

James T. Jeremiah
The Character of Simon Peter
May 21, 1992

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

378. One of these days, shortly.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm glad that I have this opportunity to say a few things before commencement because a lot of my friends will be leaving. They'll be going on to serve the Lord out in the field and that's exciting, that's wonderful. That's why we are here, but I also want to tell you, we'll miss you. And in a few days, this place will be vacant and that's when I'm trying to find someplace to go because it is not very lively when you all leave. But I'm greatly encouraged this morning because, though there are many seniors leaving the campus. There are some new prospects right down here and they're going to come one of these days and it won't be long before they'll be here. Time goes on rather fast.

James T. Jeremiah:

I want to bring a message this morning that's been on my heart for several days and I'll never finish it because it could go on and on, but I'll try to stop at an appropriate time. We had one man, come here, one time to speak and he had spoken at one of our fellowship meetings and he bypassed about five terminal points or facilities in his message. I mean, he just saw them and went on. And so I invited him to come and speak in chapel and I'll never forget his response. I said, "Now you can come and speak at Cedarville College Chapel. It's not an annual meeting of the GRBC. You can talk as long as you want to here. I mean, there's no limit. Just keep on going just long as you want to. The students will leave at 9:45, but you can continue talking."

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, he had the last word. He got up and said, "Every place I drove as I came to this chapel today, I saw this sign over and over and over again that said 'Boron, Boron, Boron.'" He got mixed up with a gasoline station, I think. Anyhow, I'll try not to bore on too long. Let's have a word of prayer and then we look into the book. Father, thank you for this day. We're grateful for friends, for their kindness, and for this time today. We pray Lord that you'll help us as we think about our Savior, to realize how wonderful it is to be saved, how glorious it is to be called, for all of us are called to be witnesses. And help us to be obedient and as we think about some of the things of scripture today, may the word of God challenge us in that direction. What we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Have you ever met or known a person who was eager, impulsive, energetic, self-confident, aggressive, daring, unstable, fickle, weak, cowardly. Some of my friends say that sounds like the chancellor... cowardly, fickle. A boy said sounds like a class

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member or one of my faculty members. I knew a person like that when I was a young Christian, I became acquainted with him. His name was Simon Peter. He was all of that. So eager, impulsive, energetic, self-confident, aggressive, daring, unstable, fickle, weak, and cowardly. And yet I find a lot in that man, that helps me to face the problems that I face in life. And if we're honest and read the life of Simon Peter, we'll say, well, we find one man that we can look at. Think of his relationship to Christ that is honorable in many ways, in many of the things he did. Some of the things he did very unwisely, it would seem.

James T. Jeremiah:

One of the things that the Savior, who was constantly dealing with Peter said of Himself, is "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." He said, "I seek not to please Myself but one who sent me into this world." Doing the Father's will was high first place, if you please, on the Savior's agenda. He came in obedience to the father's call and the father's plan and the father's wishes. May I suggest that that should be high on our agenda?

James T. Jeremiah:

Simon Peter had a little problem with that, we're going to discuss in a minute. The most important thing that any of us can ever do as Christians, is to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. Obedient to Him in our family lives. There'd be a lot fewer...a good many less divorces in our nation among Christians if we would commit ourselves to obedience. Finding the will of God and doing it. There wouldn't be so many washouts, failures if high on the agenda of our living was doing the will of God. At the beginning of a series of confrontations and experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ, Simon Peter faced some real challenges.

James T. Jeremiah:

If we read, particularly a verse, in that surrounding text that we're going to use in Matthew. So open your Bibles to Matthew 16. We're going to start there. In verse 24 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Somebody said, deny myself. That means I'll have to give a tithe to the church. I'll have to sacrifice a lot of things for the cause of Christ. No, denying yourself is what it says, self.

James T. Jeremiah:

And that's a lot more costly sometimes than money. Deny yourself. All of us have a problem with it, but all of us need to hear it. In this little verse, the Lord Jesus Christ gives an invitation. If anyone desires to come after Him, let him, let him come. Freely come. Speaking to disciples now, not the sinners, but the disciples. He speaks about an identifying mark. Come after Me and take up his cross. You think about the cross in the New Testament and its emphasis upon the death of Christ and its relationship to the death of the believer in Christ. It's more than a symbol, more than a piece of jewelry, far more than a decoration.

