

# The Better Way

Volume XXXIX, Issue 44

October 27, 2024

## SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

Physical Address:  
1327 Spring Cypress Rd.  
Spring, TX 77373

Mailing Address:  
25403 Lancewood Dr.  
Spring, TX 77373

Office: 281-353-2707

springcoc@gmail.com  
www.churchesofchrist.com

### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

#### SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.  
Worship.....10:00 a.m.  
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

#### WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.  
(via Zoom Meetings)

#### ELDERS

David P. Brown  
Ken Cohn  
John West

#### DEACONS

Bret Bailey  
J. D. Gunter  
Eric Paluka

#### EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

#### SECRETARY

Sonya West

## PETER, THE MAN OF ROCK

*J.A. McNutt*

Our text is found in Matthew 16:13-20, which reads as follows:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked, his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

One of the most interesting and personal ways to study the Bible is to study the actual characters around which the major events and vital teachings of God's word are clustered. Acquire a "speaking acquaintance" with the principal characters of the Bible, and you are certain to have a working knowledge of the fundamental truths of God's book. The Bible was written for men not angels, so you will learn that the characters of the Bible have much in common with men and women of the present day. Some are bold and courageous, some are weak and deceitful, a few are abject failures, but the most of them are towers of strength in God's cause.

### CEPHAS, THE MAN OF ROCK

The apostle Peter, among all the great characters of the New Testament is the most intensely human. Jesus called him "Cephas," or a rock; but the early record of his life he was often impulsive, rash, and subject to the common weaknesses of men today. He was quick to speak, and quite often he said the wrong thing. His temper flared up and cause him to draw his sword and strike the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear—and Peter was not aiming at his ear, either.

Since Simon Peter was warmhearted, impulsive, and subject to mistakes, why is he called a "rock"? There must be a reason for this, because "when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42). The Lord, who knew the hearts of all men, knew that, in spite of his weakness, the fires of love and loyalty burned with fervor in his heart. The Lord knew that he might waver and fall, and in a moment doubt, sin beneath the waves, but that he would rise from sorrow and defeat a stronger and wiser man.

“But noble souls, through dust and heat,  
Rise from disaster and defeat  
The stronger  
And, conscious still of the divine  
Within them, lie on the earth supine  
No longer.”

### **PETER WAS A BUSY MAN WHEN THE LORD CALLED HIM**

Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee when He saw the two brothers, Peter and Andrew, casting their net in the sea. They were both busy men, engaged in their daily occupation as fishermen, when the Lord said: **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”** (Mat. 4:19). A man who is slothful in his own business is never worth much in the Lord’s business. Christ called him from a lowly occupation to a much greater one, which involved the salvation of the souls of men. Peter was busy, but he was not too busy to obey the Lord, because he left his nets by the sea to follow the Christ and become a “fisher of men.” He left all behind to become a disciple of the greatest teacher of all the ages. It was his privilege to hear the words of wisdom from the lips of Jesus and see the mighty miracles that He wrought until it became a strong conviction of his heart that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Now let us consider—

### **THE GREAT CONFESSION THAT PETER MADE**

The reputation that Jesus had established among men caused the world to say: “He is John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or at least *one* of the prophets.” But when he addressed His apostles, saying, **“Whom say ye that I am?”** Peter answered and said, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Simon’s reply came quickly, but it came from *his* heart. There was no hesitation, there was no evasion, but the sincere expression of the deep-seated conviction which was *in* his heart, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”**; and **“Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”** (Mat. 16:17). Jesus did not say, “Thou art Peter, and upon thee. I will build my church”; but he did say, **“Upon *this* rock I will build my church.”** That is, the church will be built upon “Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,” as he had just been acknowledged by Peter. Peter was not the great foundation stone *himself*, because he ascribes

that honor unto Christ *in* his own words, calling Jesus the **“living stone”** and **“chief corner stone, elect, precious,”** and speaking of all Christians as “lively stones” in God’s spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:3-6).

