

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

"I Denied My Lord Thrice"

by **Simon Peter**

"My name is Simon Peter. It is my desire to tell you of my experience with JESUS in the hope that you will find in Him what I have found in Him.

"I was born in the Province of Galilee in the country of Palestine. My father was a fisherman. As a young lad I looked forward to the time that I would have my own boat and nets. I was more anxious to fish than to learn letters from the Rabbi. My brother Andrew shared the same ambition and by hard work we bought our own boat and nets. We formed a partnership with James and John the sons of Zebedee, who was a friend of my father. They, too, owned a boat and many a day we toiled with our nets in the sea of Galilee.

"Along with Andrew my brother and my two friends, James and John, I attended the synagogue. Here we learned about the Messiah. The Rabbi used to get very excited when he spoke about the coming of the Messiah. You see, our country was under the control of the Romans. We hated them. They taxed us to death. We all longed for deliverance. The Rabbi felt that deliverance would come only through the Messiah. He spoke of Him as a great King like unto David. The Messiah would establish a great Kingdom and we Jews would rule over all the nations of the world.

"Often my brother, my two friends, and I would talk about this as we fished on the sea of Galilee or when we mended our nets. By this do not get the idea that I was very religious or good. I was a rough lad and would often make the air blue with my cursing. My father often rebuked me and told me that I was breaking the law of GOD. But I kept on cursing.

"One day we heard about a man by the name of John. He was called John the Baptist. Some felt that he was the Messiah. We heard that thousands went out into the desert to hear him preach. And that was true. During the slack season we went out to hear him. Did he give us a scorching message! He told us of the wrath of GOD and urged us to repent. I felt terrible because I knew that I had broken the laws of GOD. We heard him a number of times. But he told us that he was

not the Messiah. GOD had sent him to prepare the way of the Messiah. Andrew was so taken up with John the Baptist that he became one of his disciples. But I went back to my nets. After all, one of us had to earn a living.

"One day while I was fishing Andrew called me with great excitement. He said; 'We have found the Messiah; we have found the Messiah!' I became excited also and left my nets. On the way to where this man was lodging Andrew told me what had happened. As he and another disciple were standing with John the Baptist a man by the name of JESUS approached. Suddenly John the Baptist cried out: '**Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.**' Andrew then told me how they followed this JESUS and spoke to Him. 'And I felt that I had to tell you about Him: said Andrew. 'For He is the Messiah.'

"I felt very strange when Andrew introduced me to JESUS. His eyes seemed to gaze right into my soul and I was ashamed of what He could see there. But graciously He said: '**Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas.**' Cephas is the Hebrew for the Greek word Peter. It means a '*little stone*.' I learned many times that I did not deserve this name.

"After remaining with JESUS for a few days Andrew and I went back to our nets. One day while the four of us were washing our nets JESUS approached us. He asked us if He could stand in my boat so that He could teach the multitude that followed Him. After He finished speaking He directed us to launch out and cast our nets. I protested: '**Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.**' I felt it was foolish but I did it to please Him. Suddenly we knew that we had a great catch. There were so many fish that the net began to break. We called James and John to help us. Both of our boats were so loaded that they began to sink. I realized that we were in the presence of One who could perform miracles. I felt so sinful that I fell on my knees before Him and cried out: '**Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**' Graciously He said: '**Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**' From that day Andrew and I, along with James and John, left our nets and followed Him.

"I wish that I had time to tell you all that JESUS spoke and did. His teachings thrilled us. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and cleansed lepers. It mattered not to Him who a person was or how dreadful his disease. He helped him. He had love and compassion for all. Let me tell you of one incident.

"A certain ruler came and worshipped JESUS and said, '**My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.**' When we arrived at the house of Jairus we found the house full of people. They were weeping and wailing. The noise they made was terrific. JESUS said to the noisy crowd: '**Give place; for the maid is not dead but sleepeth.**' How they laughed Him to scorn and ridiculed Him. It made my blood boil. But JESUS took James, John and myself into the room where the young girl was. He put forth His hand and raised her. When the crowd saw the little girl alive they looked foolish, let me tell you. I was tempted to make fun of them, but I knew the Master would not approve.

