

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

“Thou art Simon, son of John, thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation Peter - a stone or rock) - John 1:42.

In modern parlance: You ARE = You SHALL BE. The ACTUAL and the POSSIBLE. Realism and Idealism! What is and what ought to be. Jesus looked at Simon and read him to the depths of his being. He saw his hot and hasty nature. He saw that impulse was strong and energy boundless. But he saw also a selfishness and a jealousy that would consume and almost destroy him.

But despite the drawbacks the all knowing, all seeing Master confidently continued: You will become Peter – a man of rock! The statement contained no qualifications, no doubts – YOU SHALL BE.

Simon – rash, presumptuous, self confident, jealous.

Peter – faithful, obedient, courageous, fisher of men, mighty Apostle.

One day to be fully converted to strengthen his brethren and be a pillar in the church of the living God.

The lessons for today, to the young in particular, and thankfully to the more mature, are obvious. This is all about the saving of the whole man! The saving of the soul or life came as a shock to Peter in the telling episode at Caesarea Philippi:

whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul (life)” Matthew 16:25-26.

This message was not primarily meant for the unconverted! It was very much directed to disciples and in particular to Simon Peter, who in his letters has a lot to say about ‘the saving of the soul. For example, referring to his Lord he said:

“whom having not seen ye love; on whom thou now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls (lives)” 1 Peter 1:8-9.

In this sense the salvation of the soul is the ART OF THE POSSIBLE. Whatever

views we have about ourselves or whatever grasp we have of God's purposes for our lives, He is capable of doing with us "*exceeding abundantly about all we can ask or think*" - *Ephesians 3:20*.

He took Amos from behind the plough and made him a mighty prophet.

He took Mary Slessor from a jute mill in Dundee to India.

He took Ron Cunningham from a railway engine firebox to Tanzania with the message of love and hope.

He took Roberta Stevenson from the Sunblest Bakery to Euro/Asia to be His ambassador for the salvation of children.

The big problem is in accepting the truth of what we are and successfully reaching out to the possibilities of what we can be. Jacob, at Bethel, met with God and heard God's covenant - Genesis 28:10-21. But years later he met God again at Peniel and had to face the embarrassing question, "What is thy name?", and he said, "Jacob". But out of that stubborn wrestling, in his determination to win, God acts in grace and changes his name from Jacob (crooked) - what he WAS, to Israel (power with God) - WHAT HE WOULD BE.

"YOU SHALL BE" the glorious possibility promised by the One who, if there is the willingness, is able to strengthen us to attain. One translation of Philippians 4:14 is captivating "*I can do all things through Christ who keeps on pouring power into me*".

Someone has remarked that "if God calls he will equip and sustain".

In the famous Bun Hill Cemetery, lies the mortal remains of John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace and many other hymns. His epitaph reads:

John Newton
Clerk
Once an infidel and libertine
A servant of slaves in Africa
Was by the mercy of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ
Preserved, Restored, Pardoned
And appointed to preach the faith

He had so long laboured to destroy.

Such are the possibilities open to the one who is willing to let GO and let GOD!

DREW CRAIG.