



Four Corrections of Peter

by Brian Parr

*Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace!
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for ceaseless songs of praise.*

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand'ring from the ways of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.*

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.*

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to grieve the One I love;
Yet Thou, Lord, hast deigned to seal it
With Thy Spirit from above.*

*Rescued thus from sin and danger,
Purchased by the Saviour's blood,
May I walk on earth a stranger,
As a son and heir of God.*

R Robinson

Four Corrections of Peter

Matthew 16:21-24; 17:1-5, 8; John 13:6-10; Acts 10:9-16

Introduction

I want to speak this evening, as the Lord may help, about four of the corrections of Peter.

There is no premium on failures but God uses them. He may even allow failure for our education and blessing. He allows it to the great end that Christ might increase with us and we might decrease. We can see in Peter's own experience that, every time he had to be corrected, he comes out of it with a greater appreciation of his Lord and Saviour.

I like Peter, because, like Peter, I have made many mistakes. But I like his enthusiasm, his determination. He fell, but he got up again. He never seemed to mope about things; he got up and went on; he learned the lesson and went on. I think it is a great encouragement to any of us who might get a bit down. When we fail the Lord, we should get up and go on with the Lord. Get back to the Lord, learn the lesson and go on. That is what Peter did, and no doubt that is why his experiences are recorded for us in the scriptures.

The first correction I have read of is in Matthew 16. A most vital lesson to learn is how essential the sufferings of Jesus were if we were to be blessed and God was to secure His eternal purpose. In chapter 17 he had to learn the incomparable greatness of Christ over every other. In John 13 there was a wonderful lesson of true humility. When Peter wrote his first epistle he told the saints to, *"bind on humility towards one another"* (1 Peter 5:5). I think Peter would have been always ready, he would have been the first to wash the saints' feet in the future. And then in Acts 10 Peter learns to regard the work of God in others and he also learns the supremacy of Jesus as Lord of all.

First Correction: the sufferings of Jesus were essential

In Matthew chapter 16, Peter had had a wonderful revelation from the Father but, at this stage, he could not accept putting suffering and glory together. But he learnt to do this! The Lord had spoken of how *"Hades' gates shall not prevail ..."* (verse 18) and that appealed to Peter. I do not know how much he understood it but that represented power - something indestructible - and it appealed to Peter. But suffering did not appeal to him, as it does not appeal to any of us by nature.

It says that Jesus began to say that He would suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and be killed and the third day be raised. On that blessed truth hangs the whole of God's purpose and blessing for mankind, the whole of the eternal day. Someone said, "The cross is the centre of the Christian faith." It is true. It is the basis on which everything has been secured for God.

Peter acted in a self-confident way. He took the Lord to himself and, very presumptuously, began to rebuke Him. One moment he was filled with the greatness of the glory of the Person, exclaiming, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). The next moment, he was taking the Lord Jesus to him and rebuking Him, saying, "*God be favourable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee*" (Matthew 16:22).

Peter did not know the mind of God when he was asking God to be favourable to Jesus. It says in Hebrews, "*it became him*", it became God, "*to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings*" (Hebrews 2:10), if we were to be forgiven. As the hymn says: -

*If sinners ever were to know
The depths of love divine,
All Calv'ry's weakness and its woe,
Blest Saviour, must be Thine.*

I saw a little bookmark the other day. It said, "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven." We say "just forgiven" - but what a wonderful experience it is to know that our sins are all forgiven, every sin from the time we are born until the time we die, every sin forgiven. What a wonderful truth. John says, "*children ... your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*" (1 John 2:12).

I remember visiting a dear old brother who was very ill and often alone studying the scriptures, who shared that scripture with me. "He said it is wonderful that Jesus has a name connected with forgiveness – for His name's sake." Our God is a forgiving God.

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich so free?*

But if ever we were to be forgiven, Jesus had to suffer. The solemnity of the Lord's rebuke to Peter shows on the one hand the seriousness of what Peter had said but, on the other, the all-important truth of the sufferings of Christ. You think of Jesus turning to Peter and saying, "*Get thee behind me, Satan*" (KJV).

You say, He was addressing Satan? He addressed Peter! *“Turning round, he said to Peter, Get away behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men” (Matthew 16:23)*. Who can fathom what Jesus suffered, the necessity of it? John’s gospel stresses it. In speaking of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness he says *“thus **must** the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14)*. There was no other way.

This work was foretold by God through the prophets, through the psalmist. All the deaths in the tabernacle system of offerings were looking forward to that time when Jesus would go forward alone to Calvary’s cross. And there, upon that cross, He would suffer, not only from men but from God. The prophet says, *“and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4, 5)*.

