

The Circuit of Life

I can't help it. I've always been this way. Always talking out of turn in Hebrew class. Always fidgeting in synagogue. "Peter, slow down!" "Peter, don't talk so loudly!" "Peter, don't interrupt." When something grabs me, I just have to do it. I don't know why. Maybe someday someone'll figure out kids like me. Maybe that's why Dad got me out on the fishing boat young. Something to do with my hands. Active work for an active boy. I loved it—sea spray in my face, straining your muscles to haul in huge nets, even the smell of fish. And out on the water—you can be as loud as you want! Heaven, I tell you.

So no one was surprised when Jesus came along and told me to leave everything and follow Him and I just did it. Didn't I say I had a track record for impulsive behavior? They all figured it'd blow over in a week or two. I'd be back, and it'd be another thing the next week. No one ever imagined I'd stick with one thing for three years!

And, just like things come to me that I've gotta do? Sometimes, things come to me that I just know and gotta say. Don't have to think it through, it's just there. I never was much of a scholar. Not that I'm not smart. I really think I am, actually. I just never learned much from books. Boring. I learned by doing things, and saying things till I got them figured out.

I don't know how I knew who Jesus was—I just did. Like that first time when He told us to put the nets out again after we'd caught no fish all night. So we did. And they almost burst apart with all the fish! That impulse in me just said—*get on your face, Peter. This is no ordinary man!* So I did.

Then, on that road, when he asked me who I thought he was, I hadn't really thought of it before. But it popped into my head and it came out—"You are the Messiah—the Son of the living God."

I didn't know what it meant. Obviously, since I blew it right away by saying something dumb. The guys got a laugh when Jesus started making a big deal out of my name—Peter, the Rock. Steadfastness has never been my standout quality.

I did think, I really did believe, I'd die with him like I said. Sure, I said it impulsively, but I was sure I would do it if I had to. I loved him! I believed him! And when I love someone, I throw it in 110 percent. I don't go halfway.

But then they arrested him. What chaos that was! I couldn't help myself—I felt so angry, so scared. I pulled my sword and charged to the rescue! Good thing I'm a fisherman and not a soldier, cause my aim's not so good when I'm excited. I only got someone's ear. Then Jesus told me to stop, that that wasn't the way, and somehow in my insanity he got through. As quickly as I started, I fell apart. I . . . I just deflated.

Then they took him away, and I followed. I could still do something, I was sure. Except when people started asking me around the fire—"Weren't you with that man Jesus?"—you guessed it. Impulse again. "No way!" I yelled, before I could stop myself. "I don't know him."

"I'd go anywhere for you, Jesus! I'd die for you!" Right! I couldn't even go three steps down the road without messing something up!

I ran out of there. I didn't know where I was running. I couldn't see. I just ran. Ran from, not to. It was a good thing the rest of the guys found me that night. I don't know what I might have done alone. None of us was in such good shape, so we stayed together. Comfort in knowing you're not the only one who blew it and doesn't know which way is up. But I wouldn't talk to anyone. Wouldn't get up. I just lay there, not moving, not talking, for probably the longest stretch in my whole life.

What now? What about all my great promises? All those claims to be something? Something I guess I'm not. I'm not anything. Just stupid, impulsive Peter. Just the guy who can't stick to anything, like everyone always said. Peter, who jumps from one thing to another, never finishing anything. Peter the loser, just like they told me when I was a kid. Now it's official. I can't even keep a promise, let alone be a Rock.

I thought . . . I really thought he might change me. I got told all my life to be what I wasn't—slow, steady, thoughtful. But Jesus, Jesus seemed like he always wanted to tell me what I *was*. Or what I could be. I started to believe. To really believe . . . that maybe it was OK to be the way I am. Maybe God could use a live wire in His big circuit of life.

And now, I've just blown the fuse. Again. Like always. And I just . . . can't . . . ever . . . fix it. God, why tempt me with making me think you could really use me? Why make me believe I could change? Why even get me off that fishing boat if it was all going to end worse than where I started?

Jesus, I know you can't hear me. I know it doesn't make any difference. But I really, really, wanted to be your Rock. No one else ever made me believe it was possible. But, I can't do anything now, without you. I can't be the me you wanted alone. But I really wanted to be.

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