

*I retired from the Coast Guard over 21 years ago – after having served 22 years in that organization. I retired as a criminal investigator; however, that’s not where I started. My Coast Guard career started in the aviation community, where I logged hundreds of hours in the air, often times, being sent on search and rescue missions where the weather conditions were the absolute worst – and in those kinds of weather conditions, where the aircraft was being bounced around in those dark and angry and stormy skies, it was vital that the pilots naturally do what seemed very unnatural to them – trust the aircraft instruments.*

*Pilots are trained to look to the horizon or to the ground as a point of reference when they are flying, and they can use the horizon or the ground to help them see if they are going up or down, right or left. It’s a pretty simple way for a pilot to get their bearings in the air, but what if the pilot can’t see the horizon or the ground? What if they are flying through storm clouds and lose that point of reference – then what?*

*On July 16, 1999, John F. Kennedy, Jr. was killed when the aircraft he was piloting crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. His wife and sister-in-law were also killed in that accident. On January 26, 2020, Kobe Bryant, his daughter and seven others died in a helicopter crash in California.*

*It was determined that these accidents were caused by “spatial disorientation.” Spatial disorientation is a phenomenon that can occur when a pilot flies into fog or through clouds, or through other conditions blocking any visual reference points. As strange as it seems, the pilot soon loses all sense of direction – even what’s up and what’s down. Without a horizon or at least lights in the distance from the ground, the pilot doesn’t know if they are flying straight and level or if they are diving the aircraft straight into the ground.*

*The only way a pilot can overcome spatial disorientation is to keep their eyes on the aircraft instruments, and trust them more than they trust their own senses. The instruments on the aircraft can keep things straight, and level, and upright even when the senses of the pilot might be telling them something entirely different.*

*According to seasoned pilots, learning to have unwavering confidence in the instruments is the hardest thing to do, but they know it will save their lives.*

*In a roundabout way, that’s what we are considering this morning – like instruments in an aircraft, we are to trust God’s Word as we navigate through life.*

This morning, we are back in **2 Peter**, and as a summary of what we have covered thus far, Peter told us that we have been given everything necessary to live a Christian life and to escape the corruption in this world. He explained that we are partners with God – and we are to cooperate with God by applying and putting to use what He has given us. Peter also told us that we should be diligent to make certain of God’s calling in our lives – we should be confident about our salvation, explaining that our confidence comes from the growth and the progress we experience in our lives as we walk with Christ. As we see Christ-like changes occurring in our lives, as we mature in the faith, as we allow God to work in us, that gives us assurance that we are really saved. Unfortunately, on the flip side, if we are not growing and progressing, if there is no change in us – if our salvation is not reflected in the way we live our lives, then that will give us reason for doubt – and quite frankly, it should.

It’s been said that “*God loves you just as you are,*” and that’s true, but He refuses to leave you that way. He loves you too much to leave you as you are because His love for you is a life-changing love – it has to be, if we are becoming Christ-like. Simply put, there should be a change in you and in me after coming to know Christ – and over time, it should be evident, and Peter is a great example of this.

If you recall, in the gospels, Peter had rebuked Jesus, when Jesus talked about His impending death, and Jesus said to Peter “*Get behind Me Satan.*” Peter was opposed to the Lord’s death – he did not understand the necessity of it, but now Peter is aware that his own death is imminent, and he accepts it with certainty and even with hope. Peter is not the same person he used to be. He’s a changed man.

Peter is a confident man, and this morning I want us to see where his confidence in the Lord comes from – and ours as well. If you have your Bible, turn with me to **2 Peter 1** and we will begin with **verse 16**.

**For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**

In this verse, Peter explains why he remained faithful to the Lord even in the face of his own suffering and death. He says, the things that I have shared with you, the things I have been writing and talking to you about are not make-believe, it’s not fiction, it’s not some myth or fable – it’s not some story I invented. Peter was surrounded by pagan religion – he knew the difference between the truth and the lies that were being circulated, and he says the things I share with you come from

what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears, and not just mine – there were other apostles as well who experienced what I experienced.

Do you think Peter would be willing to suffer and die over some story that he made up? Do you think that every apostle, except for John who died naturally, would be willing to suffer and be executed for a lie they invented? No, of course not, but they were willing to suffer and die for what they said they saw and heard. They were there with Jesus, they were eyewitnesses, and they were convinced of the truth – so much so, they were willing to stake their very lives on it.

Peter makes it clear that the foundational truths about Christ do not fall in the category of a myth because he and others were eyewitnesses of **His majesty**. Now, what does that mean? When did Peter and others become eyewitnesses to the majesty of Jesus? We get a clue in the next two verses. Look at **verses 17-18**.

