

“Rock solid faith” (4)

We’re continuing our sermon series of **1 and 2 Peter** and we saw in Peter’s second letter that he is writing to **"those who have obtained like precious faith with us."** **2 Peter 1:1** And if you remember we talked about how precious our faith should be to us and how we should always trust in our Saviour Jesus Christ and trust the word of God.

Before we get started today let me share with you a story **about a woman who was very nervous about crossing a busy road; she didn’t know how to cross over, she stood there and stood there. Until finally a strong looking young man walked up and put his arm inside her elbow and said, “May I cross the road with you?” She was relieved until they got out on to the road, they were all over the place, dodging cars and they almost got knocked over a few times, finally they made it to the other side; she turned around angrily and said, “You call that help, you look like your blind” And he said, “I am blind, that’s why I said can I cross the street with you?”**

And I guess the point is that we really need to be careful who we are following. Now some people may think that Christians are the blind following the blind. Some Christians may even believe that we are gullible and we have nothing but blind faith. Now I’m not saying that all Christians think that way but there are some who do.

And this morning I want to try and show you that your faith isn’t blind, your faith is rooted and built upon two testimonies. You see from the very first Gospel sermon in **Acts 2** right through to the rest of **the Book of Acts**, whenever the apostles were preaching or teaching they also always appealed to two sets of testimonies to let people know their faith was real and not blind.

First of all they appealed to the testimony of apostolic eyewitnesses. **If you’ve ever been involved in seeing a car crash or a disturbance in your street, you will find that the police try to get as much evidence as they can as to what actually happened. But the real evidence they are looking for are the people who actually saw the whole event. They are looking for eyewitnesses.**

Now all the way through the apostle’s preaching and teaching they would always say, **‘we spent time with Jesus, we saw the miracles He did, we were there when they crucified Him, we saw Him being put in the tomb, we spoke and ate with Him after His resurrection, we saw Him ascending back to heaven.’** In other words they were eyewitnesses to these things, they saw and heard all the evidence they needed to know that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be.

Second they appealed to the testimony of Old Testament prophecy. And so when the apostles were preaching and teaching they not only said, **‘we were witnesses to the things Jesus said and done but from Genesis to Malachi the entire Old Testament said these things were going to happen and the prophecies found within were fulfilled in the man named Jesus’.**

Now the reason I shared all that with you was to prepare your minds for what Peter is going to tell us today. Peter is going to appeal to the same two witnesses and he wants to reinforce the validity of our faith in Jesus, as something which is based upon a solid foundation. **2 Peter 1:16 “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”**

Peter says let me tell you something loved ones, what we’re talking about is not some fairy tale, it’s real and it’s real because we, the apostles, saw these things with our own eyes. Peter says I’m not just making all this stuff up to deceive you, I’m telling you what happened because I was there. Now we’ve got a choice loved ones, we either believe what he is about to tell us or we believe that what he is about to tell us is a lie or a fabrication of the truth.

Now notice that Peter uses the word **‘we’**, he’s telling us that this is not just his testimony but the testimony of others too. Peter says that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of what they made known concerning Jesus' coming and power. He says because we all saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears and felt with their own hands, there is no way they were making all this up. Because they saw, heard and felt Jesus when He was with them there is no way that they could be deceived.

In **Acts 10:39-41** Peter says to Cornelius and his household, **“We are witnesses of all the things he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him up on the third day and caused him to be seen, not by all the people, but by us, the witnesses God had already chosen, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead”.**

John wrote his first letter and says in 1 John 1:1 “This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched concerning (Jesus) the word of life.”

And so Peter says, we’ve been there, done that and got the t-shirt concerning Jesus. And then he goes on to give us an example of one the things he witnessed. 2 Peter 1:17+18 “For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” We heard this voice come out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain”.

Peter is referring to that special event which took place on the **mount of transfiguration**. Now this was an important event because Matthew records it in **Matthew 17:1-9**, Mark records it in **Mark 9:2-9** and Luke records it in **Luke 9:28-36**.

