

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

WHAT'S IN A NAME

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 16:17

The depravity of the human heart shows itself at an early age as David said, “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*” (Psa 58:3) It is impossible to tell the exact point in a persons life when that corruption is first manifested by outright disobedience, but I can attest that in my own case, no one had to teach me how to be a rebellious sinner or how to disregard those things which I knew to be right.

I can still remember paying little attention to my mother's call to come to her when I was busy doing something that interested me. I knew that I had some leeway when she called me by my first name, and I often paid little heed to her call, even if it was done more than once. But I knew that whenever she called me by my first, middle, and last name all at once, that I could not ignore her anymore lest great wrath should come upon me. This was an effectual call and anytime my whole name was used I understood that whatever was said by her was of the utmost importance.

We get something of this same notion when the LORD addressed Simon Peter as Simon Barjona (i.e. Simon, son of Jonas, see Mark 10:46). Peter had just made a glorious statement of faith, saying “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Mat 16:16) The LORD would point out to him, the very SOURCE of his understanding, and how great a privilege it was to be given such knowledge. HE had told HIS disciples this very truth, earlier, saying, “*But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*” (Mat 13:16-17) HE was here making a particular application of it to Peter as HE addressed him by name in this formal fashion. By reminding him of his fleshly lineage (i.e.; son of Jonas) HE made the contrast of his not having received this knowledge from his earthly parentage but from his “*FATHER which is in heaven.*”

The name which was originally given to Peter by his parents was Simeon (or Simon). Yet the name which was given to him by the LORD was Cephas. “*And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*” (John 1:42) Cephas is an Aramaic word which means “a stone or rock”. Aramaic was likely the the language spoken at that time. The Greek synonym for “Cephas” is “Petros” (or Peter). Thus we read in the scriptures “*And Simon he surnamed Peter.*” (Mar 3:16)

The LORD gave Peter this descriptive name (or nickname) likely, because of Peter's lion-like character, a man not to be trifled with, as we see when he drew his sword when the multitude of soldiers came to arrest the LORD JESUS in the garden. So it is illustrative when the LORD used this name, saying, “*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” (Mat 16:18)

I believe that much error has been promulgated by a misunderstanding and misapplication of what the LORD said to and concerning Peter in relation to the establishment of HIS church.. The LORD did not mean that Peter was the “rock” upon which HE would build HIS church, but HE was rather using Simon's “nickname”, “Peter” as a contrast to the ROCK upon which HIS church is truly built. This is in exact keeping with the same theme that HE set forth when HE taught Peter how it was that he came to know who the LORD JESUS is, “not by flesh and blood”.

Though HE called Simon “the rock”, he is not “THE ROCK” nor the basis upon which the church of JESUS CHRIST shall ever stand. Peter received his standing and understanding from the same SOURCE that every member of HIS body must and shall receive the same: the revelation of who JESUS CHRIST is. As Peter himself testified, “*THOU art the CHRIST the SON of the LIVING GOD.*” Also saying the same in Acts, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12)

So we see Peter addressed formally by the LORD (Simon Barjona) in order to teach him the origin of his faith, and then we see him addressed affectionately by his descriptive nickname (Peter) in order to teach HIM the BASIS upon which the church of CHRIST shall stand forever.. So it is truly amazing when the LORD refers to him by quite another “name”, in order that he might know that the will of GOD must be done in the earth and how that this Kingdom which the LORD JESUS came to establish could not be received by flesh and blood. “*But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*” (Mat 16:23)

It is impossible that man in his natural state could ever grasp the glory of that Kingdom or to enter therein by the will and power of his flesh. Everything about HIS Kingdom is at odds with the natural mind and contrary to human reason. “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*” (Rom 11:33-34) The work which CHRIST must perform cannot be hindered even by the Prince of darkness himself. “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*” (Mat 12:30) Indeed the “*gates of hell*” cannot prevail against that which CHRIST would establish. Thus the LORD would show Peter, that to oppose the work which HE came to perform would be to join with him who was a liar from the beginning. In similar fashion Paul said, “*As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” (Gal 1:9)

There came a day when “*there was also a strife among them,(i.e.; the disciples) which of them should be accounted the greatest.*” (Luke 22:24) I can imagine that Peter (true to his persona) was contending for his own station there. Thus the LORD spoke to him by HIS given name (spoken twice, as a parent might admonish their child) saying, “*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*”(Luke 22:31-32) HE would show Peter that he in reality had no strength at all of his own and would collapse like a two dollar suitcase if the LORD did not sustain him.

Peter, perhaps chafing at being called weak, responded, “*Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*” (Luke 22:33) I think in Peter’s fleshly mind he really meant that he would, yet he had a hard lesson to be learned: that one must not trust in the arm of the flesh. Thus the LORD responded to HIM, calling HIM, Peter, (the Stone); “*I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*” (Luke 22:34)

I imagine that Peter, once again, thought this could not possibly be true, since he felt himself to not only be strong but brave in the face of any adversity. Little did he believe that he would ever deny the LORD, perhaps he thought others might, but, not himself. (see Mark 14:29) Oh how quickly would “the Stone” learn that he was no stone at all, but as weak as any coward who ever lived and failed in the day of testing.

Yet the LORD loved Peter with an everlasting love and in order to teach (i.e.; chasten) Peter wherein his STRENGTH was, HE ordained a fire, a young maiden, and a crowing cock. A mere look from the LORD brought this Stone to tears as the work of GOD was in progress. “*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.---And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*” (Luke 22:61-62)

But this is not the end of the story, for the LORD is never done with those whom HE loves. When the two Marys and Salome went to the tomb they found there a “*young man*” (i.e. an angel or messenger) whom the LORD had given a specific message, “*But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee.*” (Mar 16:7) Thus we see HIS specific affection for Peter completely undimmed by Peter’s failure. HE continues to demonstrate this affection as HE, three times, (again by his whole name: Simon, son of Jonas) encouraged him to confess his love and to feed HIS sheep. HE said that HE would call HIS own sheep by name and thus did HE with Peter. HE knows them that are HIS.