

J.R. Miller:

"These are the twelve He appointed: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter)" Mark 3:16

In an art gallery in Europe are shown, side by side — the first and the last works of a great artist. The first is very crude and most faulty; the last is a masterpiece. The contrast shows the results of long culture and practice.

These two names — are like those two pictures:

"Simon" shows us the crude fisherman of Galilee, with all his rashness, his ignorance, his imperfectness.

"Peter" shows us the apostle of the Acts and the Epistles; the firm and secure rock; the man of great power, before whose Spirit-filled eloquence, thousands of proud hearts bow, swayed like the trees of the forest before the tempest; the gentle, tender soul whose words fall like a benediction; the noble martyr witnessing to the death for his Lord.

Study the 'two pictures' together — to see what grace can do for a man!

It is not hard to take roses, lilies, fuchsias, and all the rarest flowers — and with them make forms of exquisite beauty. But to take weeds, dead grasses, dried leaves, and trampled and torn and faded flowers — and make lovely things out of such materials — is the severest test of skill.

It would not be hard to take an angel — and train him into a glorious messenger. But to take such a man as Simon, or as Saul, or as John Newton, or as John Bunyan — and make him into a holy saint or a mighty apostle — that shows great power and ability!

Yet that is exactly what Christ did with Peter — and has been doing ever since. He takes the poorest stuff, despised, worthless and vile — oftentimes the outcast of men; and when He has finished His gracious transforming work — we behold a saint whiter than snow!

The sculptor beheld an 'angel' in the rough, blackened stone, which had been thrown away. And when he was finished — behold! men saw an angel cut from the rejected block!

Just so, Christ can take us, as rough, unpolished and vile as we are — and in His hands, our lives shall grow into purity and loveliness, until He presents us at last before the celestial throne, faultless and perfect! "For those God foreknew — He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son!" Romans 8:29