

# From Simon to Peter #01 - Preparation

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon explores the transformation of Simon to Peter, highlighting the importance of preparation, repentance, and the role of John the Baptist in laying the foundation for this transformation.*

**Duration:** 34:00

**Topics:** "Simon to Peter"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the transformation of Simon into Peter and the preparation that God undertakes in shaping him. The speaker emphasizes that the kingdom of God requires a radical change and repentance, not just a physical descent or religious affiliation. John the Baptist plays a crucial role in Simon's transformation, calling people to repentance and moral transformation. The speaker also highlights the relatability of Simon's story, as he represents the struggles and humanness that many people can identify with.

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## Transcript

Now, we have announced in the bulletin that we are beginning a new series this morning. A series that we have entitled, From Simon to Peter. From Simon to Peter.

And this morning we are going to take what is described by the word preparation. Our message this morning is not based so much upon one particular text or passage, but upon a wider spectrum of scripture. On the occasion of their first encounter, our Lord Jesus Christ looked into the eyes of Simon, son of Jonas, and said this to him, So you were Simon, the son of John, or the son of Jonah.

You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter, a rock. John 1.42 Now, this renaming of a man must be seen and understood against its biblical background. And also, of course, we must recognize something of what such a thing signified in ancient times.

When it was done by a man, it meant that the person who performed the renaming was a person who had authority over the renamed. For example, it would invariably happen if you procured a slave, and the slave was added to the number of your household. You might very well want to give him quite a different name to that which was his when you procured him.

And the very fact that you could so do meant that you had authority over him. When God renames a man, however, it does not simply mean that God has authority over the man, that he has over all of us, for we

are in his hands. But it also signifies that God is going to transform that man, so that he will assume a character that is altogether new, a character that is in some ways symbolized by the name that is given him.

By way of illustration, you have the Old Testament character Jacob. There came a point when God said to Jacob, your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel. The reason is this, there is something princely that is going to emerge in your life.

You have prevailed both with God and with man, and your name henceforth will indicate this transformation of character. And of course, you have other instances. Simon, as he appeared before our Lord Jesus, was very much the son of Jonah.

And there is good reason to believe that our Lord played upon that fact. Jonah means dove. One modern writer puts it like this, Jonah means dove, and Cephas, or Peter, mean rock.

So what Jesus is saying to Peter is this, up until now you have been very much like a fluttering, timorous dove, child of a dove, fleeting, flying, hither and thither from bow to bow. But if you take me as your Savior, and if you give your life to me, I will make you a man of rock. Now if you omit the ifs, because there were no ifs in our Lord's statement, not one.

Omit the ifs from that quotation from a modern scholar, and you've got the truth of my text. Jesus said, Browart, Simon the son of Jonah, a little dove, fluttering around from place to place without any solidity, without any purpose, going around in circles, higher and lower, moving hither and thither at the whim of a fancy. But I'll make you a different man.

Thou shalt be called Cephas, Petros, rock. Now that's a wonderful promise. Not more wonderful still as far as we are concerned this morning.

We have the evidence of the transformation that took place. Making Simon, son of Jonah, into the man of stability, and of character, the rock man. That we find him to be in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and in the two epistles that bear his name.

And what a story it is. He was a man ultimately not only saved by the grace of God, that he was, but if we may use his brother Apostle's language, sanctified, meek for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work, so that as God would have him labor for him, here or there, the man is ready, and the man is willing to be made willing if he's not already willing. And we find him ultimately as one of the most mature, one of the most stable, one of the most stalwart souls of the great New Testament and Apostolic Age.

Simon the Rock. Now the story of that transformation I believe is one of the great epics of history. It's a remarkable story.

But it is all the more remarkable because you see, there is so much of Simon in all of us. Now I dearly love the Apostle Paul. Who doesn't? We owe him so much under God.

But somehow or other he's often on a different plane, naturally speaking. We're not in the same world, naturally speaking. Oh there are times when we converge, but this man Simon, son of Jonah, he's so much like me, or I'm so much like him.

And wherever I go I find people who are prepared to say this, there is so much of Simon in me, we're so near to one another. His humaneness brings us so near to him. He's such a real man, he's no man of straw, I'm not suggesting that Paul is.

But this man is certainly made of the same stuff as you and myself. And you see, as we pursue the footfalls of Simon Peter, and see the vicissitudes of his life, and how the Lord deals with him and transforms him, we cannot other than take courage. For we see what the grace of God can do, and can make of a man like ourselves.

Very impetuous. Very impulsive. And there is much else that we can say about it.

