

PETER

Previously we noticed how, - in each of the four lists of the disciples (Mt. 10, Mk. 3, Lk. 6, and Acts 1), - there was an order ... and Peter was always the first, - the most prominent of the twelve.

We also drew attention to his inquisitiveness and how he often felt compelled to share his thoughts with others. Sometimes they were of great benefit, - such as when he professed Jesus as *the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt. 16:16). However, on other occasions, - such as when he denied he knew the Lord, - his thoughts were not at all to the advantage of the Gospel.

Being inquisitive is how we learn though and, inevitably, sometimes we get it right ... and sometimes we don't! To misquote Alfred Lord Tennyson, "It is better to have tried and failed, than to never have tried at all".

It *is* good to ask questions to try and arrive at the right answers and conclusions. It is good to think for yourself for it shows initiative, - and that is something Peter had in abundance. Indeed, as a leader, - as the first among the disciples, - he *had* to have it ... and the others recognised it in him! He not only asked the questions, but he also was the first to respond to any questions Jesus asked. While some of the other disciples were processing their thoughts and considering the possible responses, - Peter had already thought quickly and given his opinion.

Yes, sometimes he made himself out to be a bit of a fool ... but other times he was accurate and correct ... And he turned out to be the man God chose for the important task of standing up on the Day of Pentecost and preaching ... and what a powerful Holy Spirit-inspired message he presented that day! He was 'fast', and he could 'think on his feet'.

But ... we are nothing if we are not inconsistent for there was another infamous occasion that illustrates a lacking in Peter's initiative. It was when the Roman soldiers and the high priest's entourage came with Judas to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane. Peter was there, and he had a sword. ... And he pulled out his sword, and he took a swing at the armed men coming to assault Jesus. Now, it didn't matter who Peter's sword would have made contact with, - ... any of them ... he wasn't fussy (!) ... but it happened to be a man called Malchus ('king', 'kingdom', cf. *melek*). He most likely meant to chop his head off, but he only managed to chop his ear off! ... The point is though that Peter

was for taking on all those armed professionals who had come to arrest Jesus! ... That was the kind of man he was! He would have died defending Jesus!

... What was he doing carrying a sword? In Lk. 22 Jesus was with the disciples in Jerusalem. They had celebrated the Last Supper, Jesus had announced one of them would betray Him, - referring to Judas Iscariot, - ... and He also said to Peter, **Lk. 22:31** Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ... similar to what the devil had tried to do with Job, in the Old Testament ... **32** But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. ... Jesus told Peter, the devil had approached God to try and draw him out of the service of the Lord Jesus; however, the Saviour had interceded before His Father on behalf of Peter and prayed that Peter would not lose his faith. Jesus the Intercessor also prayed that Peter would be ‘converted’ (ἐπιστρέφω, turned around again, *returned* ... aorist tense), and that he would afterwards would strengthen and ‘stabilise’ (στηρίζω, confirm) his brethren, the disciples. ... Through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in his preaching, his brethren would be firm and constant in the preaching of the Gospel.

Peter did not realise what Jesus was saying though, so he protested ... **33** And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. **34** And he [*Jesus*] said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. **35** And he [*Jesus*] said unto them [*the disciples*], When I sent you without purse [*wallet*], and scrip [*a leather money-bag that travellers carried*], and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. **36** Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword [*μάχαιρα*], let him sell his garment, and buy one. **37** For I say unto you, that this that is written [*i.e. Old Testament prophecy*] must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. **38** And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

So, Peter was carrying a sword because Jesus told the disciples if they did not already have one, go out and buy one ... *Strange!!* Peter, - a *fisherman*, - went out and *bought* a sword! Was Jesus advocating violence? Did Jesus need armed protection against the authorities in Jerusalem? ... What is it all about?!

Jesus was in Jerusalem, the city famous down through the centuries for killing her prophets, **Lk. 13:34** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest

them that are sent unto thee. The religious leaders were spying on Him and watching His every move and testing His every word, **Lk. 20:20** And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. Their opposition to Him increased for He was saying what they did not want to hear, and yet despite the tension Jesus was able to attract and teach great crowds in the temple ... and the authorities dare not have touched Him! ‘Behind backs’, Judas Iscariot had ‘slithered away off’ and ‘cut a deal’ with the enemies of Jesus to betray Him.

Then the Passover Meal in the upper room was prepared ... and sometime during the proceedings Judas ‘slipped out’ to search for the authorities because he knew it was the custom of Jesus to go across to the Mount of Olives to pray, **Lk. 21:37** And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

So, that is the context of **Lk. 22:35** And he [*Jesus*] said unto them [*His disciples*], When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. ... At the last supper in the upper room Jesus was proving the point the disciples did not have to worry about their daily necessities for they would be well catered for by the friendly and exuberant pilgrims in Jerusalem ... ³⁶ Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: **and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.** ... What was the reason for saying that, - sell your clothes to buy a sword? Here was the reason ... Jesus continued, ³⁷ For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. ... Their response illustrated they had not really understood what He was saying, ³⁸ And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

But here is the point ... Jesus said, he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one ... so that the prophecy would be fulfilled, For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. ... And he was reckoned among the transgressors was referring to Is. 53:12, he was numbered with the transgressors. ... And He was numbered with the transgressors for a very particular reason, for the things concerning me have an end.

