

## "LOOK ON US"

Acts 3:5

These words were spoken by the apostle Peter, and we notice that he could not conscientiously utter them until after Pentecost. As we study the life and characteristics of this man we cannot help observing the great transformation that came over him after he became filled with the Holy Ghost. Let's look into his life before Pentecost. We find him to be an individual that was spasmodic, impulsive, unsettled and quick tempered.

Peter was not dependable. One minute he would confess Christ and the next he would deny Him. Matt. 16, 16:23. Thus he received the blessing and rebuke from Christ, respectively. Even after this failure Christ gave Peter a wonderful privilege and blessing on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was humbled there with Jesus and John, for a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him," and they fell on their faces and were afraid. This was a sacred privilege, such that Peter was loath to leave the place, and yet all this was before he received his pentecostal experience.

We learn this disciple was self-confident, and so sure he could keep true. When Jesus said that all of them would be offended that night because of Him, Peter speaks up and says, "Tho' all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Jesus then declared to him that before the cock crow he would deny Him thrice. The disciple contradicted this statement with a stronger declaration, saying, "Tho I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." Time proved Jesus' statement to be true. It was during Christ's sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane, that Peter began to weaken. He, with the other disciples were sleeping just when Jesus needed them most. He warned Peter then to "watch and pray lest he enter into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus understood this disciple's weak points.

Again we notice Peter had a carnal temper before he was filled with the Holy Ghost. How do we know? What about the incident when Christ's enemies came to take Jesus to crucify Him? One could not blame Peter for feeling some righteous indignation in beholding such manifestations of deceit, hypocrisy and betrayal on behalf of Judas, when they took away his beloved Lord. But he displayed a spirit of carnal anger rather than righteous indignation. He actually drew his sword and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant. Impulsive Peter! Again Jesus rebuked him. So many people live in this place that in a time of crisis, even when God's cause is at stake, they commit such impulsive acts which expose carnal anger rather than "so called" righteous indignation. And they, like Peter, even tho' penitent of the deed, are unable to make amends as he was unable to replace the servant's ear. The act was done! And someone had to wear the scars, the life-long scars. Then we remember how gradually Peter began to lose interest and "follows afar off," during Jesus' trial, just the time when He needed "stand bys." As Christ prophesied, he denied Him thrice before the cock crew. This is characteristic of a back-slider's trend. They usually follow afar off, get in the wrong company, and this is followed by a denial, either by word or deed, or even silence, which betrays their insincerity. After the denial, Peter "wept bitterly," just like many back-sliders do.

We notice with interest how Jesus tests this disciple's love. Twice He asked, "Lovest thou me?", thirdly with, "Feed my sheep." Now the

word "these" has a practical application to Christ followers. It may mean money, ambitions, pastimes, friends, and so many things. Do we love Christ more than "these"? We must prove it by doing what we can to feed His lambs and sheep.

These records satisfy us in the belief that Peter was "up and down," in his experience. Now it was after all this that "the day of Pentecost had fully come." Acts 2, and Peter "happened to be" assembled with those of one accord, and praise the Lord, he got the blessing! How thankful he must have been that he wasn't wandering "afar off" this time, and missed it all.

The following records in Acts 3, reveal to us the wonderful transformation in Peter after Pentecost. No doubt those that did business with him and those with whom he lived, especially his wife, appreciated the change. Now he could afford to say, "Look on us." He was now working in unity with one of the disciples of whom formerly he had been "just a little" jealous. St. Jn. 21; 21:22.

The scripture Acts 3 and 4 express his consecration, "Such as I have I give," also his humility, for he wished God to get all the glory and we see the people *then* took knowledge that "he had been with Jesus." They saw the evidence, the fruit. Like so many onlookers, as much as they wished to, they could not deny it.

Peter now possesses a holy boldness and determines to obey God rather than man. Can this be the same Peter that previously had denied his Lord before a little maid? Now he, with John, goes to his own company and we further notice that "his own company" must have been spiritual people for when they heard the good report they lifted up their voices with one accord and praised God!

