

# From Simon to Peter #26 - the Holy Spirit and Peter's Mind - Part 1

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The Holy Spirit's illumination of Peter's understanding is crucial in transforming him from a rough diamond to a leader in the church, enabling him to understand and explain the phenomenon of Pentecost.*

**Duration:** 42:10

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28, Matthew 16:17, Luke 24:27, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:12-14

**Topics:** "Simon to Peter"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the audience's understanding of the scriptures and their familiarity with the word of God. He emphasizes that simply attending meetings or relying on feelings is not enough, as feelings can be misleading. The speaker highlights the importance of using our minds to read, understand, and obey the Bible, as it is a gift from God. He also mentions that the Gospel of Jesus Christ appeals to the mind, conscience, will, heart, and the whole being. The speaker references the story of Simon, son of Jonah, and how Jesus was able to transform him into Peter, illustrating the power of God to change and shape individuals.

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## Transcript

We are continuing this morning with our theme, From Simon to Peter. The burden of this theme, of course, is to show from Scripture how God in his grace and in his mercy takes a very rough diamond, a very difficult character, perverted and twisted by sin. How God takes him and even in the initial stages, the Savior looks him in the eye and says, all right, I know who you are, you are the son of Jonah, you are Simon son of Jonah.

But you're going to be an entirely different man. And you shall be called Petros, Cephas, whether you give the Aramaic name or the Greek it makes no difference. Petros or Cephas, a rock or a stone.

And of course in the change of name there is inside a change of character, a change of heart, a change of life. Now this is our God. And this is the gospel.

And on a lovely morning like this it is good for us to be able to address anybody that is living in the shadows of sin and to say this, the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to the shadowed sons and daughters of men and says exactly what it said 2,000 years ago to Simon son of Jonah. He knows who you are, he

knows what I am. But by his grace and by his power he is able to make us the kind of people that befit the children of God.

He can make a Peter out of a Simon. Some of us perhaps may need to lay hold upon that promise today. And to look to him as our Savior as we've never done so before and say, Lord you know I wouldn't like to tell others all about myself.

If you can make this other kind of person out of me here I am. Take me, save me. Well that happened quite a long time ago as far as Simon is concerned.

Over three years have gone since Jesus thus spoke the word of promise to Simon son of Jonah. And I guess as we have been looking at the progressive story and the record of Peter's subsequent life some of us have been a little puzzled. There have been times when we've wondered whether there's going to be a different man at all.

We've come to some high peaks where we've thought oh yes this is quite a different person now. We can see the new man emerging, the man of stone, the man of rock, the man of character, the man of stability, the man of conviction. We've seen him emerge.

Then we've hardly taken that in when dear old Simon is back again where he was yesterday. And after climbing one of the highest heights Jesus has to turn to him and says, get thee behind me Satan. And so it is all along the way he goes forward a step and then he goes back too.

Until we come to the end of the gospel narratives and especially do we see the change when we move into the book of the Acts of the Apostle. When the Holy Spirit of God came down at Pentecost he did a work in Simon Peter the importance and the depth of which we simply cannot properly understand. It's too big and it's too great and it's too significant for us to measure with our puny human instincts.

God did a work in the heart of this man and at Pentecost and after we see the new man emerging in all his triumphant glory. Now what did the Spirit do for Peter? We've seen two things already. We've been seeing first of all how the Holy Spirit came to control his tongue.

And this is a miracle in any man's life. Behind the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, whatever that meant and I'm not minimizing its importance, but behind all that please let's get hold of this. Before the Spirit of God spoke the message through him, the Spirit had control of his lips.

And this is the basic point. This is the cardinal point. This is the fundamental issue.

The Spirit controlled the man's mouth. Does he control yours? The mighty power and blessing of Pentecost came to a man and to others of course with him, whose mouths, whose lips were controlled by the Holy Ghost. Then last time we saw how the Holy Spirit dealt with Peter's personality problems, fitting him into a community, giving him a sense of belonging, enabling him to take his place along other Christians without disturbing the fellowship.

And not simply to take his place, but to become a leader. Now this is very difficult. You know how difficult it is in the nearest, closest, the most intimate unit of the home.

For children to take the place of children. And parents to take the place of parents. And if there are servants to take the place of servants.

The servant wants to be the boss. And the boss wants to be a super boss. And the child sometimes wants to be a super, super boss.