But at last, God triumphs. And it is on that score that I want to invite you over the next number of months to come with me and follow in the footmarks and see the great transition from Simon to Peter. Until we see what the grace of God can do, not only for him, but please God for every one of us.

It would be a wonderful thing, let's pray for one another, if no one was left out of this. I'm often sorrowful on behalf of men and women who come to the sanctuary and who go out unblessed. They even see others blessed.

But they themselves don't seem to catch the glory and the grace that God is pouring forth. Will you pray with me that in these mourning times as we gather together over the next number of months, there will not be a man or a woman or a boy or a girl which will fail to see the significance of these things, but that we shall all know the grace that redeemed and rescued and transformed Simon, saved him, sanctified him, and made him a servant of God. To whom successive generations acknowledge their gratitude.

Now, the first scene, preparation. The divine potter always prepares his clay with meticulous care. Ere he personally and directly began the work that was to change Simon into Peter, and canalize his energies into the fulfillment of God's perfect will, Jesus first arranged that Simon should become closely involved with the ministry or in the ministry of John the Baptist.

And this is the background, this is the preparation. Now it often happens this way. When God is about to do something big, he will arrange for a man to come under the influence of somebody or other who will engage in a preparatory ministry.

Sometimes it's a mother or a father. Sometimes it's a Sunday school teacher. Of course, sometimes the father or mother or the Sunday school teacher can be the very person who is involved in bringing the boy or the girl right into the swing and glory of the Christian life.

It's true. But more often, rather, it is a case of someone being the agent for the performance of the preparatory work. Now there is some legitimate room for doubt as to whether or not Simon was actually a disciple of John the Baptist.

And so we don't dogmatize here. But really it doesn't matter whether he was directly a disciple of John the Baptist or not. He was intimately involved.

I'll tell you why. We read that all Judea and Jerusalem and all the cities round about Jordan went out after John to be baptized of him. And we also read that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was a disciple of John the Baptist.

And knowing Andrew, and the way he shared things with Peter, and the way they talked about things together, and the way he was ultimately able to persuade Peter to come to the Messiah, it is impossible, it is inconceivable that Simon could have evaded the ministry of John the Baptist. But in all probability, I say in all probability, Peter was a disciple, Simon was a disciple of John the Baptist. I suggest that because of the way Peter speaks on the occasion when they would choose someone to succeed Judas to the throne.

These are Peter's words. So says he, one of the men who have accompanied us during the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day when he was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. Now, that means at least that Simon was present on the occasion of our Lord's baptism by John.

Why was he there? Well, the most natural reading of the text, I think, would suggest that he was there just like his brother, as a disciple of John's, being taught by John. He was one of the serious young men who, along with others, had gathered around John the Baptist, this authentic man of God, this voice from above, who in those days when the word of the Lord was scarce, knew his God. But really, it doesn't matter very much.

In either case, the ministry of John had an impact upon Simon Peter, and prepared the way for what was to come. Now, in what sense? This is our question this morning. How did the ministry of John prepare Simon to become Peter? I can only choose a few strands from the main body of truth that we have in the Gospels.

The first thing I want to say is this. John's ministry demanded reformation, and this in itself had an impact upon Simon as well as upon others. John's announcement was that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Don't read that without care, without thought. The kingdom of the heavens is at hand, the Old Testament had promised a king. And a kingdom that would belong to the Son of Man.

The ancients of days would give him a kingdom that would outlive and outlast every other. And what John said, the kingdom of the heavens is right at hand, it's around the corner, it's just here. Of course, it was here not because the kingdom as such had come, but the kingdom had come in the presence of the king.

And in this context, the king makes the kingdom. He brings all the powers of the world to come, to bear into the human situation and upon it. And he comes.

Now, John's statement that the kingdom was at hand was no more startling than his understanding of the nature of that kingdom. Peter and all others like him, versed in the Old Testament, were waiting for this. But they waited, they knew not what for, because their understanding of the kingdom had become so material and so carnal that alas, they were oftentimes waiting for the wrong thing to come, as the Jews are still waiting.

It was nationalistic and narrow, their concept of things. It was materialistic and shallow. John knew that it was quite different from the common conception.

In the solitude of the desert, he had learnt that God's promised reign would be spiritual before all else. Now, I deliberately put it like that. I'm not saying that there was no other aspect to it, but what I am saying is this.

It was spiritual before anything else. So John's call was not to become involved in political intrigue or maneuvering. John's summons was a summons to summon men to repentance.

A change of mind and a change of heart and a change of life. It was spiritual, because the nature of the kingdom was spiritual. It wasn't to verse people, it wasn't to teach people according to the tenets of some philosophical or political creed.