James T. Jeremiah:

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We must submit to Him and be identified with Him when we take a cross, we're saying we're following the Savior and we're going to be obedient. There is an alternative. If you want to save your life, don't do it. If you want to keep your life, do it. And that's more than just eternal life. That's talking, not about eternal life really, but about our living, our psuche, our souls, our lives. Alternatives, wreck your life as a Christian, ignoring what God the Savior says, go your own way, have your own agenda. Let us do what we want to do. No, that's not the way God has it.

James T. Jeremiah:

And then He goes on to tell us that there's a reward, each according to what he has done. I'm glad for the day when there will be a faithful reward for the faithfulness of God's people. We'll stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There will be rewards. Every man shall receive his own reward. Every woman shall receive her own reward. Now, as we think of Peter in this light, we see some very strange and interesting things. As we review Peter's statements, arguments, or antagonism against Christ going to the cross, keep in mind as we think about it, that each of these conversations center in the coming cross in Peter's life. He is living before the cross.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me tell you, if I can briefly, what he did or what I think he did anyway. Peter opposed the will of God. Look at chapters 16:21-23. The word of God says "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed and raised again the third day." That's very interesting because just a few verses before this, Simon Peter makes this great declaration that makes him stand out as a great believer.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" And then they named a prophet and some of the prophets. "But who do you say that I am?" and Peter, the same man we're talking about in this instance said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But now, in this case, we read that Jesus began to show His disciples that He was going to the cross and Peter says, "Never Lord, not You. This shall never happen to You." We read in verse 22. Later on in Acts, we had him doing somewhat the same thing. When the Lord told him to take of the clean things, he would not take of the unclean, not so Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's an interesting thing about that. You may say it not so, Lord, But it doesn't fit. If He's Lord, there is no, not so. If He's Lord, we obey. We take the word at face value. We listen to what He says and do it. And here Simon Peter is opposing it. If any of us ever realized how difficult a burden might be because we are obeying God, we often talk about the troubles we have if we don't, but it can get tough in obedience. It can get difficult. It isn't always easy. Not me, Lord. Why me?

James T. Jeremiah:

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But there may come times in our lives when we'll be facing a cross like Simon Peter did. We don't want the Lord Jesus to go to the cross. Oh no, no cross. And there he stood arguing with the Savior. Opposing the will of God. What was the will of God? The cross. When did Jesus know that was the will of God? He's the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. He came to die for you and for me. He didn't come just to be a good example. He didn't come to just show people how to live. He came that we might have life.

James T. Jeremiah:

And that cross was the will of God. And here Simon Peter say, "Not You Lord, never You." The will of God, my friend, for the Savior, was the cross. Now let's think about it in our regard. Simon Peter didn't have the privileges we have. We have a complete revelation of God's will in His book that he didn't have. He only had the Old Testament, what he was learning along the way. We have the Holy Spirit living in us. The Holy Spirit hadn't come to abide in the believer at this particular time.

James T. Jeremiah:

So let's not criticize him too much until at least we've had an opportunity to see what we do with a cross now. Crucified with Christ. Buried with Christ. Raised with Him. There are strength and power in identification with a cross of Christ. Dead to sin. The law has been fulfilled. The power of Satan has been destroyed. We have all of that. And do we say not so Lord, I don't want a cross. Then again, Peter substituted for the will of God in chapter 17. Go on just a few verses. They speak about His departure, when Moses and Elijah appeared transfigured with a Savior. What were they talking about, these three individuals? They were talking about the Exodus, the departure of the savior. Talking about the cross. Think of it. God brings Moses and Elijah and they appear with the Savior to talk about the cross. Peter seemed to be more concerned about the fulfillment of the promised glory. He was more concerned about having these two men stay.

James T. Jeremiah:

He suggested a tabernacle campaign. Someone preached years ago when tabernacles were used for preaching, on the failure of Simon Peter's tabernacle campaign. And he said let's make three tabernacles. One for the Savior, one for Moses, one for Elijah, let's get rid of this Exodus, this departure, this cross. Going to have them here permanently. What was the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus about anyway? About the kingdom? About the coming day, when He would reign the throne of His father, David. When he would be in control in obvious ways He is still the Lord and running the business, but He'll be the king. The sovereign.