How difficult it is with all our personality problems to take the place that God meant for us without disturbing the harmony. Now this is one of the miracles of Pentecost. Not only was a rough diamond like Peter able to take his place in the community as a member, but he was able to assume his place as a leader without disturbing the community, without creating worshippers of personalities, and much else.

I'm not going after the issue this morning. But all this was rendered possible by the ministry of the Spirit in Peter and in the others. Now this morning we are simply going to begin the next theme.

It's too big for us to deal with one Sunday morning. It's the power and the influence of the Holy Spirit upon Peter's mind, upon Peter's mind. And I'm going to read to you again some of these familiar verses, because I want to focus this one issue upon us this morning.

I want us to focus our minds upon it, and I trust that it will grip us and speak to us as God would have us hear the message. Now the Spirit of God has come down, and these men have been speaking in tongues, and the crowds have gathered in the streets. And this is what we read in verse 12.

They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this? Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, but Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Peter knew what it was. Peter was able to explain the phenomenon.

Peter understands. Peter sees the wood for the trees, and Peter is able to teach the teachers of Jewry what to them was utterly mystifying. How? Because the Spirit that came down upon him and flooded his soul had illumined his mind, and taught him, and given him the key of knowledge and understanding.

And now this untutored man, this unlettered man, this man without a degree, this man that's not been to the university, this man that has even has not been authorized to preach by the Sanhedrin, this man who is a man from the world and a man from the lower classes, this man is leading the intelligentsia into an understanding of the great phenomenon of Pentecost. It is all because of the power of the Spirit illuminating the mind of the humble. Now my friends, this is my message this morning.

And I trust that the Lord will help us in a short time to see something of the significance of this. As we come to this present subject, it will be readily appreciated that we are moving into a different realm altogether. The Spirit's work upon Peter's tongue and personality was largely a matter of controlling and of correcting things that were natural to him.

His natural life, his way of speaking, his way of talking, and then his personality problems, his quick temper, and things like that. It's a matter of controlling and of curbing. But when we come to this, something new is imparted.

Peter is given an understanding that he did not have by nature. What we have here is not a heightening of the natural capacity, but the imparting of a divinely proffered gift. It is an understanding that is imparted by the Spirit so that the whole of Peter's mind is illumined and it's like a flooded room, full with light.

And as himself illumined, he is able to bring light and understanding to the baffled and the bewildered. Now you will remember that Peter had had a little, a little taste of this before. You remember the episode of Caesarea Philippi, Whom do men say that I am? said Jesus.

Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? The replies were given, and then he challenged them, but whom do you say that I am? Peter replied for the rest of them and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now you remember how our Lord then qualified that and explained how Peter was able to say that. Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, he says, Simon son of Jonas, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you.

You didn't get it by dint of your own reasoning processes from within, nor did any human teacher reveal it to you or disclose it to you from without. Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood did not give you that knowledge. Well, where did it come from then? Oh here, but my Father which is in heaven.

Flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father revealed it to you. How was Peter at that point able to recognize Jesus to be the Son of God and the Messiah? For this one reason, the mighty Spirit of God, the hitherto impetuous disciple, was now, and not only impetuous but obtuse, was now able to see that here on the day of Pentecost, this becomes a more or less settled, permanent gift of God in which this man who has been so foolish in many respects becomes wise. He becomes one of the two outstanding leaders of the church and the wisdom that was given him and the understanding that was imparted to him, they were the gift of the Holy Spirit who came into his heart and flooded his life on the day of Pentecost.

Now before I go any further, will you permit me to say something here which I think is very relevant. I want to say just a word about the importance of the mind in Christian experience and in the Christian life. It is evident from Scripture that the whole person is involved in a response to the gospel, the mind, the will, the conscience, the whole heart.

And the same goes for Christian experience generally. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. Well there's nothing else left, is there? However you care to examine human life, there's nothing outside of that.

So what our Lord is saying is this. In our response to the gospel initially and in our response to God daily in Christian living, God requires the whole of us, everything. But what I want to stress now very briefly is this.

It's the importance of the understanding. It's not enough to have an emotional experience. It's not enough to go to meetings that give us kicks.

It's not enough to just feel well or feel happy or feel better. Feelings are always misleading. Our Christian gospel makes its primary appeal to the mind, then via the mind to the conscience, to the will, to the heart, to the whole being.

Now if there was need to substantiate that, you see we've got a Bible, a whole Bible, 66 books. And if God has given us this book, he means us surely to use our minds to read it and to understand it and to obey it. The whole of biblical religion is addressed primarily to the mind, not exclusively.