The kingdom was not political, the kingdom was not philosophical. It was moral, it was spiritual, and the preparation must be correspondingly moral and spiritual. Repent, says John.

And wherever he went, this was the message. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He summoned men to make a verdict, to arrive at a verdict that they would be morally different and spiritually different.

He called them to repentance. And such repentances would radically change their thinking and their living, their beliefs and their behavior. Now that moral transformation that John sought must in the first place involve the end of national bigotry and a self-righteousness that bursted in mere physical dissent.

This is one of the damning features of the life of the Jews of our Lord's day. And John, with the axe in his hand, lifted it up and let it fall in these thunderous words. Bear fruit, said he, that befit repentance.

And don't begin to say to yourselves, we have Abraham for our father. For I tell you, says this man of God, can you imagine it? I tell you, he says, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. If this were the salvation of mankind, simply to be physically related to Abraham, God can make stones into children of Abraham.

There could be no more devastating word in the whole of the Bible. Merely to be a physical descendant of Abraham does not save a man. Let me repeat, physically descend from the very friend of God.

Significance as it may be, does not in and of itself imply greatness or goodness. In and of itself. As such, it is no qualification for access into God's kingdom.

Nicodemus was the man at the threshold of John's gospel who had to be told, Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, except a man be born again he cannot even see, let alone enter the kingdom of God. Then again, where genuine repentance is present, there must be fruit that befit repentance. Repentance is not a thing that you can do without showing it.

Oh no. Now you can be secretly in love with someone, I suppose, and hide it for a long time, but you cannot be a penitent sinner and not show it. It will show in your attitude, of course, love will also in due course.

But repentance is such a radical change of mind concerning myself and concerning God and his glory, that it has to be out. If we ask with the multitudes that did ask John, well how, in what sense, what must we do, how do we express it? Well John's got his answer ready. They asked him exactly that question in the days when he ministered.

What then shall we do, they said, Luke 3.10. And we have the reply. He who has two coats, says John, let him share with him who has none. And he who has food, let him do likewise.

Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, Teacher, what shall we do? And he said to them, Collect no more than is appointed you. Soldiers also asked him, And we, what shall we do? And he said to them, Rob no one by violence, or by false accusation, and be content with your wages. That's evidence of repentance.

Now you notice what John does. He deals with the peculiar sin of every sector of society that come to him. The first were materialistic, and they loved to hoard clothing and other things, clothing and food, food and clothing, hoard, self is in the center.

Right, says John, the token of repentance is this, share what you've got. This means that you haven't the view that you yourself are the center of the universe, but other people have a share in God's good things. That's repentance.

And so he goes down the list, I'm not going to pursue. The point is, of course, that we all have our sin that so easily besets us. It may not be quite the same with me as it is with you.

It may not be quite the same with any two among us this morning. But the fact of this, there is a sin that besets us. We must repent.

Each reply speaks of a practical expression of a moral and spiritual change. My dear friends, this is so challenging. You know, I would love to speak eye to eye with any passenger this morning who feels that when the message of repentance is struck, it applies to everybody else.

My good man, my good woman, in the name of God, don't let yourself be thus bulldozed by the devil into a corner where you will perish this morning. Repentance is a word for you and for me. And then, of course, genuine repentance needs to be expressed symbolically as well as practically.

Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan. Confessing their sins. Confessing their sins.

Acknowledging their wrongness. So easy to expect others to do this. It's a different thing to do it ourselves.

And it's so easy for us to call attention to other people's sins. Now, my dear people, we need a lesson here. We are past masters at this terrible game of that's his sin.

I beg of you, dear people of Knox this morning, every man and woman among us, don't do that. What's yours? What's mine? Acknowledge it. Keep your finger to yourself, man.

You see, for every finger that points at another, there are three that point back at me. And I tell you, this can damn the church. And I will stand in this pulpit this morning, though I've only been here six months, less, and I will tell you that this sin can damn Knox.

Man or woman. Repentance means acknowledging your sin. Not somebody else's.

Now, there comes a point, according to the disciplines of the New Testament, where those in pastoral authority have from time to time to speak to a recalcitrant brother or a recalcitrant sister. But this is of such a pastoral order that it is extremely delicate and a very, very, very sensitive operation to perform. But generally speaking, penitence means this.

I acknowledge my own sin. Only on that score, only on that score is the baptism of John, the baptism unto the remission of sins. For that word unto means this, that to the penitent who acknowledges his sin before God, God forgives and God forgets.

