, "It is finished" (cf. John 19:30). But in a sense, it was not finished. It had to be practiced, performed, heard, and enjoyed for its benefit to be realized. For Jesus to accomplish His desired will on the earth, we too must join the fray; we must carry out the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16). If we fail in our task, the work of Jesus on the cross fails by the number of people we fail to tell.

Jesus offered redemption. This was redemption for them, as Jesus was giving the opportunity to make up for forsaking Him. It was redemption for Jerusalem, as the apostles were not to regard even the city that crucified Jesus as too wicked to hear the gospel. Even the Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus were to have opportunity to hear and obey (Luke 24:27).

Appearance #6: Eleven Apostles saw Jesus alive and examined His wounds (John 20:26-30). Thomas had been absent the first time Jesus appeared to the apostles' group. This time he and his faltering faith were the focus of the appearance. Jesus invited Thomas to touch Him and examine His wounds (John 20:27). Jesus was not critical of his doubts, but He was concerned about them. On another occasion, when a troubled father said, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:23-24), Jesus did not condemn him for being honest about the amount of faith he had at that moment. He simply healed his boy (Mark 9:25-29) and strengthened His faith. We all have to work at our faith; we have to feed it. Paul mentions the "work of faith" (I Thessalonians 1:3). The faith of the Thessalonians was well known (I Thessalonians 1:7-8), yet Paul wanted to see them and "perfect" whatever was lacking in their faith (I Thessalonians 3:10). Here, Jesus perfected what was lacking in Thomas' faith.

This shows us that the disciples were not gullible men eager to believe a hyped resurrection story. They were reluctant witnesses who had to be convinced that what they were seeing was real. Jesus gave them plenty of evidence. In this appearance, He gave them the opportunity to see, touch, and hear Him. Thus three senses were engaged. During the six weeks they interacted with Him after the resurrection:

- They saw His body with the wounds intact.
- They heard Him speak and recognized His voice.
- They touched Him. Disciples held His feet (Matthew 28:9); they "handled" Him (John 1:1).
- They saw Him eat a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb, which they gave Him.

*-Allen Webster
to be continued*

FROM DOUBT TO DEDICATION: THE STORY OF A NEWLY FORMED FISHER OF MEN—2

The second step in Peter's arduous journey from doubt to dedication was a point called disturbance. What is meant by that is that Peter's soul had to be agitated to rid himself of the doubt with which he had previously been plagued. Notice the text once again, when after Peter yielded to Christ's request and the fishing net was filled that, "*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken...*" (Luke 5:8-9). Another way we might word it is that Peter's soul was stirred by what he saw. The evidence was clearly set before his very eyes and was too powerful to neglect or ignore. However, Peter's life is not the only New Testament example of where disturbance is noticed as a natural progressive step toward penitent obedience. Think about the response recorded to the opening gospel sermon at which time the church was ushered into existence (Acts 2). It was Peter this time preaching, and throughout he spent a considerable amount of time from the psalms and prophets proving to those gathered that Jesus was the Christ. And as he concluded, this statement summarized his charge: "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (vs. 36). Hearing and knowing the gravity of their actions, the very next verse demonstrates the disturbance experienced on that occasion that "*now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (vs. 37). Their souls, just like Peter's, had to be stirred up toward penitence and that is exactly what happened. An indelible impression was left on his soul that, yes, at times was ignored, but never forgotten. Every single soul in this world needs to have their doubt disturbed by the gospel, just as did Peter; and thus lead them one step closer toward the ultimate goal of close adherence to God's will.

Finally, then, Peter arrives at the desire destination—dedication. Yes, he had doubted (which would have led many today to view him as a lost cause), but he allowed that doubt to be tested and his soul was stirred. Now see the end result of the events that took place: "*And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him*" (Luke 5:11). And to preliminarily settle the matter, Strong's defines the word "followed" as "to be in the same way." In other words Peter did not just physically follow Jesus in His travels. This word implies much more than that. It means that Peter literally made his life an embodiment of Jesus' teachings and will. He loyally accompanied Jesus through the peaks and the valleys of His earthly ministry and beyond. And while his actions did not always reflect Christ's will, his life as a whole still reflects a faithful existence on Peter's part. Such dedication should be reflected in the life of every child of God and disciple of Jesus Christ today. Like Peter, not everything in our lives will reflect Christ's will, but we must determine that our lives as a whole will be faithfully dedicated to His service. The New Testament pictures this dedication through various terms, a favorite of mine being the concept of steadfastness. Literally, that word carries with it the idea of one who digs their heels into the ground to such a degree that they are able to withstand whatever may betide. Such generally characterized the life of Peter and must characterize our lives as well. And perhaps Peter had his own shortcomings and the regret that accompanied them in mind as by inspiration he would later write, "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end of the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ...*" (I Peter 1:13). Peter's desire was that the dedication of every child of God would equal and surpass that of his that we might all look forward to the realization of that great hope that shall be revealed to us in the last day.

Some journeys are shorter and less arduous, while some may extend for years and face extreme hardships. But however long and hard one's road from doubt to dedication may be, the effort is worth the blessings that will be experienced in the life that encompasses the true principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I imagine that if we could talk to Peter today and ask him about the trials he faced in life and the hardships he experienced from both the good and bad decisions he made, he would express a degree of regret for his mistakes, but readily admit that overall anything he endured for the sake of remaining true and loyal to the cause of his Master was worth it. Will you allow yourself the same opportunities that Peter even now is enjoying. If so, allow your doubt to be tested and overcome that your journey might ultimately lead you to a glorious life of dedication in service to Jesus Christ.