No, no, no. I certainly am not for one moment thinking of it in terms of an arid intellectualism, not at all. But first of all to the mind, man is a thinking being.

And what a man does not understand, he cannot properly respond to. The mind must be involved. And therefore we must think.

We must read, and we must study what there is to read and to study, and we must come to understand by the grace of God, and then we must respond to the truth. Years ago it was a Princeton professor who said that commitment without reflection is fanaticism in action, whereas reflection without commitment is the paralysis of action. Now I would dare say this morning that very much so-called keen, I put that word keen in inverted commas, keen Christian activity is nothing but unreflecting fanaticism, because it is inspired so often by a mere emotional thrill, and it is unreflective.

It is not thoughtful. It does not know the scriptures of truth. It does not know the will of God.

It is something largely emotional, and therefore fanatical. The mind is only involved in a very secondary way. You know as well as I do that over the last number of years there have been three main movements in the church away from the intellectual element in Christianity.

We've always had ritualism, because there in the medieval church, and you have it showing its head in all kinds of places, even in Protestant churches in the 20th century, there is this love of the ornate, this love of what the eye can see, the sense of beauty. Now God, as we said on a previous occasion, is no patron saint of ugliness. How could he be, having created a world like ours? But ritualism is basically irrational, and where you have the ritual emerging, you have the downgrading of the doctrines of the word and the preaching of the gospel.

I believe that in history that can be substantiated. Where you have ritualism reigning high, you have the proclamation of the gospel, and the ordinance of preaching and of teaching the doctrines and the truths of the gospel downgraded. Then we've had something else in recent times.

We have what we may call social activism. This is the general trend in the ecumenical movement of the world. If you read ecumenical literature, then you will know that this is what the gospel is supposed to be.

It's becoming involved in the social structures. And so the ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches, will back all sorts of groups who are involved in terrorist activities, and especially leftist groups. They believe that the gospel is this.

It's being involved with a downtrodden in all kinds of places. So if you're waging guerrilla warfare in South Africa, riot will support you. Not necessarily in the Soviet Union, but in South Africa anyway.

This is the gospel. This is the good news. Now you see, this is to downgrade the plain doctrines of Scripture.

And not only that, there is also this emphasis upon experience which has come into the church today. Pragmatism, a kind of pragmatism which says, it really doesn't matter what you believe if you've got the experience. Now my friends, that would be all right if it were only the Holy Spirit that is abroad in the world.

But there are evil spirits. And just as in the days of Moses, the magicians of Egypt can produce a counterfeit to the truth, so the evil powers of the twentieth century can produce counterfeits to the real experience. Social activism, ritualism, and this kind of thing--experience or pragmatism in religious affairs--everything must be brought to the bar of truth.

That is the teaching of Scripture. In other words, the test of Christianity is not whether it makes me happy. Is it true? The test of Christianity is this.

Not does it bring about a better social structure. Is it true? If it is true, then even though we suffer politically and socially and economically, it is to be espoused. It is to be proclaimed.

We must die for it if it is true. The test is not, does it give me kicks? Does it make me feel fine? The test is, is it true? Now I want to plead for this this morning. Because you see, we are living in a world when these other things are being emphasized, and therefore it's a problem for parents of children.

What are they going to do? Are they going to emphasize the teaching of Scripture, the grind of learning? Or are they going to feed their children on the bubbles of these superficial things, just send them out for kicks? Ultimately, there is only one answer, and it is this. Christianity requires the mind to be functioning under the illumination of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the truth that God has revealed. Now that brings me then to this.

The Holy Spirit here illumines Peter's understanding, and it was fundamentally because of this that Peter became a leader. Now I'm not, again let me say, I don't mean to minimize anything else that Peter did. He wrote miracles.

He spoke in tongues. But what I do want to say, and you'll forgive me if I say it dogmatically, Peter became the man he became fundamentally because of what the Spirit did for his mind. Everything else is secondary to this.

He was given an understanding. He was given the key to open the doors of the kingdom. His mind was illumined.

He became a man of understanding. And if only we could have more men and women of understanding in the Christian church today, I have no doubt that we would be able to do something that we're certainly not doing in this perverse and wicked age. The Holy Spirit then and an understanding, and especially an understanding of scripture.

Now I can put what I have to say this morning rather simply. The Holy Spirit has come down at Pentecost. You remember that in Jerusalem you have a very remarkable gathering at Pentecost.