Peter was only one of the builders of the church of God, along with Paul and other apostles. Here is how Paul speaks of the matter:

**According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ** (1 Cor. 3:10,11).

Therefore, the words of Christ to Peter in Matthew 16 did not exalt him to supreme authority above all the other apostles; neither is it said here or anywhere else in the Bible that Peter should have a line of infallible successors in office, acting as heads of the Lord’s church.

### **PETER’S POWER TO BIND AND LOOSE**

Someone may say: “I know Peter had supremacy over all the other apostles, because he was given the keys of the kingdom and the power to bind and loose.” This statement looks plausible at first, but let us give it careful thought before we jump at conclusions. Did the words of Peter ever carry any more weight than those of the other apostles, who also spoke by the authority of the Spirit? Were his actions infallible and above error on religious questions? Did he declare some things lawful and others unlawful with an authority superior to all the other apostles? Did the other apostles and the church appeal to his infallible (?) judgment on controverted questions? Now for the Bible answer to these questions: If you will turn to Acts 15, you will find that if the great discussion in Jerusalem by the apostles and elders, over the question of circumcision, the advice of *James*, and not that of *Peter*, was followed. Furthermore, you will learn that it was James who made the closing speech and announced the decision, and not Peter (Acts 15:13, 19).

Open your Bible again at Galatians 2:11:

**But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.**

Then Paul says again in verse 14 that he rebuked Peter before all the disciples. Draw

your own conclusions, but this does not look like Peter was an infallible potentate, does it?

The fact is that whatever Peter taught by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was, and is, binding today upon all men. But the same thing is true of that which was taught by all of the apostles, because the authority to bind and loose was given to all the apostles alike (Mat. 18:18). Get your Bibles and read it for yourselves.

Peter enjoyed priority, but not supremacy, in the use of the keys of the kingdom, because he was first to preach the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2), and from his lips came the first sermon to the Gentiles (Acts 10). Peter then opened the door of faith to the whole world by declaring the terms of entrance to the kingdom, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Therefore, when Peter said on the day of Pentecost, **“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 2:38), repentance and baptism for the remission of sins were made binding by the authority of God in heaven. No one, then, not even an angel from heaven, has the right to set these conditions aside (Gal. 1:8, 9).

#### WHY DID PETER DENY HIS LORD?

No doubt Peter was sincere when he said: **“Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee”** (Mat. 26:35). He had no intention of failing his Lord in the crucial hour, but he overestimated his own strength—a thing that Christians today should be careful to avoid. Peter needed the counsel of 1 Corinthians 10:12: **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”** Briefly stated, here are some of the faults that led to his humiliating downfall:

He was too sure of himself (Mat. 26:33). He followed afar off (verse 58).

He was too impetuous (John 18:10, 11). He got in bad company (verse 18.)

His denial of the Lord was shameful and complete, but be it said to Peter’s credit that his repentance was genuine, the product of godly sorrow and bitter tears.

He weeps, and bitter are his tears,  
As bitter as his words were base,  
As urgent as the sudden fears  
Which even love refused to face.

O love, so false and yet so true;  
O love, so eager, yet so weak,  
In these sad waters born anew  
Thy tongue shall yet in triumph speak.

Thou livest, and the boaster dies,  
Dies with the night that wrought his shame;  
Thou livest, and these tears baptize—  
Simon, now Peter is thy name.

#### HOW DID PETER MAKE AMENDS FOR HIS MISTAKE?

Peter, who denied his Master in shame and disgrace and fell, rose in tears of repentance to the heights of faith and courage. That night the boaster died, rashness was subdued, and Peter became a stronger and braver man. Follow his life’s record of service and, sacrifice for the cause of Christ; hear his humble professions of love for the Lord; read his letters of instruction to the children of God, and you will rejoice in the victory that this great man won over self and sin.~

*Deceased*

## WHAT JEHOVAH REQUIRES

*Frank L. Cox*

**Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what Jehovah requires of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?** (Mic. 6:6-8; ASV).