**<sup>17</sup> For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”—<sup>18</sup> and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**

I suspect there were multiple occasions where Peter and the other disciples experienced the greatness of God, but this passage has to be a reference to the transfiguration of Jesus. Turn to **Matthew 17** and let’s look at this experience.

*<sup>1</sup>Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. <sup>4</sup>Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” <sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. <sup>7</sup>And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” <sup>8</sup>And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.*

Peter chooses this account because he personally heard the voice of God testifying about Jesus from the cloud of glory, declaring, **“This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.”** The very last words from God the

Father to man were this: *listen to Him*. Listen to Jesus for He is higher than Moses and Elijah. Listen to Jesus for He is higher than the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament – *listen to Him*.

Peter can legitimately say that God Himself had validated the ministry of Jesus. And besides hearing those divine words with his own ears, Peter saw with his own eyes the brilliant transformation of Jesus right in front of him. He got to see what Jesus was like in His glory. Peter was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah – the Son of God, and Peter was assured that his faith in Christ was well placed.

So, with his eyes and his ears, Peter both saw and heard the truth of who Jesus really is – but not everybody has the privilege of standing on a mountain top to see the spirits of Moses and Elijah and to hear God Himself confirm the truth about Jesus. This is why Peter transitions from the subject of the Living Word – who is Jesus, to the written word that has been given to us.

Look at **verse 19**.

**So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.**

Like the predictions and the proclamations given by Old Testament prophets concerning the power and the coming of Jesus – Peter says that he and the other apostles also wrote about the power and the coming of Jesus Christ – in fact, they were actually eyewitnesses to it. Peter's experience of seeing Jesus transfigured on the mountain in all His glory was a preview of what it will be like to see Christ at His second coming, but here Peter essentially says to his readers – and don't miss this, "*You do not have to rely only on my experience. You have another confident source that is even more reliable and surer than my personal experiences – you have the Scriptures.*"

We have Old and New Testament Scripture that lay the biblical foundation for our trust in Christ. For example, according to one calculation, there are over 300 Old Testament predictions regarding the Messiah that Jesus fulfilled, and these are predictions that were made hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus found in documents such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. This prompted a really smart guy to consider the mathematical probability of one person fulfilling these prophecies.

Years ago, Professor Peter W. Stoner, who was Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College and Chairman of the

science division at Westmont College wrote a book called *Science Speaks*. In his book, Professor Stoner assigned probabilities to a number of biblical prophecies and then he calculated the odds that one person in the first century could fulfill them by chance. He started with only 8 of these Messianic prophecies. Here are the 8 prophecies that Stoner evaluated:

The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**).

A messenger will prepare the way for the Messiah (**Malachi 3:1**).

The Messiah will enter Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey (**Zechariah 9:9**).

The Messiah will be betrayed by a friend and suffer wounds in His hands (**Zechariah 13:6**).

The Messiah will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (**Zechariah 11:12**).

The betrayal money will be used to purchase a potter's field (**Zechariah 11:13**).

The Messiah will remain silent while He is afflicted (**Isaiah 53:7**).

The Messiah will die by having His hands and feet pierced (**Psalms 22:16**).

Using very conservative estimates, Professor Stoner calculated that the probability of any one man fulfilling just 8 of these prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power – that's 1 with 17 zeros behind it. That's 1 in 100 quadrillion. **How big is that?** Professor Stoner said, using silver dollars to illustrate the size of those enormous odds – you could cover the state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep. Now, take only one of those silver dollars and mark it with a red X and throw it back into that pile of silver dollars that covers the state of Texas. Then blindfold a volunteer and ask that person to find the marked silver dollar on their first try. That's the same odds that 8 predictions about Christ could be fulfilled by chance by one man in the first century. Again, that's just 8 out of over 300 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled.

Then Stoner took his project a little further and went on to calculate the probability of one person in the first century fulfilling 48 prophecies. That number is 1 in 10 to the 157<sup>th</sup> power. I don't believe there is a name for such a number, and I need to remind you that is only 48 prophecies out of over 300. And in case you're questioning whether Professor Stoner's math was wrong, his calculations were peer reviewed, and their mathematical analysis concluded that Stoner applied the principles of probability in a proper and convincing way, and his findings were determined to be dependable and accurate.