They were there from all over the place. You read from verse 9 on to verse 11 where they came from, the Jews coming home. Now these are referred to in this context as the devout.

They were the best kind of Jewish people. But what we have here is the perplexity of those devout people. Faced with the phenomenon of Pentecost, they simply didn't know what it was all about.

Let me read. They were all amazed and perplexed, saying one to another, what does this mean? Now we can not other than concede the religious zeal and enthusiasm of these good people. After all to have come from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and these other places.

To have come to Jerusalem for the feast in order to worship the God of their fathers, you know it was quite a feat. Simply the matter of traveling in these days was not all that easy. There were so many dangers on the road and there was much else that we could talk about if time permitted.

But here they were. What brought them? Oh they've come to worship the God of their fathers. Now you can't deny these people zeal.

Neither indeed can you deny their sincerity. They were worshiping the God of their fathers in the only way they knew. As far as their knowledge went, they were obedient.

And they've been prepared every one of them to pay the price to come right home to the temple and to join the people in accordance with the requirements of scripture at this season of the year. But you see their zeal was not according to knowledge. When God moves and sends forth his spirit on the day of Pentecost, even though the prophets have spoken about it, they didn't know anything about it.

They're out of their element. When the spirit comes down and these men begin to speak in tongues and so forth, you know they just don't know what to make of it. They're like untutored men.

And they have the guidance of the most intelligent Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, but then they know nothing more. It's a new world to them. They're totally perplexed.

These are the words, let me repeat them, they were amazed and perplexed just as others of their of their ilk had been perplexed at the coming of the Son of God, born of the Virgin, conceived of the Holy Ghost. So now 33 years later, these men are completely bewildered by the coming of the Spirit. They're out of their depth.

So then the first thing we have here is the perplexity of the of the devout. We also have the mockery of the others. Verse 13 says, But others, mocking said, these are filled with new wine.

If the devout were amazed and perplexed, these others were abusive and suspicious and spirulous, too arrogant in their traditional stance to concede any virtue to the despised followers of the one that was crucified. They were too blinded by prejudice to recognize the divinest gift when it was given. As incensed and hostile to those disciples as they had been to their master, those who charged Jesus Christ with casting out devils by the prince of devils, now say that men possessed by the Spirit of God are drunk.

You see, they're out of their depth. They just don't understand. They're bewildered.

They can make no sense of it. Now over against all that, over against all that, here is Simon Peter. Here is the man that we are looking at.

Here is the man to whom Jesus said, You shall be Petros. You shall be safer. Here is this man.

And look at the certainty of this now humble follower of his Lord. But Peter standing with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed them. Peter has never done this kind of thing before.

The very fact that he's standing up to address others in public is something big and something new. Standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed them saying, Men of you dear and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you. I'm teaching you.

I'm telling you something. Let this be known to you and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is only the third hour of the day.

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Men and women he says, I can tell you what this is all about. I understand it.

Over against the confessional perplexity of the devout and the recorded mockery of the less devout, this man understands. Good people, may I ask you this morning to which class do you belong? Are there mockers here? I don't suppose. I trust not.

But there are devout here and zealous. Do you understand the scriptures? Do you know the meaning of the Word of God? Is this a familiar territory to you so that it is the key that unravels the mysteries of life? Do you know the Word? Is it a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your going? Or is it something that simply mystifies? That Peter was correct in his understanding of the event of Pentecost is evident. But it's the source of that illumination and understanding that I want to stress this morning.

There are two things I want to say. I will be brief, I promise you. Before the illumination of the Spirit, which we have been speaking, there had to come something else.

The instruction in the scripture. And so this is what I want to mention first. The evident instruction that preceded the Spirit's descent.

Now I can put it to you in a nutshell like this. Before the Spirit came, Peter knew something about Joel. When the Spirit came, the Spirit illumined what Joel had said.

Instruction, illumination. But there was a basis for illumination. Peter was instructed.

Now I go back to something I was trying to say a few moments ago. All the importance of instruction in the scripture. The knowledge of the Word of God, knowing the facts, knowing the details.

They may not be all that significant to us at a certain stage in our lives, but when the Spirit of God comes down, everything will assume a new proportion and we shall understand things differently. Peter was familiar with Joel. He knew that Joel had written his book.

He knew what Joel had written in his book. Without such knowledge, however, the Spirit's work would have been, to say the least, rendered doubly difficult, probably impossible. The Spirit was able to impart to Peter the knowledge.