That the Lord requires something of His people is plainly taught in the Bible. When we come before Him, what shall we bring? On what condition will He accept us? “How can man be just with God?” is an ever-recurring question, pressing upon people of every age of the world’s history. In the passage before us, written by a prophet of the Lord, we have man’s earnest question and the Lord’s simple reply.

#### MAN’S EARNEST QUESTION

**“Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God?”** Convicted by the prophet’s previous warnings and appeals, the people inquired how the Lord may be appeased. (1) *With rites or external forms?* **“With burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?...”** Men naturally cling first to outward forms, trusting in the customary rites to heal the wounds of the soul. They are liberal in their offerings, and ready to sacrifice anything for ease of conscience. But we are reminded that

the blood of animals cannot take away sin. (2) *With human sacrifice?* **“Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”** Heathen nations have “burnt their children in the fire” (2 Kin. 17:31). Feeling their unworthiness and the weight of guilt, they have been driven to desperation, and sought to appease divine anger by their own inventions. Neither a spotless beast nor human blood can make men acceptable to God.

### GOD’S SIMPLE REPLY

**“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.”** In His revealed will, He has given the requirement. In the Bible and the Bible alone we have God’s reply to man’s earnest question. Without the Sacred Volume, man would indeed be in the dark. The world by its wisdom knew not God. The light of nature is dim. In the words of the passage before us, three things are specified, namely: (1) **“To do justly.”** Injustice and oppression are destroyed by the teaching of God’s word. In all our dealings with men, the law of justice should prevail (Mat. 7:12). (2) **“To love kindness.”** Kindness is the element that gives more than justice requires. Kindness is the warmth added to justice. Kindness is manifested in three ways: *in forgiveness* (Eph. 4:32); *in deeds of helpfulness* (Luke 10:36, 37); *in mildness of judgment* (Mat. 7:1). In the element of kindness, we should rejoice (Luke 6:36). (3) **“And to walk humbly with God.”** The first two requirements have to do with the human relationship, the third with the divine. **“We walk by faith, not by sight”** (2 Cor. 5:7). When we walk by faith, doing what the Lord tells us—no more and no less—we walk with God (Gen. 5:24).

In the life we now live, various requirements are made of us. Some are made by our fellowmen. Some are made by ourselves, i.e., we demand certain things of ourselves. But the important requirement is the threefold one that God makes—*to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.* This, my brother, is the essence of man’s duty. Unto this noble purpose, let us dedicate our lives.~

*Deceased*

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Today:** Monthly meal and afternoon singing service
- **This Tuesday, October 29th:** Ladies’ Bible Class (last one for this year)

## THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024

<b>Announcements</b>	Bret Bailey
<b>Scripture Reading</b>	Andrew Paluka <i>Genesis 1:24-31</i>
<b>Song Leader</b>	Jonathan West
<b>Prayer</b>	David Brown/John West (AM) Zack Nero/Steven Johnson (PM)
<b>Speaker</b>	Eric Paluka
	<b>Lord’s Table (AM)</b> <i>(Luke 23:32-38)</i>
Stephen Cohn	Eric Paluka
Bret Bailey	J.D. Gunter
	<b>Lord’s Table (PM)</b>
Steven Johnson	Andrew Paluka
<b>Audio/Video Monitor</b>	Jonathan West
<b>Camera/Door Monitor</b>	J.D. Gunter

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2024

*(via Zoom Meetings)*

<b>Announcements</b>	J.D. Gunter
<b>Speaker</b>	Eric Paluka
<b>Bible Class Teacher</b>	David Brown

### FOR OCTOBER

<b>Prepare Communion</b>	Bailey
<b>Lock Buildings</b>	Gunter
<b>Prepare Bulletin Board</b>	Mercier/Ferguson

## IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Tania Turcios, Gayle Barnett, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Robbie Kirby, Edith Young, Zack Nero, April McCain, Debbie Brannon, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Charles & Ann Nero, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

## TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

What was the Septuagint?

**Answer to last week’s question:**

Jews who lived among the Gentiles and spoke their language; Acts 6:1