"I was thrilled to be chosen along with eleven others to be apostles of our Lord. Among the other eleven were Andrew, James and John. Whereas before we were partners in the catching of fish now we were partners in catching men. Soon after, our Lord sent us on a preaching mission. We were to preach that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Also we were to heal the sick, cleanse

the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. It was a wonderful experience to see the power of GOD working in the lives of others. We called upon all to repent of their sins.

"Sometime afterwards we were at Caesarea Philippi. There our Lord asked us: **'Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?'** We told Him that some said He was Elijah; others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He was disappointed with these answers. He turned to us and asked; **'But whom say ye that I am?'** For some time I had become convinced within my heart that JESUS was truly the Messiah and under the inspiration of the Spirit of GOD I was led to reply: **'Thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.'** JESUS graciously said to me: **'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: 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 are 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 Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.'**

"I must confess that I felt proud when our Lord said that. Evidently I was destined to take a big part in the Kingdom. But my Lord soon humbled me. JESUS began to tell what seemed very strange to us. He said that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, the chief priests and scribes. He said that He would be killed and be raised again the third day. This annoyed and irritated me. How could they kill Him who was able to raise the dead? And if they killed Him how could He establish the Kingdom? The more I thought about this the more indignant I got. So I turned and rebuked the Lord for having such thoughts. But the Lord rebuked me and said: **'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'**

"How that humbled me! Here I had exalted myself. Did not JESUS call me a stone and give me the keys of the Kingdom! But now He called me an offense and even Satan. I know now why He called me Satan. Satan wanted to tempt JESUS to establish a Kingdom without the cross. I spoke in ignorance and was justly rebuked and humbled.

"Six days later JESUS took James, John and myself up into a high mountain. While JESUS was praying we were startled to see Him transfigured before us. His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light. And behold we saw two men speaking with JESUS. They were Moses and Elijah. Strangely, they were speaking of the coming death of JESUS - of His crucifixion. We scarcely knew what to think or say and I blurted out: **'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tents; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'** I wanted to stay on the Mount forever. But while I was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed us and we heard a voice out of the cloud: **'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'** It was the voice of the living GOD. Fear struck our hearts and trembling we fell to the ground. And while we were stretched out on the ground just frozen with fear JESUS touched us and said, **'Arise and be not afraid.'** When we raised our eyes we saw no one but JESUS. And JESUS said: **'Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead.'**

"In that high mountain we saw the wondrous glory of our Lord and knew that He was the very Son of GOD. In the light of His glory this action seemed very strange to me. It was just before the feast of the Passover. After the supper ended, JESUS laid aside His outer garments and

girded Himself with a towel. He poured water in a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and wipe them with His towel. Why the others permitted Him to do so I do not know. When He came to me, I said, **'Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?'** JESUS answered, **'What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter.'** I was not satisfied with that answer and said: **'Thou shalt never wash my feet.'** JESUS answered, **'If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.'** No part with CHRIST, my Lord! I could not stand that so I blurted out: **'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.'** But JESUS said, **'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'** It was through this we learned that the greatest in the kingdom was he that was most humble and serving.

"It was after the Passover Supper that JESUS told us again that He was to suffer a violent death. He said also that we His disciples would flee away from Him and be offended because of Him. Offended at CHRIST! Fleeing from Him! The rest might be cowards but not I. And so I said: **'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.'** JESUS turned to me and said with a voice of sadness. **'Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.'** How could that be! I felt annoyed that the Master thought me a coward so again I said, **'Though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee!'** O that I could have cut my tongue out before making such a boast!

"We approached the garden of Gethsemane and JESUS called James, John and myself into the garden. The face of the Lord changed. He began to look sorrowful and pale like death. He said unto us, **'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.'** We were tired and fell asleep. But just before I fell asleep I heard Him cry out in agony: **'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'** The next thing I remember was JESUS waking us. And He said to me: **'Could you not watch with me one hour?'** That pricked me. I who had bragged so much could not even remain awake when He needed me. He withdrew again to pray. He said the same words. But I could not remain awake. Neither could James and John. He awakened us again. He wanted our companionship. He was as pale as death and under a terrible strain. To my shame I confess that I fell asleep again the third time. He let us sleep for a while and then said, **'Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.'**

"It is hard for me to tell you just what happened after that. Of part of it I am thoroughly ashamed. Judas came with a mob and kissed JESUS as he said, **'Hail, Master.'** As the mob closed in on JESUS, I drew my sword and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear. But again I had done the wrong thing. JESUS said, **'Put up thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'** And then He touched the ear of the wounded man and healed him.