This is not something that has just happened. This is something that was prophesied. This is something that God promised to his prophets.

And this is the fulfillment of a divine plan and purpose. The evident instruction that preceded the Spirit's descent, but now the equally evident illumination of that instruction. In its effect, I suppose, what happened here to Peter and the rest of them, especially to Peter at this point, is not dissimilar to what happened on the Emmaus road to those two disciples, you remember.

On the first day of the week, the day of resurrection, walking away from the scene where their Lord had been crucified, downcast, and an unknown stranger stole alongside of them and began to walk and ask them questions. Why are you sad? They told him. Do you remember at last he, having listened to their tale of woe, unrecognized as he was, he turns to them and he says, oh foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And later on in the breaking of bread they knew him because their eyes, their understanding was open.

Now here in Acts 2, it is the Spirit who illumines the sacred page and explains to the humble believer how the scriptures that spoke of the coming and the sufferings of Christ also spoke of the coming and of the ministry of the Spirit.

His illumination lit up the sacred page. Now because my time has gone this morning, I want to give you an illustration and with that I'll have to quit. I can put all this I think helpfully in the form of an illustration that at any rate was helpful to me.

I remember hearing of a farmer the other side of the Atlantic who lived in a very dilapidated house and he decided that he must have an entirely new dwelling. Time had come when the old farmhouse must be torn down and a new one built. Now it was in a very remote district.

Electricity had not as yet come to that part but there was talk about power coming that way. So he decided against the advice of the builder, he decided in preparation for a coming day that he would get all the rooms wired for electricity. Builder laughed at him and said all right I'll do it but it's just extra expense and you don't know when they'll come anyway.

But insist he did and he did look a little bit of a fool to everybody else. Every room wired for electricity switches on and everything there but no power. However it was about 18 months later that the power came that way and as the pylons were put up and the wires put in their places.

At long last he only had one thing to do just to link up with power. One blessed day he went to every room of the house and put the switch on. He had light in the breakfast room, he had light in the dining room, he had light in the bedroom, he had light in the kitchen, he had light everywhere.

Light in the attic, light in the basement, light everywhere because he was wired for it. Men and women the illumination of the spirit invariably comes by the word of God in the mind and if it's treasured there from youth and if it is memorized and if it is there and kept being added to as the days go on when the spirit comes there is something to it. Now that's what the bible teaches us.

Have you seen how significant it was when the spirit came upon Peter. The knowledge of the prophet was there already and it came a light, it came a glow, it became meaningful. He was able to teach the teacher same with the apostle Paul.

How could a man like the apostle Paul almost overnight become the man he did become, a teacher, a preacher, a witness, proving that Jesus was Messiah. I'll tell you he was nurtured in the scriptures. He read the parchments, he studied the prophets and the law.

If we feed our young people on little titbits of truth we'll make titbit christians of them. Now we're living in a day and age when really christian parents are faced with a dilemma and we've got to decide whether we're going to do this or that because in the evangelical church today there are places where you simply have titbits of divine truth. Men and women who are going to know the real power of the spirit in action illuminating the mind, transforming the personality, enabling them to serve their day and age must be men who know the truth so that the spirit can illumine the whole, make them a light in their day, cities set upon a hill, the light of which can never never be.

Oh may God grant us so to heed the lesson that not only we ourselves but our children, and I'm specially concerned about the children this morning, our children who are coming behind us being taught in the truth may have the tinder of truth in their soul so that when the fire of the spirit comes there'll be light in

every room. Spirit of God come down, reveal the things of God that the spirit reveals the things of God via the scriptures of God which he has inspired for our profit. The man or the boy or the girl that despises the scriptures will invariably become a man or a woman or a boy or a girl that will be caught in the quagmire of false teaching or a false experience.

This is Peter, never having been in the college. This, says Peter, is that. How do you know it, Peter? By the Holy Ghost.

Let us pray. Oh Heavenly Father, we beseech you thee to write this lesson upon our hearts today for we need it. We do not like the disciplines and the difficulties of the Christian life.

We do not like to think too much. It is too hard. We who can work out our sums in the world find thy words so hard and it's so hard going and all the arteries of the flesh rebel against it.

Give us grace, we pray oh that we who bear thy name under this roof this morning should be a taught people that the spirit may illumine the word and guide us in the truth and in the way of thy will. Hear us now, direct us for the rest of this day that walking in the light of scripture we may live in the power of the spirit. Amen.

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