This is another lesson we've got to learn. That when God forgives and forgets, we've got to learn to forget as well. When God forgave, God forgave.

We've got to forgive and forget. This is a fellowship. And Simon came to this.

Later on, but this is very significant, Simon along with other sons who asked our Lord, How I'll forgive you. How I'll forgive you. I wish you under the sneezing to forgive you.

And forget. But a man who is penitent is so aware. Such was the radical reformation that was and was and was participated in.

What I want you to notice is this. John's minister supplied instruction instruct authoritatively to be made explicit concerning certain matters. John's kingdom was quite at hand.

Sure as it was imminent and close, so also was it quite spiritual as we've seen. And a God-present of the King. It is for John to see that it was spiritual.

Verily, the memory of the King in whom was embodied was a spiritual many things. That the Son opens, doesn't it? Yes, until why? Until we put it in its place. It's the son of a lamb made the cur of sinners.

Rather than the son of iron that is whose foe Alex is the sovereignty over our guilt. Rather than the son deals with an exit such as Rome. Old says he, the lamb that us.

You see, if he couldn't in this realm were the point of breaking the law of Rome. The King cannot consume a nature, cannot curse and be able to with God. Well, there's the basic issues taking away the King of the Lamb.

The Jews of Peter do this. They expect a King to emerge. He is coming to send guilt.

Jews are just going to do something to the nature to be complete. Says John, hide in water. But he who is mighty he with a holy fire.

Judgmentations both of us. Only the preparer of the way the foreking Isaiah 4. It was going down the mountains up the valleys leveled up so that the highway could be the King. The King is coming.

That says John. I know that I am as limitations of ministry as limitations of the water that symbolize repentance. Water can do nothing.

Not anything. And of itself water is as simple as anything. In myself no water can do nothing.

But, says John, perhaps the water with the baptized men is symbolic of something that has happened by the grace in the heart who's coming after me. The shoes I'm on were his shoes. And when he comes he will baptize me with the holy spirit fire and the holy symbol of doing things.

Not the symbol this is. Going to a power being a power. This is the power of God.

Down among God the holy is God. Human heart. And you see water all we are is a loss of our business, you know, with water.

God have mercy. And it's all simple after all. Who's self is a cup.

Nothing. But the holiest never comes in vain. He changes the heart.

He renews the soul. This was one thing that Simon needed to learn. The kingdom to which you call is not a kingdom that you enter into because you're a Jew.

It is a kingdom to which you summon that you must change radically and harm in. That sin and curse must be done. And when the law of sin must be so that a man is made new, transformed, redeemed, regenerate.

And John told him that. One other thing. John included at least one other vital note concerning the king in whose very assembly from the kingdom comes.

He errs away and baptized with the Holy Spirit for burns with unquenchable fire. A then solemn note. Very palatable in the 20th century as in the past.

Yet I can't apologize to you for this morning for many because I am declared the word of God and not the age. Listen to this. Winnowing for and he will cleave and he will get into his but that he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Rome also comes under the shape of Sodom in his view. And where is the king? Juvenile. Immodern.

He's all. He's sovereign of the world. He's separate from the goat and the wheat.

And having gathered in a garden or in a corn harvest he will burn with unquenchable fire. I'm not suggesting one more. That's not everything he heard.

I'm not suggesting a half of it in points or a fact of this ministerial revolution. You choke in upon the nonsense of scientist fellow countrymen. Humans start to ask questions.

The thing to which I want to be closing is this. It would be remiss of me if I had one other speech in history. Very briefly in this way an introduction.

He said the kingdom that he brings materialistic. It is first place. God says to John the one that I'm talking about the sin bearing spit baptizing the king.

Behold. Then he says to his demon you who dwell there is an abusive disciple knowing that he has now started in the beginning Simon's preparation took shape beyond the baptism of life and instruction as well to protomatize the best sin as well as individual produced by John's minister my friends on your pathway and you dislike more of the John the Baptist when he disclosed your weakness had to be dealt with. The wound is opened up of the foot marks and and thereby my very life that refuses will be silenced to dance to his tune of all disgust to me.

Have you ever before the one Herod of Jesus before Herod had understand this and had said my friend Herod is Baptist and you can discourage the Baptist and he brings to the heart has been the such disgust and shamelessness under the men of the forerunner of your people I have afraid that God one thing and

say something to us and this is why perhaps we feel that with all sense and we should take advance cuts on this and if we keep the letter the history of the gospel with our best prisoners to dance. I have advised everyone as John for the reasons he had concerned us and leaders of the people and of Israel of Israel

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