How wonderful but how sobering to stand, as it were, in the presence, in the shadow of the cross and contemplate these holy sufferings. Peter says we were witnesses of His sufferings. They were witnesses of His resurrection. They were witnesses of His glory on the Mount. But they were also witnesses of His sufferings (1 Peter 5:1). They saw Him suffer but no human mind could ever fathom what our Saviour suffered when He was made sin in those three hours of darkness. He was made sin for us, for you and for me.

I want to commend this wonderful lesson to us, that our blessing, our eternal salvation, all the thoughts of God are founded upon the truth that Jesus suffered and died, made atonement and secured an eternal redemption through His blood. Wonderful work! That work is finished. Peter really got the gain of it. You have only to read his writings to find out that Peter really got the gain of what Jesus suffered.

And then Jesus says to His disciples, *“If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24)*. There is not only the suffering connected with the work of Jesus on the cross but, as believers in Jesus, we are called to a pathway of suffering. The first thing Jesus said was, *“let him deny himself”*. Maybe in Peter’s word to Jesus he was not only thinking of Jesus but thinking of himself. We spare ourselves, but He was not spared! God *“has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Romans 8:32)*.

“Let him deny himself”. That is a definite challenge today, dear brethren. I speak to my younger brethren and to us all. There is a definite challenge in this

day of apostasy and public evil to each one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was the challenge of Jesus here, *“If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* Are we prepared, every one of us here today, for the reproach of the Christ? (Hebrews 11:26). Are we prepared to walk apart from this world where our Saviour was crucified, to be true and loyal to Him who is our Saviour and who is the King of kings?

It says in the book of Revelation that a city of the world is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified (see Revelation 11:8). What a challenge! We appreciate, surely, every one of us, a little of what Jesus suffered in order that we might be saved and brought into blessing. Are we prepared, then, to take up the challenge of Jesus as those who would come after Him, to deny ourselves and to take up the cross and to follow Him?

It is the way to glory. You will find in his first epistle that Peter links those two thoughts together. Suffering is the way to glory (see 1 Peter 1:6,7; 4:13). It is the way to blessing. It is the way to happiness. He went this way. He has left us a model, Peter said, that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We have the Lord as our perfect model before us in this way.

We are in the last days and I do not believe there is very much time left.

I was speaking to an old Christian lady in the town the other day and she said, “Every morning I pray and I say, Oh, Lord, hurry up and come soon.” It is wonderful to meet another Christian! The Lord might come today. Who of us knows?

Surely we would not want to be found mixed up with this world, would we, when He comes. Surely we would like to be those who stand by the cross of Jesus. Take up the cross. Take it to school with us. Take it to work with us. Take it to the shops with us. Take up the cross and follow Jesus. Don’t be afraid to stand for Jesus and confess His name. Don’t be afraid of reproach. Think of what it says of Jesus, *“Consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds”* (Hebrews 12:3).

Is there one who is weary? Is there one here in this company today who is fainting? Look unto Jesus, the One who endured such suffering for us. I visited an old lady; she is confined to a wheelchair and she has great pain. She had terrible pain in her arm, but she said, “You know, when I think of Jesus, it is nothing to what He suffered.” I know we cannot compare physical suffering with what Jesus

suffered. But she found comfort and she found relief in her circumstances of suffering and pain by looking off unto Jesus. And we will find that, too.

Second Correction: the glory of Jesus is unique

In chapter 17 there is a wonderful preview of *“the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 1:16) as Peter tells us in his letter. If we are prepared to take up the cross in this world, in our life here, we will love His appearing. There is a day coming when the One who suffered on the cross, suffered such shame and ignominy from men, is going to come in glory. This is just a little picture of it. *“His face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light”*. Matthew speaks to us of *“the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”* (Matthew 24:30).

Think about that. He is not going to come again to suffer. He is going to come again in power and glory. Even in our lifetime there have been men in America and other places who have raised themselves up and said they are the Christ. But Jesus said, *“Go not after them”* (Luke 17:23). *“For as the lightning goes forth from the east and shines to the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man”* (Matthew 24:27). There shall be no mistake when Jesus comes. All will know Him and *“all the tribes of the land will wail because of him”* (Revelation 1:7).

Think of the glory of this scene. And do you know another thing? He has Moses and Elias with him. He is going to have His saints with Him. I think someone said, it was nearly 1500 years since Moses had died and about 900 since Elias had departed, and yet here they are in bodily condition with Jesus on the mountain.

I think that is just to give us a wonderful picture of that day of glory and how the saints will be with Him. Make no mistake, God is going to bring them with Him when He comes in glory, every one of them – that is a comfort to those who have lost loved ones. They are safe. They are in His safekeeping. Moses and Elias are proof of that. He will come out with His saints, *“when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed”* (2 Thessalonians 1:10). What a wonderful day of glory!

