

## Rocky

*Simon's father is sitting in his boat, moored on the quayside at Bethsaida.  
He shares some thoughts about recent changes in his son.*

"He's really gone head over heels into religion has our Simon, or Peter as he insists we call him now. That's the name Jesus the teacher gave him when Simon decided to follow him. He's really got serious about Jesus. He believes he could be the promised Messiah. He's even talking about giving up the fishing to go full-time preaching. My Simon, a preacher! If Andrew goes as well that's the end of the business for me. I'm too old to take on a new crew now. Peter isn't a new name, mind. Jesus must have heard how the lads over at Capernaum used to call Simon, "Rocky" - Peter means "a rock" you know. That was a few years ago now, when Simon was just realising his strength. He was always a big lad. He takes after his grandfather. I'm tall, but he's broad and stocky with it. Even as a youngster he towered over me. His poor mother used to ask him to sit down when he talked to her! "Rocky" Yes it's the right name for him. He's rocky in shape and rocky by nature.

I don't know how my son got himself into religion though. Don't get me wrong. We have our faith and we brought our lads up to be religious. I may not attend synagogue as often as I should but I keep the Sabbath and do my bit to live right. The boy's mother brought them up clean and straight. Peter,... There, I've started calling him it now. He took it hard when his mother died. It brought all the negative side of him out. He's always been quick tempered and impulsive, but then he became morose and a bit of a bully. There was a good side to him but only Andrew and I saw that. Simon can really be quite soft. There are times when I've seen him in tears about his mother - especially when she was in a lot of pain. Then he went through the angry moods - angry with God most of all. He seemed to get over that for a while when he married Leah, but as time went on and Leah didn't produce a family, Simon got the idea God was angry with him for being angry with God. He withdrew into himself. He threw all his strength into his work. We made a lot of money last year but I can't say Andrew and I enjoyed the work, especially when Simon saw the Zebedee twins as rivals. Every day he was determined to get bigger catches than them.

So, although I was a bit surprised when Andrew persuaded Simon to go to hear the Baptist preaching in the desert, I was relieved to see a change in him. At least he took some time off and gave me a break.

There IS a real change in Simon. It's easy to change a name. A changed personality ! Now that's a different thing altogether ! But, then, Simon's so stubborn...If he makes up his mind to do a thing..... When I think about it, there've been a lot of changes in Simon since he's been with the teacher, - Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth they call him. He's a carpenter's son. We're related really, but that's too complicated to explain just now. It's as though Jesus is drawing out of him the old Simon - the real Simon. He actually got a new concern for me the other day ! Said I shouldn't be doing the heavy work now. I nearly fell overboard when I heard it. The bitterness has gone out of his rivalry with James and John too. They're even good friends most of the time now Simon's gentleness is coming to the fore again, and there's laughter on our boats like the old times.

Yes, Peter's a good name for my lad. But there's one thing troubles me. When, as a boy, his quick temper got him into trouble he always went to his mother for comfort. She used to say he would spend his life getting hurt. 'Big men fall hard,' she'd say. But it's not his broken bones I fear. If he follows the way of love and justice I hear Jesus is teaching, then it's his big heart that's going to be broken.

He'll make it though. Simon's a big man with a big heart. Yes, "Rocky"'s a good name for my Simon.