In reading Peter's Epistles, we get an insight of his life after Pentecost. Tho' saved and sanctified he still had trials, temptations, etc., but since he was then established and settled, he had victory over such. It should encourage us to know that God's Holy Spirit indwelling in such individuals as Peter, can refine, establish and settle so that they become new creatures in Christ Jesus. We pray that we may see more manifestations of the workings of God's Holy Spirit in our midst.

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## SEVEN MARKS OF SURPASSING GREATNESS

E. H. Cook

"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord." Luke 1:15.

We may easily form a wrong conception as to what constitutes real greatness. The world frequently honors characters as great on account of their wealth, their exalted position, their superior intelligence, etc., but "that which is highly esteemed among men" may often be "an abomination in God's sight." And certain characters that are highly honored of God, are often despised by the world. The Jewish leaders said of John the Baptist, "He hath a devil." But out of earth's teeming millions, during all the passing centuries, Jesus said: "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Here is the testimony of One who "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

Such a remarkable statement leads us to earnestly inquire and diligently search to discover if possible some of the outstanding qualities that mark the greatness of John's character.

1. He was favored with godly parents. How much we owe to good blood, good discipline, holy environments and godly influences.

2. He was intensely spiritual. He is the only Bible character who was "filled with the Holy

Ghost from his mother's womb." This gracious filling of the Holy Spirit was the underlying cause of his greatness as a prophet. It is our privilege not only to be born of the Spirit, but to be "filled with the Spirit." And the baptism of the Spirit qualifies for successful service in the kingdom of God as nothing else can. The Holy Spirit increases our usefulness. He multiplies our peace and joy. He gives us the sweetness and tenderness of perfect love. He reveals Christ to us in all of his loveliness and makes us effectual witnesses for him.

3. John was great because of the position he occupied as the forerunner of Christ. He was sent to "prepare the way of the Lord." This accounts for his unusual baptism of the Spirit at his birth. Israel had long been without a recognized prophet. John broke the silence of four hundred years. He went before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah" and was at least, the primary fulfillment of the prophecy in Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 17:10-13.

God, who so carefully prepared the way for the Lord's first coming, will be none the less thoughtful and careful to make every possible preparation for the Lord's second coming. Three things especially will be ripe for his coming: (1) The Church will be ripe and ready for glorification. A period of unparalleled tribulation will have the effect, by grace, of driving the Church closer to God in earnest prayer and consecration. It will cement the members closer together; and weed out of the professing Church many that are unfaithful. (Matt. 24:29). (2) Israel as a nation will be in a position to accept the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. George Muller says: "In the scripture the glory and resurrection of the Church of the first born ones is always connected with the time when Israel (who will have returned to their own land in unbelief) shall know the Lord." During the great day of God's wrath, in the form of seven trumpets, or vials, covering a period of three and one-half years, Israel will represent Christ and his gospel here upon earth, in the absence of the Church, which is raptured at the opening of the sixth seal. Israel at this time is favored with two great outstanding prophets. (Rev. 11:3). (3) The entire antichristian world, including the Great Harlot and the Antichrist, will be ripe for judgment, which is poured out in the form of seven trumpets, or vials. "Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." Christ reaps the Church which is ripe for glorification; (Rev. 14:16 with Mark 4:26-29) and it is Christ who commands the angel to cast his "sickle into the earth and gather the vintage of the earth" and cast it into "the Great Winepress, of the wrath of God."

4. John was a great preacher and soul winner. Great multitudes came to hear him, including King Herod. Such glory and supernatural power rested upon him that many supposed he was the long-looked-for Messiah. He bore such unmistakable evidence of being a godly prophet that the Jewish leaders were afraid to speak against him for fear of being stoned by the people. John was not only a mighty preacher, he was a great soul winner. Great multitudes were turned "to the Lord their God."

5. John possessed remarkable courage. He looked upon the great surging multitudes that came to hear him and saw among them many who were vile and corrupt. They were ready to submit to the outward ceremony of water baptism, without bringing forth the fruits of repentance. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring

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