And here, in this little preview, Peter unfortunately intrudes, *“let us make here three tabernacles: for thee one, and for Moses one, and one for Elias.”* He was proposing a certain equality. There is no one to compare with Jesus. There is a great trend today to equalise everything, bring everything to one level. Other religions, multifaith in the schools, multifaith religions. I tell you this, you

know, they do not try bringing up the other religions to Christianity – they bring Christianity down to their level. That is what always happens. You could not bring a human religion up to a divine level. It is absolutely impossible!

But Peter tries to bring Jesus down to a human level. Equality? No, Jesus stands out alone and unique. *“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them”,* Moses and Elias, as it were, were gone, *“and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, ... hear him”*. Ah, I think it is wonderful to get this view of the pre-eminent glory of Christ.

In many ways there is a tendency to familiarity and to bring things down to a human level. I am not exactly supporting old-fashioned language, but I am supporting reverence for the holy Person of Christ and a need to remember who He is. Peter says, *“the holy one of God” (John 6:69)*. And think of this voice distinguishing Him, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him.”*

When we have problems, we ring up somebody or call on someone – we like to hear what other people say. But God is saying from heaven, “Hear what My Son has to say.” And it says, *“they saw no one but Jesus alone.”* Would that we might get our vision cleared of every other. There was nothing wrong with Moses, nothing wrong with Elias, but they were not on a level with Christ.

May our hearts be expanded in the glory of the Person, the incomparable greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third Correction: The humble service of Jesus

John chapter 13 is a lovely chapter. It tells us something at the beginning about the love of Jesus, *“having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end” (John 13:1)*. That included Peter, with all his failures, He loved him through them all. Oh, the love that will not let me go! I marvel at it. I have no doubt that most of us here would marvel at the love that has taken us up and will not let us go.

“Having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end.” Did the Lord love Peter when he was denying Him? Yes, He did. Of course, He does not love our sin. But His love for us never wavers. We are loved with an everlasting love. That is what God told His people of old, *“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3)*.

And then it is supper time. I have only just noticed that this was done after the supper. Normally speaking feet washing would be done first. In the house of Simon the Pharisee Jesus said, *“I entered into thy house; thou gavest me not water on my feet ... Thou gavest me not a kiss (Luke 7:44,45),* and so on. The normal thing would have been to wash in order to be free and happy for supper. I know it says here, during supper, but if you read the note it agrees with the Authorised Version which says, after supper. How gracious the Lord was just to wait until the supper was over and then to give this example. I marvel at it.

This is true humility. I feel in the presence of it that I hardly know the meaning of the word. It was true humility that marked the One who came out from God and was going back to God. The One who had appeared in glory with Moses and Elias. He rises from supper and lays aside His garments. Oh, the lowliness of our Saviour!

Jesus comes near to wash Peter's feet now and Peter says, *“Lord, dost thou wash my feet?”* It is a bit like in Chapter 5 of Luke as they are hauling in the multitude of fishes. You could almost picture Peter's mind and heart working underneath. There is something happening, and as Jesus was coming round to Peter you can almost feel Peter's conscience was being pricked. Perhaps he may have been thinking, 'I should have done this.' And he says to Jesus, *“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”* The Lord says, “Well, you do not understand it now but you will afterwards.” Then Peter, as he normally does, goes to the other extreme and says, *“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”*

Now, there is a very vital truth that the Lord brings out here. There are two thoughts in connection with washing. One is connected with conversion. Jesus said of His disciples, *“Ye are already clean by reason of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).* That can be true of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of the gospel that has come to us: through the finished work of Jesus we are clean, altogether suited and fitted for God's presence. As the hymn says,

*“’Tis finished!” Joyous let us sing;
No other hand need aught to bring,
’Tis finished every whit.*

But there is a cleansing, there is a washing that we need every day as we go through a world like this. And that is what Peter was objecting to. He did not understand that he needed to be refreshed and cleansed by this service. As the Scripture says, *“the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26).* It's the importance of giving the scriptures a rightful place in our daily life, the washing

of water by the word.

Someone said, “Read it until you come to Christ and then close your book”. Just to get an impression of Christ, something from God’s word with all its purifying power. Otherwise, you know, we get very dull. If we start giving it up and start slacking, the world gets in and affects our spirits and minds and habits, and we find ourselves drifting away from the Lord. We do not need to look at one another for that. Any of us can fall!