James T. Jeremiah:

Simon Peter wanted to have the kingdom without the cross. He wanted to stop now. And there was a cloud that appeared covering the scene. Why? Well, there may be many reasons. I don't know if we have them all. Maybe we don't have any of them. But one thing that has occurred to me is Simon Peter's big mistake here is he put Jesus Christ on the level with two human beings. And He isn't that. He's more than

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that. The second thing is Christ didn't come to stay on the earth in those days. He came to go to a cross and go to Heaven and then someday return as the King.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, what about us? Like many of us, so many times Peter wanted to have what he thought best, rather than what God commanded. How often we have substituted manmade shelters or tabernacles if you please, for God-ordained plans.

James T. Jeremiah:

We must learn, there can be no crown without a cross. There can be no godly living without difficulty and taking the cross. It's going to be a burden. I hear people say to the unsaved sometimes, get saved and you won't have any problems. I want to tell you, get saved and you will. The difference is you got somebody to see you through them. You got somebody to help you. You got somebody to be there. That's the glorious part of it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Two or three more of these that I want to talk about. Peter questioned the will of God. The will of God was that He was going to the cross. When Judas and his crowd came with the clubs and with the swords, old Simon Peter was ready to do battles for the Lord Jesus Christ again. But that was the will of God. For Him to go to the cross and here he is with the sword. I often think of that. Simon Peter raised up the sword and he struck it down and he meant to cut off a guy's head and all he could hit was the ear. Good thing. The Lord restored the ear.

James T. Jeremiah:

But here is Simon Peter again trying to, somehow, keep the Lord from getting in difficulties, protecting the Lord. He questioned the will of God. "Will you lay down your life for My sake?" the Lord said to him on another occasion. Surely will. Here he is demonstrating what? Probably. But the Lord Jesus said "I could call and there would be twelve legions of angels come to My attention, come to My deliverance," but that's not the will of God. The will of God is the cross.

James T. Jeremiah:

Peter ignored the will of God. This is... I'll have to close with this, there are three or four more of them but you can read it for yourself. Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray and was sorrowful. Even unto death, we read in Matthew 26, 39, and 41, even unto death, "let this cup pass from Me." The cup of sorrow, the cup of taking the sin that you and I deserve and He didn't, and the burden of all of that. And while He is there praying with a broken heart, they all slept. They all slept.

James T. Jeremiah:

"Peter," He said, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" They did not enter into the meaning of the cross. Sleeping. I've seen people sleep in church. I always tell them that it's all right. They got to get something out of the service. They might get

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rest. But sometimes I wonder if the sleeping in church is not an indication of where they've been sleeping, all the time, indifferent. You cannot think of the cross and the price He paid and the agony endured for your sins and mine and sleep. Simon Peter questioned it, ignored it.

James T. Jeremiah:

But he's not the only one. I've been guilty. Probably none of us here in this place can say we have not failed here. In the days ahead, we can have opportunity to take our stand for Christ. We be our attitudes about the cross, about the Savior. As I think about this matter of the cross, I think of a great text in Galatians and that I'm going to use as a closing point. The Lord Jesus Christ died for us. We died with Him, having been crucified with Him. The word of God tells us, as we think about Paul's testimony, we have life, and we have a future.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think that it's important that we look together at Galatians 2:20. Look at it with me. "I have been crucified with Christ," that's past. Let's not forget it. "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me." He's in us. "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, gave Himself for me."

James T. Jeremiah:

We are dead with Christ. Alive with Him as believers. What's that have to do with me, you? You, young people, are going out this summer and you're going to go back home and face some of the old gang you've always faced. You're going to face the same temptations and the same trials and the same difficulties. Unless you realize that you're dead to sin and alive to Christ and walking with Him in obedience. You'll stumble like Peter did and maybe worse. Listen, friend, you can't read the newspaper, watch television, hear the radio without recognizing more and more, this is a corrupt, godless, Christ-rejecting, home-breaking society in which we live. Living it as lights and we can become lights if we go the way of the darkness.

James T. Jeremiah:

We have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, we live. We live by faith in the Son of God. What an opportunity stands before us as we go out from here, in a few days, to go in various parts of the world. To bear witness to a dying society that needs a savior. Not just by preaching it, but by living it, living Him. As we go forth to glorify His name. Put obedience to Christ as the first point in your summer agenda. And go rejoicing and come back victorious in the Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

Father, thank You for Your word. Use it in our hearts. Thank You for this day and for Your goodness to us, in Jesus' name. Amen.