

**FULFILLED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD**  
**"Part IV: Holding To The Apostle Peter's Beliefs In A Pagan World"**  
**(The Words And Writings Of The Apostle Peter)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We are going through an epistle by the Apostle Peter, a man of whom Christ said, ". . . 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 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." (Matthew 16:18b-19)

The fact that we are going through Peter's first epistle is very important to us at Nepaug, for many of us have come from the religious background where we were taught that the true Church was built upon the bones of Peter in St. Peter's Square, Rome, Italy!! After all, Jesus said, ". . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church . . ."

**Well, if Jesus is building His true Church upon the rock at St. Peter's Square in Rome, what are we doing attending Nepaug Church which has no connection to St. Peter's in Rome? How can we be pleasing God by being HERE, at NEPAUG Church?!**

Also, how can we justify interpreting the Bible individually when Peter was given the 'keys of the kingdom' in Matthew 16:19?! Doesn't that give Peter and all who succeed from him the authority to dictate what and who and how Scripture is to be taught and interpreted? Since when may we as individuals interpret Scripture ourselves when the Church at St. Peter's says only the priest may do so?

What are we doing at Nepaug, and what are we doing interpreting the Bible personally in light of Matthew 16:18-19?

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and to motivate . . .)

Waterbury Republican . She reported in the article how her former Church allows communion to be served to people with divorced backgrounds only if (a) their first marriages were canonically annulled or (b) if remarried, they abstained from intimate relations in that second marriage. She felt left out since she had married a divorced man and chosen to be intimate with him.

She writes about her feelings: ". . . the removal of the . . . Church from my life felt much like an amputation. I experienced the phenomenon of phantom limbs, feeling there was still something warm and alive where the cutting had taken place . . ."

When she broke her back in a boating accident, out of a feeling of great need while in isolation in a private room at the end of a hospital corridor, she called out to God for help. "Filled with fear, I found myself praying for answers, for a place to put my faith. I asked God for a tangible sign, for something to help point the way."

Someone had marked her religion on the hospital admission form, so a priest visited her. She asked him for some way to regain admission to the Church, explaining her 20 year marriage to a divorced man. The priest was taken back by her request, and left the room without saying the prayer he'd come to make!

She writes about her response to this event, stating: "Looking back, I realize our roads were divergent from the start. His (the priest's) rules and my needs had no meeting ground . . . But he didn't have to back away from the human issue, from the person who was hurting and needed answers . . . I'm recovering from the accident and walking again with renewed strength. It's time to explore other religions."

**Would to God that she would explore the teachings of the Apostle Peter, an apostle she has been taught is authoritative in her "still something warm and alive" background, and find her answer through Peter's teachings of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ! Then, to quote Peter, she can be "begotten . . . again unto a living hope . . ." as God "purifies (her) heart by faith . . . in the precious Lamb of God"!**

***Need: "Many of us were taught that Christ's Matthew 16:18-19 claim to build His church 'upon this rock' meant that St. Peter's in Rome is the true Church! We were told the 'keys of the kingdom' given to Peter led to the priest alone being allowed to interpret our Bible! If Matthew 16:18-19 is Scripture, how do we justify being at Nepaug and promoting personal Bible study and interpretation?"***

- I. **First, we must understand what Matthew 16:18f teaches as follows:**
- A. The rock upon which Jesus stated He would build His church is not Peter, but the confession of faith that he made in the context:
    1. The word translated "rock" is *petra*, a **feminine** noun in the Greek N. T. It is never used for a personal name, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Matthew 16:18.
    2. Peter's name is the **masculine** gendered word, *petros*, Ibid. Ryrie.
    3. Thus, Jesus was **not** teaching the "rock" to be Peter, but something else in the context which we note as follows:
      - a. Just before Christ's reference to the "rock" in verse 18, Peter gave his confession of faith which Jesus heartily accredited, Matthew 16:16-17.
      - b. Since verse 18's "rock" (*petra*) cannot mean Peter, Peter's confession of faith is the "rock" Jesus meant, Ibid.
  - B. Peter's "keys of the kingdom" in verse 19 are identified as follows:
    1. Some teach that Peter was given authority to **initiate** heaven's edicts as Christ's "vicar" by "binding" and "loosing" in Mtt. 18:19!
    2. However, the words "bound" and "loosed" (*dedemenon* and *lelumenon* respectively) are **both perfect passive verbs** translated "shall have (**permanently**) **been** bound" and "shall have (**permanently**) **been** loosed," Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Mtt. 16:19.
    3. Thus, heaven cements these things up before Peter heralds them on earth! See Acts 15:7 for the fulfillment of this promise!
- II. **Now, the TEACHINGS of PETER clearly critique many erroneous drifts away from these Matthew 16:18-19 truths as follows:**
- A. Peter's Beliefs About Tradition and Scripture - Though some teach that "apostolic succession" traditions carry as much authority as Scripture, Peter puts Scripture above any man's own creation so that traditions that contradict Scripture are false, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
  - B. Peter's Beliefs About Who Interprets Scripture - Some teach that only the priest may interpret Scripture! Yet, Peter ordered each of us to give an apologetic for our faith if asked by anyone as though he were before a judge, 1 P. 3:15 (*apologion*, B.K.C., N.T., p. 850). **Peter** orders us to use and so interpret Scripture ourselves!
  - C. Peter's Beliefs About A Christian Hierarchy - Though some teach that Peter's "keys" of Mtt. 16:18 began a hierarchy, Peter commands elders not to lord it over people, but to lead by example, 1 Pet. 5:1ff!
  - D. Peter's Beliefs About Mary, The Mother of Jesus - Some teach that Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the "Queen of Heaven" has all of God's authority over man given unto her. Yet, in a meeting where she was present, Peter led and Mary submitted to Peter, Acts 1:13-26!
  - E. Peter's Beliefs About How One Goes To Heaven - Some teach that salvation is by faith plus the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders and marriage. Yet, in Acts 15:1-11, Peter taught salvation by grace through faith without sacraments!
  - F. Peter's Beliefs About The Soul's Destiny After Death - Some teach that Christian adults at death enter Purgatory while infants go to Limbo. However, **Peter** taught that **Paul's** Epistles were authoritative Scripture in 2 Pet. 3:15-16, and **Paul** wrote in his epistles that absence from the body for the believer is presence with God in heaven, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Philippians 1:23-24.
  - G. Peter's Beliefs About The Priesthood - Some teach that Christians must confess their sins to human priests. Yet, Peter wrote that all believers are priests to offer praise to God, 1 P. 2:5, 9! Also, **Peter** called **Paul's** epistles Scripture (2 P. 3:15f), and **Paul** wrote in 1 Tim. 2:5 that man has one Mediator, Jesus Christ!
  - H. Peter's Beliefs About Rituals - Though some teach the importance of ritual, Peter said that rituals were burdens, A. 15:10; 1 P. 1:18-19.
  - I. Peter's Beliefs About Canon Law Ethics - Some teach that good ends justify **licentious means** towards good ends, Liguori, St. Alphonsus, 1, 3, 5, 75, 434. However, Peter commands us to be holy and thus not indulge in lusts, 1 Pet. 1:14.

**Lesson Application:** *Peter is not God's vicar, but a herald. Peter is not the rock of the Church, but his Matthew 16:16 confession of faith is the belief upon which Christ builds His Church! So, to enter heaven, (1) believe on the Jesus as Savior from sin, Jn. 3:16. (2) Also, use Scripture with our own interpretation for belief and practice! (3) If we ever doubt these views, recall that Peter taught them, and thus relax!*