"Then fear entered into my heart and I fled like a coward. But as I ran I thought of my boast that I would die with Him rather than flee. I stopped and I followed from afar off so that they would not see me. They took Him to the palace of the High Priest. John had also followed and because he was known to the High Priest they allowed him to enter. I stood outside of the door trembling like a leaf. John spoke to the servant who kept the door and she let me in. She did not know that I was a disciple of JESUS. But she thought she had seen me with JESUS and she said, **'Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?'** I blustered and said, **'I am not.'** There was a fire in the courtyard. I drew near in order to warm myself. Another one said to me: **'Art thou not also one**

of his disciples?' Again I denied it and said: **'I am not.'** I heard one of them say that he was related to the man whose ear I had cut off. He began looking at me and finally said, **'Did not I see thee in the garden with him?'** I began to curse and though I had not used profanity for three years yet I remembered enough from my fishermen days. My cursing soon convinced them that I was not a follower of CHRIST. Just then I heard the cock crow. At the same time the Lord turned and looked at me with such sadness that I rushed out. I had denied my Lord. And though I am not a man accustomed to weep, I wept bitterly.

"When I was with my Lord in Gethsemane I could not remain awake but now after I had denied my Lord I could not sleep. Again I had failed the Lord. I was a coward. On Friday they crucified the Master. John told me the terrible way they abused the Master. He told me how they scourged Him and crowned Him with thorns. He told me how they nailed Him to the cruel cross. My Master was dead. I could not confess to Him how bitterly I repented my denial.

"Saturday I spent with John. I tried to sleep, I could not. I awakened John early on the first day of the week. I wanted companionship. I understood now why JESUS craved companionship during His agony of soul. Suddenly there was a knocking at the door. It was Mary Magdalene. It was she out of whom the Lord had cast out seven demons. She startled us by saying that an angel had told her and the other women that JESUS had risen. She said that His body was not in the tomb.

"John and I looked at each other with doubt. Had Mary been dreaming? There was only one way to find out. We ran to the tomb. John outran me and reached the tomb first. When I approached he said to me: **'The Lord is not here.'** I entered into the tomb. I found not the body of JESUS. The linen clothes were lying neatly together. The napkin that held His head was lying apart by itself. But JESUS we saw not.

"I left John and went in a different direction to my own dwelling place. Suddenly a voice called me: 'Simon Peter!' It was the Lord. I fell before Him weeping. He knew my sorrow and repentance. He forgave me my sin. He said, **'Peace be unto you.'**

"I returned to the other disciples. Thomas was not with us. The Lord appeared in our midst. Later He appeared when Thomas was with us.

"After these days I said to the others, **'I go a fishing.'** The others came with me. We toiled through the night but caught nothing. As we drew near to the shore we saw a stranger. He cried out to us: **'Children have ye any meat?'** We replied, **'No.'** He said, **'Cast your net on the right side and ye shall find.'** As the net began to fill with fish, John said to me, **'It is the Lord.'**

"I flung myself into the sea and swam to the shore and there was JESUS standing by a fire of coals. I thought of the fire in the courtyard of the High Priest. What a coward I had been to deny my Lord. After we had dined on fish and bread JESUS said to me: **'Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?'** I replied, **'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love thee.'** He said unto me, **'Feed my lambs.'** A second time He said to me, **'Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?'** I replied, **'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'** He said, **'Feed my sheep.'** And a third time He said, **'Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?'** With this third time I wondered whether the Lord disbelieved me. I had denied Him thrice. But I did repent and with sorrow I said **'Lord,**

Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He said, **'Feed my sheep.'**

"Then He told me that the day was coming when I would die for Him. Strange as it might seem the news that I would suffer a violent death brought joy to my heart. It meant that the Lord had fully forgiven me for denying Him thrice. Our Lord is full of mercy and loving kindness.

"On the fortieth day after His resurrection He led us as far as Bethany. He ascended into Heaven. But just before His ascension He said: **'All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And Lo! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen.'** In obedience to His command I do testify to you that JESUS is the CHRIST, the son of the Living GOD. May you experience His pardoning grace even as I experienced it."

~ end of chapter 7 ~