So, Peter's point is this, we have a solid foundation in the Old Testament which was confirmed in the New Testament by the apostle's experiences with Jesus. The fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and the eyewitness accounts of these

apostles who saw the light, so to speak, makes us more confident of what is yet to come in the future. We can rely on the solid truth about Jesus found in the Bible. We can be persuaded and convinced that Jesus is who He says He is, and Jesus will do what He said He will do. We can put our trust in Him to the point that we place our lives in His hands – our lives in the here and now and our lives in hereafter.

But Peter is not done explaining his confidence in God's Word. He says in **verses 20-21**,

**<sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

**What is Peter saying here?** He is saying that Scripture does not exist because several men decided to write and circulate clever stories they invented. Scripture ultimately comes from God. He is the source of Scripture. Scripture is not a record of human ideas and its origin does not come from man; rather, Scripture is God's Word.

Yes, human authors were clearly involved in the process; however, Peter tells us these authors were **moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**. The Greek word for "**moved**" is *pherō*, and it refers to something being lifted up and *carried along* by an outside force. It paints a nautical picture of a ship being driven through the waters by the power of the waves and the wind. The Holy Spirit is the driving force behind the writing of the Bible. He is the divine author and men like Peter were human authors who were merely carried along and guided by Him.

The Scriptures were written by about 40 men of God, and it is important to realize that these men were not writing machines that were merely chosen to take down dictation from God. These men were walking with God, they had their own unique life experiences, they had their own personalities, and each man had his own vocabulary and style of writing. Jeremiah does not write like Isaiah, and John does not write like Paul, but God worked through their personalities and their experiences, and guided and controlled what they wrote to be exactly what He wanted written. These men did not write their own thoughts, rather, they were **moved** – they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

As an example, let's think about Peter for a moment and his words. Here we have the words of a man who spent more than three years with Jesus. He was one of the closest followers of Jesus – part of the inner circle. Peter saw Jesus hungry and

thirsty. He saw Jesus tired and weary. Peter saw Jesus troubled, witnessed Jesus' rejection by His own people, and eventually saw Him crucified.

But Peter also watched Jesus as He feed thousands of people on two separate occasions. He witnessed Jesus calm the wind and the waves. He saw Jesus walk on water – up close and personal. Peter couldn't count the number of people Jesus healed from sickness and demon possession. Peter also witnessed Jesus raise people from the dead. Peter got a glimpse of Jesus' glory when He was transfigured. He saw a risen Savior, and later watched Him ascend into heaven with the promise that He was coming again. Peter was an eyewitness to all of this, and he provided his testimony to us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His testimony is like a brick being laid in the foundation of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Last week, I talked to you about believing in Jesus, and I made mention that believing in Jesus is more than just believing the right things about Him. Believing in Jesus is more than just believing facts about Him. Yes, it's important to know that Jesus is the Son God, that we are sinners separated from God, that Jesus went to the cross for our sin, and He rose from the grave to validate everything He claimed. And yes, we need to be convinced and persuaded that what the Bible says about Jesus is the truth, because the Bible is God's Word and not merely the opinions of religious men who lived a long, long time ago. But more than that, we need to trust in Jesus and move from factual knowledge to actual reliance on Him, to the point we receive Him and we trust Him with our very lives.

*Can you imagine a tightrope stretched over a quarter of a mile, spanning the width of Niagara Falls, and watching a man step onto that rope and walk across it?*

*This stunning feat made Charles Blondin famous in the summer of 1859. He walked 160 feet above the falls several times back and forth between Canada and the United States as huge crowds on both sides looked on with shock and awe. Once he crossed in a sack, once on stilts, another time on a bicycle, and once he even carried a stove and cooked an omelet!*

*On July 15, Blondin walked backward across the tightrope to Canada and returned pushing a wheelbarrow. The story is told that it was after pushing a wheelbarrow across while blindfolded, that Blondin asked for some audience participation. The crowds had watched and "Oooooohed" and "Aaaaahed!" He had proven that he could do it; of that, there was no doubt. But now he was asking for a volunteer to get into the wheelbarrow and take a ride across the Falls with him!*

*It is said that he asked his audience, “Do you believe I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?” Of course, the crowd shouted that yes, they believed! It was then that Blondin asked the question – “Who will get in the wheelbarrow?”*

*Of course...none did.*

The story of Charles Blondin paints a real-life picture of what faith actually looks like. The crowd had watched his daring feats. They said they believed, but their actions proved they really did not.

It's one thing for us to say that we believe in the Lord, but it's another thing – it's true biblical faith when we place our trust in Jesus, to the point that we can surrender to Him as Savior and Lord, get into the wheelbarrow so to speak, and place our lives in His capable hands.

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