Let’s read Mark’s account in **Mark 9:2-9** “Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and led them alone up a high mountain privately. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiantly white, more so than any launderer in the world could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared before them along with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. So Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (For they were afraid, and he did not know what to say.) Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, “This is my one dear Son. Listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more except Jesus. As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”

A man once testified in one of D.L. Moody's meetings that he had lived "on the Mount of Transfiguration" for five years. "How many souls did you lead to Christ last year?" Moody bluntly asked him. "Well," the man hesitated, "I don't know." "Have you saved any?" Moody persisted. "I don't know that I have," the man admitted. "Well," said Moody, "we don't want that kind of mountaintop experience. When a man gets up so high that he cannot reach down and save poor sinners, there is something wrong."

You see Peter James and John witnessed this event but they didn’t stay there, they went out and preached and saved souls. But the mount of transfiguration was an event which demonstrated the power, majesty, honour and glory that Jesus had. But why out of all the events Peter experienced with Jesus, **why did he choose this one?** The **mount of transfiguration** event certainly proclaimed the majesty of Jesus. The **mount of transfiguration** event certainly illustrated the nature of their testimony.

But why this event? Well he chose this event because it was on that mountain that they **saw** Jesus transfigured before them, and joined with Moses and Elijah. He chose this event because it was on this mountain that they **heard** the voice which came from God the Father in heaven. The very fact that this event, like many others in the life of Jesus, was seen by a plurality of witnesses serves to strengthen the force of their testimony.

And so what do all these eye witnessing events mean? It means like I said earlier, we have a choice. Either they are telling the truth about Jesus or they did the very thing that Peter denied in this passage. They **followed cunningly devised fables**. Ask yourselves loved ones, **which one is more reasonable to believe?** I believe the apostles told the truth, and I don’t believe that they were blatant liars, frauds, and deceivers.

Think about the apostles for a moment and think about how they lived. They had nothing to gain by lying, in fact they were beaten and thrown in jail and even murdered because of their faith. **Why would anyone go through all of that for something they didn’t believe was real?** Peter says we were there with Jesus, we were on that mountain and we were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus.

And so loved ones, you don’t have a blind faith, your faith is precious because it rests upon the testimony of the apostles. Which is exactly the way Jesus said it would happen in **John 17:20** “I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony.”

Now Peter doesn’t just appeal to the apostles who were eyewitnesses to show us that our faith is precious. He goes on to appeal to the testimony of divinely originated prophecy. 2 Peter 1:19-21 “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture

came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit".

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to read someone's thoughts? Even more, wouldn't you love to know what's going on in God's mind? Well loved ones, that's exactly what Peter is telling us, he is telling us that the scriptures are actually the mind of God in human language.

Someone once described the Bible as a window in this prison-world, through which we may look into eternity. Now here in this text Peter is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. And did you know that there are more than 300 Old Testament prophecies alone relating to Jesus being the Messiah?

Let me give just one, the prophet Isaiah for example spoke about the coming Messiah. Isaiah 9:6-7 "For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called: Extraordinary Strategist, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His dominion will be vast and he will bring immeasurable prosperity. He will rule on David's throne and over David's kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The LORD's intense devotion to his people will accomplish this".

Now the apostles would often appeal to others by quoting the Old Testament prophecies to convince people that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah. In other words Peter says these prophecies have been made **completely reliable** because Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies

Now think about it, **what must have people thought about the Old Testament scriptures and the prophecies within them before they were actually fulfilled?** I can only imagine that all they could do is hope that the words within were really from God. But when Jesus Christ came along, their hope became a realisation. And so loved ones, because we see Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of many the Old Testament prophecies this should not only strengthen our faith in God but also in His word.

Now you might be thinking well the Old Testament is a part of the Old covenant with Israel and we really don't need to read or study it because its prophecies have already been fulfilled when Jesus came. But Peter reminds us in **2 Peter 1:19** "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts".