In other words, the ‘end’, - the reason, - He was accused of being an insurrectionist, a rebel, and a terrorist was because His disciples, - those with Him, - were identified as carrying swords, and therefore the Jewish authorities

condemned Him, - their leader, - as attempting to establish His rebel-outlaw movement. ... And when they saw two of His disciples brandishing swords ... *it proved their suspicions!* ... It was enough to haul Jesus in and bring Him before their courts *as an insurrectionist!* **Lk. 23:1** And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. **2** And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. ... **5** ... He stirreth up the people ...

So, Jesus was condemned as an agitator, a revolutionary ... antagonising the people ... and he was the leader of an armed group wielding swords! ... And that is how, - in the will of God, - Jesus *was reckoned among the transgressors* ... like Barabbas and the other criminal on the cross. That is how Jesus was seen, - as yet another rabble-rousing dangerous criminal! ... It looked, - for those who wanted to see it, - as if He was leading an armed uprising ... and Peter who went and bought himself a sword (cf. Lk. 22:36) was the proof, as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned!

What was really happening though? **38** And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. ... Peter had one of the swords ... I wonder who had the other, - might it have been Simon the Zealot? We don't know, but what we do know is that two swords would not have been enough to fight off all who came to arrest Jesus. Besides, that is not what Jesus was saying at all, - He was not telling them to 'take up arms' in His defence. That is not the way our God wins His battles, **Zech. 4:6** Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

However, the mention of the swords indicated the *tension* in the city. He certainly, - by no stretch of the imagination, - did not tell the disciples to use the swords as Peter did for He immediately told Peter to put his sword away ... and He undid the harm done by Peter. Yes, if all the disciples had been armed, they could have put up a bit of a fight in an effort to prevent Christ's arrest ... but nowhere in the Old Testament prophecy was such a scenario even hinted at!

No, instead, as far as the Jewish authorities were concerned, Jesus was a criminal, a law-breaker ... and you can pick such people out because they and their followers carry weapons to impose their will upon others ... and so, it was blatantly obvious to the Jewish authorities that this Jesus *was numbered with the transgressors.* ...

However, Peter wielding his sword was not part of God's plan to succeed at Calvary, - it *was* part of God's plan ... but not part of God's plan to succeed for remember how Jesus said, **Mt. 26:53** Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? ... Jesus could have stopped the enemy, but it was the will of His Father **Is. 53:10** to bruise him [and to] put him to grief [... so that] the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ... And that is why Jesus told Peter, **Lk. 22:38** It is enough ... Put away your sword. Prophecy is being fulfilled.

... But that was Peter. He used his own initiative ... I don't think Andrew or Matthew would have done it ... but Peter was the type to do it! Some people you have to almost drag 'kicking and screaming' to do the Lord's work for they are so shy and withdrawn ... but that was definitely *not* Peter's problem. He was the opposite for he was always the one ahead of the rest. If he did not know the answer, he wanted to find it out ... and the Lord saw his potential and was always willing to encourage him.

Yes, he was inquisitive, he also used his initiative, and he always was involved. He was in the middle of the action. He wasn't in the background ... he did not send someone off to do what he could do himself for he was willing and ready to do what needed doing. ... It was Peter who threw his leg out over the side of the boat and tried to walk on the water of the Sea of Galilee to Jesus ... whereas the rest of the disciples were more than content to remain in the boat and watch. It was Peter who had that strongest desire to be with Jesus. He was doing his best for Jesus. ... And even when he was round the fire in the high priest's garden ... at least he was there ... where were the rest of them?!!

None of us gets it right all the time. Like Peter, we make our mistakes ... but at least Peter *tried* for the Lord. He didn't stand back and let someone go to the front. ... He was pure *raw* material with a deep love for the Saviour! There was very little etiquette with him and yet the Lord shaped him into a faithful servant.

Along with Peter, another great servant was Paul ... and he often felt his inadequacies, as for example when he wrote to the Corinthians, **1 Cor. 2:1** And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. **2** For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. **3** And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. **4** And my speech and my preaching was not with

enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. ... I'm not here to present *me* ... but I am here to present *Christ*. ... That was Paul, and that was Peter also!

The reason Peter made mistakes was because he loved the Lord. He did not have any suspicious or ulterior motive ... it's simply that he did not always give as much thought to what he was doing and saying as he ought to have done ... but he loved the Lord. And Jesus took him as the raw material and shaped him the way He wanted him.

Sometimes some of the material has to be shed, sometimes it has to be smoothed, and sometimes it has to be strengthened ... but one of the favourite descriptions the prophets had of God was as the potter, - that is how Jeremiah described Him (Jer. 18:4-6; Lam. 4:2), and Zechariah (Zech. 11:13), and Isaiah, **Is. 64:8** O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

The hymn writer had these words in his mind as he wrote, "Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mould me and make me after Thy will" ... Peter had many faults, but he also had many qualities the Lord used to the glory of His name.

The last time Peter's actual name is mentioned in Scripture is in the introduction to his second epistle, **II Peter 1:1** Simon Peter, a servant [*δούλος*] and an apostle [*ἀπόστολος*, messenger] of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge [*ἐπίγνωσις*, intricate and personal knowledge] of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue ... That is the beautiful language Peter used to present what the Lord had done for him and all God's people ... And his very last words recorded in Scripture show how the Lord had taught personally him these things, - throughout his spiritual 'ups and downs', **II Peter 3:18** But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ... How did he grow in grace? Well, that is what we shall look at in our next study. Amen.