But to Peter here, the Lord says, *“Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me”*. How blessed that is, just to be conscious of the Lord’s personal service to refresh us, to lift us up. Perhaps after a day at home doing the washing and shopping and all those things, or at school or at work we can find the Lord in His restoring grace. Through His word He can lift us up again and give us to enjoy something of His presence - “part with me.” What a privilege that is!

And then He gives His actions as an example. He says, *“ye also ought to wash one another’s feet; for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also”*. We were quoting from Peter’s epistle. I think Peter took that on. *“Bind on humility.”* Bind it on. There was not one disciple with humility bound on in that upper room. But there was the One who was the perfect example, who set out humility, the One who humbled Himself. He is the One who came from the very circumstances and form of Godhead into this world and humbled Himself, made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7).

He did this service: Peter says, *“Bind it on”*. Bind on humility towards one another. How we need that command that the relationships in our local meetings may be kept right!

Fourth Correction – Jesus is Lord of All

In Acts 10 Peter had a most extraordinary experience. We were speaking in John 13 about our need of being washed and cleansed and refreshed. But this passage has to do with the cleansing of others and how we regard them.

Peter had been brought up in a particular religious way and with certain religious ideas, as we all have. There was, as Paul says to the Ephesians, a middle wall of enclosure (Ephesians 2:14) between Jew and Gentile. And it was going to be broken down, an especially big issue for the Jew.

It is wonderful how God works, is it not? Peter goes up on the housetop to

pray. He was hungry. God gives him this remarkable vision. In this vessel ... as a great sheet let down from heaven and held by the four corners Peter saw all these creatures, unclean and clean. That did not go down very well with Peter!

The voice came and said, *“Rise, Peter, slay and eat”*. He would not do that! *“In no wise, Lord”*. He had never eaten anything common or unclean. Then there was the voice the second time - and a third time. I think it was a remarkable experience to hear this voice three times.

God often has to repeat things to us before we learn the lesson. He repeated it for Peter three times: *“What God has cleansed, do not thou make common”*. I just commend it to each of us that we might learn. We should learn to value and appreciate the work of God in every one whom God has cleansed. They are held in the vessel and we are going to be there with them.

A sheet let down is not just a flat thing. It will be down in the middle and held at the four corners. All these creatures were in there at close quarters. We have to get on together! We have to learn to get on together.

All these creatures were there. We all have come from different backgrounds. We all have different make-ups, different education and other differences. But we have one thing in common. We have been cleansed. God has cleansed us. Wonderful!

Peter says to Cornelius, *“It is unlawful for a Jew to be joined or come to one of a strange race.”* Actually the night before they had put up these three men. It was quite remarkable for Jews to put up Gentiles. So Peter was getting very clear in relation to this vision that he had. He put them up, and then they went off to Cornelius.

As Peter preached this wonderful message to them, *“preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all things)”* and so on. *“While Peter was yet speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word.”* Wonderful to see that! I do not think Peter had ever contemplated that Jew and Gentile could be joined.

In Corinthians the Scripture says, *“he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is a wonderful thing to be joined to the Lord. But we are also joined together by the Spirit. *“In the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Here, on this momentous occasion as Peter used the keys and opened up

the door of the kingdom, the way of salvation, to the Gentiles, God moved in His own distinctive and glorious way, loving to pour out His Holy Spirit. Somebody said that God loves to give the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit fell upon them. The word links back with Luke 15. The father *“ran, and fell upon his neck, and covered him with kisses” (Luke 15:20)*. I think that all the love of God for Gentiles, for us, is seen in this wonderful occasion as the Holy Spirit fell upon them and Jew and Gentile became one, one in the Spirit, one in Christ. Wonderful thing! And we are *“all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28)*. I know we have to walk a pathway, separate from evil. That remains. But our regard and love for the people of God wherever they may be, for everyone who has been cleansed by God, should never be less than as a brother or a sister in Christ.

He says, *“he is Lord of all.”* You think of the glory of Jesus. I suppose the apostles had attached Him as Lord to themselves. But Peter says, He is Lord of all, Jew and Gentile, that is what the note says. He is Lord of all. How wonderful to think that there is a day coming when every knee is going to bow to Jesus and every tongue confess Him Lord to God the Father’s glory (Philippians 2:11).

How ready Peter was to embrace the Gentiles. He stayed with them some days. It was not just a quick visit and away, and glad to get away. He stayed there with them some days. What times they would have, Jew and Gentile, to discover what they had in common. There was so much that had held them apart but now they would find and enjoy all that they had in common in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May we be encouraged in these things, dear brethren, to see that out of all the failures and need of correction that we have, we come out of it the richer, with an increased appreciation of the glory of the blessed Lord for His Name’s sake.

Address given by Brian Parr at Hampton
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Scripture quotations are from the Darby translation unless stated

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