Peter says we will do well to pay attention to it. In other words, yes the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled concerning Jesus but as Christians we still need to carefully study the Old Testament Scriptures. When the apostle Paul was writing to his young friend Timothy, he encouraged him to just that. He writes in **2 Timothy 3:14+15** and says "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Paul says, all scripture is God breathed which means both the Old and the New Testaments.

How did God create the heavens and the earth? He spoke them into existence. When he created Adam from the dust of the ground, He breathed life into Adam and he became a living being. And Paul says that the very scriptures that we read everyday are the very breath of God Himself.

It was Charles Spurgeon who once said, 'I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much.' Now here is man who sees the value in the whole Bible loved ones. The question is **do you value the God breathed scriptures as much?** No wonder Peter says reading the Old Testament scriptures has value.

2 Peter 1:19 "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts". Peter says the Old Testament Scriptures are a light that shines in a dark place. And he also says, the Old Testament will serve its purpose. In other words there is a time coming loved ones when we won't need the scriptures. And that time will be when faith will become a reality at the final coming of Jesus.

That's why Peter says, the Old Testament will continue to shine until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. **What's he talking about concerning the Morning Star?** He's talking about Jesus.

Revelation 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies. I am the root and the offspring of David; the Bright and Morning Star.” Now remember Peter is arguing his case concerning Jesus, he’s seen Jesus, he’s heard Jesus and He’s touched Jesus, he and the other apostles were witnesses to these things. He says he’s not lying to us and if we don’t believe his testimony then look at the Old Testament prophets who prophesied things concerning Jesus which Jesus fulfilled.

And so Peter goes on to tell us that the prophets didn’t speak their own words, but the very words of God Himself. 2 Peter 1:20+21 “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter says, you need to understand something Christian, he says, the prophecies of the Old Testament were not the views or concepts of mere men. They didn’t write whatever they felt like and left out what they didn’t think was important. Now remember a priest was a person who spoke on behalf of the people to God. And a prophet was a person who spoke to the people on behalf of God. In other words they spoke when God wanted to communicate a message to His people.

And Peter says these prophets didn’t just make things up in their own minds, they spoke on behalf of God Himself. That’s what Peter means when he says they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. In other words they were guided, they were instructed by God through the Holy Spirit to speak to the people of old and us today. Psalm 19:7 “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”

Psalm 119:130 “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

Psalm 119:160 “All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.”

Loved ones if we would only take the words from the Bible and believe them. If we would only lift the words off the page and place them in our hearts and live by them, our faith would be so much stronger. Our faith would be strengthened when we finally start to see the Old Testament as part of God’s inspired Word. Our faith would be strengthened when we finally start to believe that the prophets indeed spoke about Jesus as the Messiah.

T.H. Huxley, a well-known agnostic, was with a group of men at a weekend house party. On Sunday morning, while most of them were preparing to go to church, he approached a man known for his Christian character and said, “Suppose you stay at home and tell my why you are a Christian.” The man, knowing he couldn’t match wits with Huxley, hesitated. But the agnostic said gently, “I don’t want to argue with you. I just want you to tell me simply what this Christ means to you.” The man did, and when he finished, there were tears in Huxley’s eyes as he said, “I would give my right hand if only I could believe that!”

And so loved ones our faith is very precious not only because our faith relies heavily on the apostles as eyewitnesses. But also because our faith relies heavily on the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus as being fulfilled in Jesus Himself. John 5:39 “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” Your faith isn’t a blind faith Christian but a rock solid conviction based upon rock solid evidence.

Now you may not know this but a man named A. W. Dicus invented the indicator on a car. Like I said, you may not have known that, but you should know that he was also a great hymn writer. And one of his most famous hymns is, ‘Our God, He is alive.’ And I would like to leave you with one of the stanzas from that great hymn.

And when you’re driving home today and you switch on your indicator to turn left or right just think about his words as he writes, ‘There was a long, long time ago. A God whose voice the prophets heard. He is the God that we should know. Who speaks from His inspired word.’